"I JUST FEEL LIKE I AM AT HOME"

Person-centred support at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House

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ABSTRACT

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The research question is how the person-centred support at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House benefits its clients. The aim of the research was to study how the clients of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House have experienced the person-centred support provided for them and how to develop the person-centred support and the services in general. The target group is immigrant women who have been participating in the activities and services at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House at least for two months.

The study utilises qualititave methods of research. The research was conducted by combining structured and semi-structured interview methods. Six women were interviewed individually. The interview method was chosen because it provides useful information and personal experiences from the target group.

The method of content analysis was selected to interpret the results of the interviews. Content analysis is a beneficial method to categorize the research data and to maintain the originality of the content of the interviews.

The results of the research indicate the importance of person-centred support for immigrant women. According to the interviews, it is clear that the interviewed women have benefitted from the person-centred support in multiple ways. The support has promoted the participants' integration into the Finnish society and their general well-being. The women have created social networks, received peer support and assistance in accessing education and labour market. The research indicates that the person-centred and peer support decrease stress and prevent exclusion.

In conclusion, the research is beneficial for both the interviewees and the Monika- Multicultural Women's House. The knowledge gained by the research can provide useful information on how to develop the person-centred support and the services in general, for example the possibility of person-centred support sessions can be advertised in a wider level. There could be more meetings and free discussion groups between the women in order for them to share their experiences and discuss with other women in a similar situation.

Key words: person-centred support, immigrant women, acculturation, integration, the Monika- Multicultural Women's House

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of our research is to find out how the Monika- Multicultural Women's House (MoniNaisten Talo) situated in Sörnäinen, Helsinki supports immigrant women in their integration process. We focus on the person-centred support method since it is commonly used at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House.

Our target group is immigrant women who have been participating regularly, at least for two months, in the Finnish language clubs and other activities that the Monika- Multicultural Women's House provides. The thesis is research oriented and will be used in the Monika- Multicultural Women's House for development purposes in their community. The research is work-life oriented and it seeks to benefit the Monika- Multicultural Women's House with its results. The thesis has a community development approach. The aim of the research is to provide valuable information about how the clients experience the person-centred support provided at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House and what is their opinion about it. This knowledge may help the organization to develop their services. In this research report we refer to the interviews with numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, and quote the interviewees.

We have implemented our practical placements in organizations such as Silkinportti, Nicehearts ry, Naistari, Mona Shelter, Osaava vanhempi- project in Vantaa municipality's immigration work and the Refugee Advice Centre, which all support the integration of immigrant women and prevent social exclusion. Le Baron implemented a practical placement at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House. These practical placement periods increased our already existing interest towards the integration of immigrant women in Finland and the issues of acculturation.

We chose the subject because we have experience in working with immigrant women and we have noticed that there are not many places exclusively for

immigrant women where they can meet each other. It is important that women have a place to visit and learn the Finnish language, participate in different activities and discuss everyday issues and problems with other women who might share similar experiences. The Monika- Multicultural Women's House does community development work by empowering their clients to become self-sufficient which increases the women's participation into the Finnish society.

Migration and multiculturalism are common issues in modern societies. There is an increasing need for information and research about immigrants and the integration process in order to develop the services for immigrants. It is important to focus on the women immigrants since they are more prone to suffer from exclusion and oppression because of their gender, cultural background, religion or prejudices.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the following chapter the key concepts of the research and the theoretical framework are introduced. We present studies and literature concerning the subject of the research and reflect on their meaning in relation to our research.

2.1 Support and person-centred approach

The following section concentrates on the person-centred approach of counselling and support. We focus on the individual's point of view and explain the meaning of the concepts.

There are multiple forms of support. According to Heikkinen (2003), social support includes emotional support such as empathy, caring, nurturing, love and trust, which are primarily received from family members and close friends. Support that supplies appreciation, for example encouragement, feedback and evaluation is generally received in working life. Informative support consists of advice, request or instruction which helps a person to function in an appropriate way and take care of personal issues. Instrumental social support consists of material help, assistance and providing money or time. (Cited in Anis & Malin 2013, 153-154.)

Social support is an important factor in anticipating psychological adaptation (Adelman 1988 & Fontaine 1986) and physical health (Schwarzer, Jerusalem & Hahn 1994) during cross-cultural transition. Hammer (1987) indicates that social support prevents psychiatric problems and a lack of social support is linked to negative physical and mental consequences during cross cultural adjustment. (Cited in Bochner et al. 2001, 85.)

Person-centred support is an overall view towards supporting an individual and helping him or her to plan and organize their life and experiences. A person-centred approach focuses on what is important for an individual. It includes

entrusting, offering and arranging services according to individuals' desires, and supports individuals to manage their lives in communities from their own perspectives. A person-centred approach aims to dispel cultural and organizational obstacles. (Kilbane, Thompson & Sanderson 2008, 18 & 43.)

A person-centred approach connects the best ways for an individual to work and maximize the control over their lives on their own terms. The principles of a person-centred approach are the cornerstones for understanding the practice of person-centred approach, planning and thinking. The principles include sharing power, listening, responsive action and connecting with citizenship. The principle of person-centred planning has its origins in the person-centred counselling and therapeutic model developed by Carl Rogers (1961). (Cited in Kilbane, Thompson & Sanderson 2008, 30-31.)

Person-centred approaches form and provide services and support based on what is important for an individual. They are means of commissioning, providing and organizing services according to what is wished for. (Department of Health 2001, cited in Kilbane et al. 2008, 28.) In person-centred thinking approaches, the professionals engaging with individuals have to adopt an empowering, inclusive, holistic and person-centred approach to all the interaction with an individual. The environment, culture and community of the individual have to be accepted in all aspects in their everyday life. (Kilbane et al. 2008, 160.)

Person-centred practice has the individual at the centre and is focused on allowing the person to have what is important for him or her. Clients are supported to reach for their dreams and hopes while being healthy, safe and well. The person-centred practice is the application of person-centred values, approaches, planning and thinking. Person-centred practice works when these main aspects are co-existing. (Kilbane et al. 2008, 29.)

Person-centred planning is a process of constant listening and learning, focusing on the things that are important for an individual now and in the future, and proceeding in cooperation with individual's family and friends. This helps to

understand client's capacities and choices. Person-centred planning is the foundation for solving problems and discovering the resources needed to achieve client's pursuits. (Department of Health 2001, cited in Kilbane et al. 2008, 27.) The person-centred counselling includes the idea of all clients having within themselves great resources for development. They have the capacity to fulfil their special identities and self-concepts. Attitudes or behaviours can be transformed or modified. (Mearns & Thorne 2007, 16.)

> *"When we use the term 'person-centred' we mean activities which are based upon what is important to a person from their own perspective and which contributes to their full inclusion in society"* *(Department of Health 2001, cited in Kilbane et al. 2008, 27).*

In counselling, it is important to understand the differences between community-centred and self-centred cultures. In Western countries it might be more common to talk to a professional whereas in community-centred countries it can be more likely to share problems with familiar people. (Korhonen & Puukari 2013, 13.)

Counselling creates new conditions for the client where the development is encouraged. In counselling, a different environment is provided for the client and he or she can recover from the past and thrive as the individual the client is. The relationship between the counsellor and the client is essential for the client to make progress. (Mearns & Thorne 2007, 17.)

The individual level approach is important in multicultural counselling because immigrants' experiences of the new country and its people are formed through the individual approach. The counsellor's cultural sensitivity and genuineness are significant factors in determining how successful the counselling is. One of the essential aspects in multicultural counselling is the well-functioning counselling relationship which creates the foundation of the individual counselling. (Korhonen & Puukari 2013, 21.) A client can find resources within his- or herself better, when the counsellor is genuine, accepts the client fully

and their relationship is emphatic and understanding. The counsellor should show an ability to feel and follow the feelings and individual meaning of the client. This way the counsellor develops the skills to communicate with the client, which demonstrates attention and caring from the counsellor's part. With these core conditions, the therapeutic movement is more likely to be achieved. The client is able to feel safe when facing negative feelings, confront him- or herself honestly without the fear of rejection, and feel self-acceptance. (Mearns & Thorne 2007, 17-18.)

Empathy is one of the main aspects in person-centred counselling. Empathy indicates that the counsellor understands the client, which increases the client's self-esteem. Empathy is a process where the counsellor replaces his or her own way of experiencing and sensing the surrounding world with the client's point of view. (Mearns & Thorne 2007, 67-77.) The main role of the counsellor is to create a bond and provide an empathic understanding towards the client. Empathic understanding only has a therapeutic outcome when the communication reaches the client. (Bryant-Jefferies 2005, 9.)

One of the characteristics that a counsellor should possess is unconditional positive regard towards the client. The counsellor who possesses this attitude shows a value towards the humanity of the client. The counsellor is consistently acceptable and warm towards the client. The basic idea of unconditional positive regard is acceptance and respect. Due to the unconditional positive regard, the client begins to feel safe enough to share more about him- or herself and process his or her experiences more profoundly. The client starts to value oneself, which is the outcome of feeling valued and accepted by the counsellor. (Mearns & Thorne 2007, 95-99.)

According to Rogers (1973), the congruence, which means realness, is the most important element in counselling. In this element, the counsellor is natural and spontaneous. It is essential that the counsellor is able to openly be him- or herself, which is a part of effective counselling. The congruence can be described as a state of being of the counsellor in relation to the client.

Congruence enables the client to trust the counsellor and the counselling process. A person-centred counsellor should be transparent in his or her work and establish an equal relationship, which is based on trust instead of mystery or superiority with a client. The counsellor needs to be present and genuine. (Cited in Mearns & Thorne 2007, 119-125.) These conditions have to be existing at the same time in order to provide a therapeutic relationship and effective counselling, and to enable the client's development towards a 'fuller functionality' (Bryant-Jefferies 2005, 8-10).

2.2 Immigration and women

Immigration can be defined in many ways. An immigrant is a person who lives permanently in another country than his or her country of origin (Räty 2002, 11). The definition of an immigrant by the International Organization for Migration (2010) as well as by the Finnish statistics is that an immigrant is a person who has lived outside his or her country of origin for at least a year (cited in Korkiasaari, Martikainen & Saari 2013, 26).

> *"Immigrant is an umbrella term that may be used to include everyone, although it is usually used to describe someone who is granted permission to enter a country and to live and work there"* *(Githens 2013, 37).*

Immigrants are individuals who voluntarily move to another country for a certain period of time. The reasons behind the relocation are usually social, economic or political. Generally, immigrants move from a less developed country to a wealthier country and are drawn by economic factors. (Bochner, Furnham & Ward 2001, 23.)

Immigration is a phenomenon that has been increasing in the past decades. There are various reasons for immigration. Increasing mobility and access from one country to another have enabled growing migration. According to the

predictions, the amount of immigrants in Finland will increase up to 500 000 by the year 2030 (Työ ja Elinkeinoministeriö 2012, 5). People might move to Finland for employment, family ties, marriage, as a refugee, asylum seeker, migrant or returning immigrant.

In Finland, immigration has focused especially in the capital region, Pirkanmaa and Varsinais-Suomi regions (Pihlaja, Pöyhönen, Tarnanen, Vehviläinen & Virtanen 2010, 22). According to Statistics Finland, 29 500 immigrants moved to Finland during 2011. It was 3 100 immigrants more than during 2010. (Statistics Finland.) The biggest groups of immigrants permanently living in Finland come from Russia, Estonia, Sweden, Somalia, China, Thailand, Iraq, Turkey, Germany and Great Britain (Pihlaja et al. 2010, 22).

Immigration moulds both individuals' life courses and societies. International migration is formed by millions of individuals moving from one country to another. According to the International Organization for Migration (2010), 3, 1 % of the world's population are immigrants; if they formed one nation, it would be the fifth largest nation in the world. The world has become more mobile. Immigration has great effects both in the immigrant's country of origin and in the destination country. Immigrants influence the surrounding society with their own lives and actions as well as with their families, social contacts, employment and transnational networks. This global mobility forces societies and international agents to search for solutions to adapt to immigration and changing demographic situations. (Martikainen, Saukkonen & Säävälä 2013, 13-14.)

Immigrant women's integration as a phenomenon has been studied and recognized more since the 1970's. Before that, women immigrants were "invisible" and mostly seen as dependents of male immigrants and without individual identities. (Kelson & DeLaet 1999, 40.) There is a great amount of literature that processes the experiences about immigration. Still, the vast majority of the material involves general immigrant experiences or concentrates only on male immigrants. (Healey 2010, 78.) According to The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS 2004), nowadays the proportion

of female migrants is rising steadily. In fact, the annual inflow of female immigrants in developed countries has exceeded that of men. In 2000, females formed 52.4 % of all immigrants to Europe and 51.1 % to North America. (Cited in Berry & Sam 2006, 408.)

Women are often defined in relation to men. Their identity and status are determined based on their roles for example as a mother, a daughter and a wife. Women are described not only in relation to men but also as being dependent on men. (McDowell & Pringle 1992, 3.) Gender roles and relationships differ between societies and time. Gender is formed from biological and social aspects and it is a way of categorising people. Biological factors, for example the sexes, or societal expectations such as behaviour, attitudes and personality, form the basis of gender roles. Deindustrialization and globalization are changing gender terms and the traditional roles of women, for example the roles as a wife or a mother. Numerous women enter the employment market in order to level the earning power of men. (Healey 2010, 19-20 & 163.)

Women's status is also defined by culture and religion. Cultural and religious rules have a great impact on women's status, family arrangements and their power or powerlessness. Different cultural traditions might determine women's role in the society and family. For example, in patriarchal societies, the roles of women might be defined by men. In these societies women tend to be care-takers and nurtures. (Deveaux 2006, 82.)

An unequal gender system can debilitate girls' and women's health by demanding them to stay in traditional gender roles and traditions that are harmful for health, such us female circumcision, favouring of male children, prohibiting education of females and not valuing employment of females. In immigration situation, ethnic discrimination in the receiving country jeopardizes the health of an immigrant, and can hinder him or her from education as well as from entering the employment market. (Anis & Malin 2013, 146.) According to Niemelä (2009), discrimination can be defined as unjust treatment of a person

because of his or her sex, age, origin, language, religion, state of health, disability or other personal reasons (Malin 2013, 153).

Approximately half of the migration population is women, especially in developed, industrialized countries. In the global economy, women tend to participate in the service and welfare sectors, for instance working as nurses and carers. The majority of the victims in human trafficking and people displaced by conflicts are also women. A considerable amount of the world's refugees are women. (Pentikäinen 2008, 4.) Even though the levels of sexism and discrimination are at a historic low, they have not disappeared. Especially minority immigrant women remain as the most vulnerable and exploited in the society. (Healey 2010, 403.)

Even though immigrant women might have common experiences, they cannot be generalized to fit into one definition of immigrant women (Hajdukowski-Ahmed, Khanlou & Moussa 2008, cited in Githens 2013, 12). Some women immigrants are benefitted and other disadvantaged by race, ethnicity, social class, religion and educational background (Githens 2013, 12).

In Finland, there are almost the same amount of immigrant women and men, although the amounts vary significantly between different countries of origin. In general, the immigrant population in Finland is younger than the native population, for example, 78% of foreign nationalities are in the working age. Still, there are more unemployed immigrants than unemployed native citizens. Even though the status of immigrants is generally congruent with the majority of population, being underprivileged, for example unemployed or lacking education, is more common among immigrants than within the majority of the population. (Korkiasaari, Martikainen & Saari 2013, 40-41 & 52.)

Immigrant organisations offer a good opportunity for building long-term cooperation in order to integrate immigrants into the Finnish society. Integration benefits everyone in the society, including Finnish educational institutions, the social- and health sector as well as other organisations. In the field of

multicultural guidance and counselling, the organisations can be cooperation partners in situations where cultural differences have created tensions and problems in the guiding process. The amount of immigrants is relatively small in Finland compared to other countries, but still there are multiple immigrant organisations which have a variety of procedures and activities to support integration. This has created different forms of cooperation between the Finnish authorities and organisations. Due to these cooperation models, there are other valuable ways to support the integration into the Finnish society, in addition to the formal integration system of the society. (Rage, Nguyen & Puukari 2013, 319-320.)

2.3 Culture and multiculturalism

There are multiple definitions of culture. According to Eliasoph & Lichtermann (2003), culture can be defined as the values, beliefs, habits, customs, stories, norms and forms of communication that connect people and communities (cited in Korhonen 2013, 34). According to Matsumoto (2008), culture is a system of meaning and information that is transferred across generations (cited in Maude 2011, 4). Ricard (1993) defines culture as the approved and patterned forms of behaviour of a certain group of people and their manners of thinking, feeling and acting (cited in Maude 2011, 4).

> *"Culture is a historically created system of meaning and significance…a system of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate and structure their individual and collective. It is a way of both understanding and organizing human life." (Parekh 2006, 143.)*

Pedersen (1990) states that culture consists of different variables: ethnographic variables such as ethnicity, nationality, religion and language, demographic variables such as age, gender and place of residence, status variables such as

social-, economic- and educational backgrounds, and many formal and informal connections and different memberships (cited in Korhonen & Puukari 2013, 12).

Belonging to a cultural community has two effects. A cultural community structures and modifies the personality of an individual and creates a content or identity for it. (Parekh 2006, 156.) Culture modifies individuals and individuals modify culture. People are constantly surrounded by culture. The relationship with the individual's own culture and with those of other people is constructed in this multifaceted interaction. In the construction process, a group of people form a world view and a life philosophy which includes important elements such as description of the human essence, definition of the goals of the relationships between individuals, individual's relationship with nature and time as well as implications and goals of the human action. (Korhonen & Puukari 2013, 12.)

Multiculturalism acknowledges the cultural multiplicity in modern societies and controls this by respecting the regulations of equality. Migrants are visible among the majority of the population through their language, culture and social behaviour without endangering the majority's identity. Multiculturalism values a culture of tolerance in different sections of life. (Pentikäinen 2008, 13.)

In multicultural work, it is important to be aware of the different meanings of culture and traditions, and avoid generalizing or categorizing people, for example immigrant groups. It is essential to find a way to combine different cultures and views, and to gain a mutual understanding of suitable working methods and solutions. (Anis 2005, 3-19.) The Monika- Multicultural Women's House practises multicultural work and the employees apply principles of multicultural work.

2.4 Acculturation

Acculturation is a multi-dimensional process and it differs between individuals. Acculturation is a process which is gone through by an individual or a group, for

example, in an immigration situation. According to John Berry (1992, 2007), acculturation is one form of cultural change and modification that is born in cultural encounter. This includes many factors such as expanding contacts, mobility between cultures and changes inside a culture. Berry (2007) states that acculturation is a process of psychological and socio-cultural change which begins by the encounter of two or more cultural groups or their members. (Cited in Korhonen & Puukari 2013, 36.)

Berry (1970, 1974 & 1980) distinguishes four strategies of acculturation: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization. The acculturation of an individual or a group takes place in one of the four strategies. These strategies include two dimensions: orientations towards one's own group and those towards other groups. These acculturation strategies differ between individuals, groups and societies. The strategies also differ in interaction situations between two groups. (Berry 2006, 34.)

The assimilation strategy suggests that an individual does not seek to maintain their cultural identity and does not avoid interaction with other cultures. The separation strategy is defined as a situation where the individual values maintaining their original culture and avoiding interaction with others. Integration is the strategy where an individual conserves their original culture as well as interacts with other groups on a regular basis. In integration, cultural integrity is maintained while the individual participates in the wider social network. Marginalization is characterized as a lack of interest and minor possibilities of cultural maintenance and having relations with others, for example, due to exclusion or discrimination. (Berry 2006, 35.)

The definitions of the strategies are based on the presumption that groups and individuals are free to decide how to commit to intercultural relations. However, according to Berry (1974), that might not always be the reality. For example, the strategy of integration can only be voluntarily sought for and successfully pursued in a society which is open and receptive towards cultural diversity. Since the 1980's, the preference for multiculturalism and the integration strategy

has risen from around 65 % up to about 70 %, showing a general and increasing acceptance towards the multicultural model of a plural society. (Berry 2006, 35-37.)

In figure 1, Berry presents the strategies of acculturation in ethno cultural groups and how they correlate with the maintenance of heritage culture and identity (the horizontal arrow) and with relationships sought among other groups (the vertical arrow) (Berry 2006, 35).

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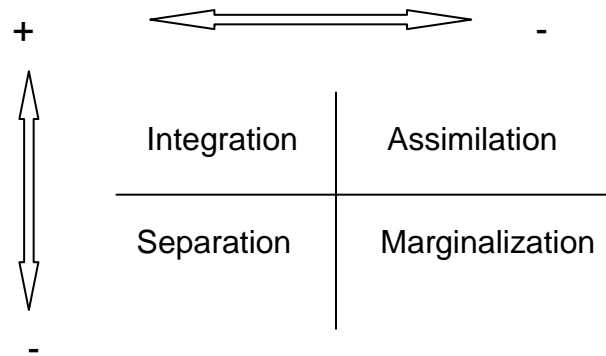|	Integration	Assimilation
	Separation	Marginalization

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Figure 1. Acculturation strategies in ethno cultural groups and the larger society (Berry 2006, 35).

The figure has been criticized by Domander (1994), of being static. Instead of being permanent, acculturation strategies can change according to time, situation and different sections of life. The process and the strategy of acculturation might vary throughout the whole life of an individual. (Cited in Lamppu 2001, 11.)

Assimilation can be defined as blending into the majority's culture. In this situation an immigrant neither wants, nor is given the possibility to form his or her own cultural identity. Separation signifies isolation from mainstream culture and in this case an immigrant does not want to interact with the mainstream population but only wants to hold on to his or her own culture. The risk of

separation might be high among refugee women who stay at home to take care of the family and do not have contact with the outside world. Marginalization is defined as a situation where an immigrant does not want, or is not able, to create his or her cultural identity and does not create relations or connections with the mainstream culture. (Lamppu 2001, 11.)

Segregation is another acculturation strategy which implies being excluded from the mainstream culture by the mainstream population, for example, in a situation where immigrant groups are located in a certain part of a city, in their own apartment houses separated from the other groups of people. Segregation inside immigrant groups takes place, for example when a woman is forced to stay home and is excluded from the outside world. (Lamppu 2001, 11.)

There exist also other models of integration process. According to Sue and Sue (1990), there are five stages in the development of ethnic identity. The first stage includes aiming for unity with the mainstream culture. The individual's own culture is underestimated or even wished to be forgotten. The second stage is described as being contradictory, or as the stage of confusion, where an immigrant might have experienced disappointment in regard to his or her expectations and the reality. The approach to own identity might be contradictory as well. The third stage is the objection of the mainstream culture and admiring one's own culture. An immigrant feels the need to be attached to his or her own culture and to deny the values and manners of the mainstream culture in order to avoid disappointment. The first three stages can be defined as a cultural shock. (Sue & Sue 2008, 242-243.)

The last two stages of the development of ethnic identity by Sue and Sue (1990) are self-examination and understanding and feeling close to the mainstream culture. Self-examination signifies that the relationship with one's own culture reinforces but the objection to the mainstream culture decreases and transforms into more interactive relation. The final stage can also be called integration, where an immigrant knows his or her own cultural identity but can

also adopt and understand features of the mainstream culture. (Sue & Sue 2008, 242-243.)

2.5 Integration

The following section describes the concept and the process of integration. We present different laws and legislation concerning integration in Finland as well as internationally.

Integration can be defined as an immigrant's individual development which aims to participate in the working life and society while conserving their own language and culture. Integrating involves the use of procedures and resources that promote integration and are provided by authorities. (Act on Integration 1999.) For the well-being of immigrants and functionality of the Finnish society, it is important that immigrants integrate into the new environment as well as possible. Good integration requires adaptation from the native population and from the immigrants themselves. (Jasinskaja-Lahti & Perhoniemi 2006, 13.)

Personal qualities and motivation influence the adjustment process to a new culture. Interaction with the native population as well as understanding their culture is important in the process. Figure 2 demonstrates the cross-cultural adjustment process.

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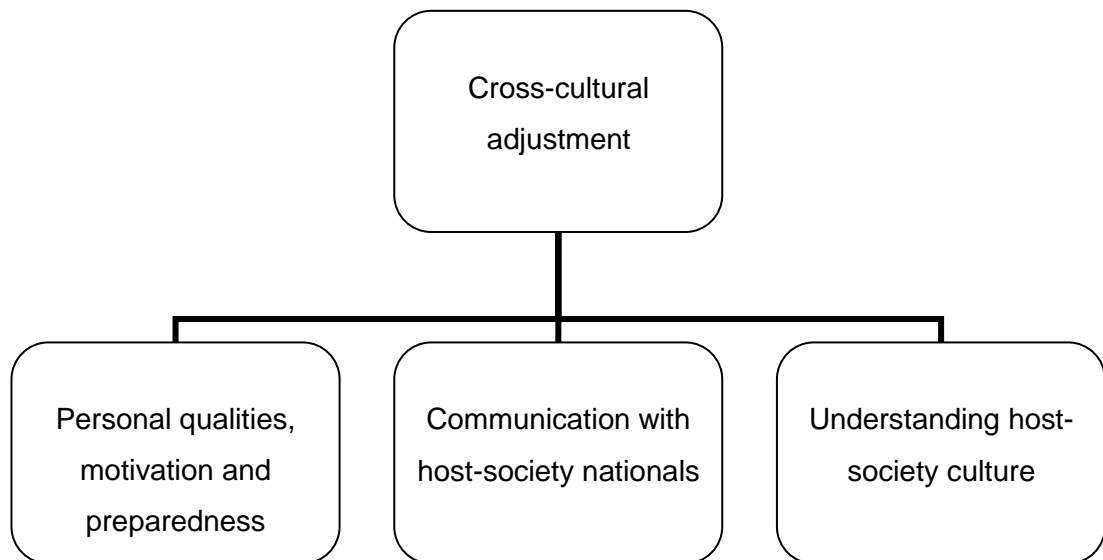

Figure 2. Cross-cultural adjustment process based on Kim (1995) (cited in Maude 2011, 195).

As the Board of Education (2012) states, the aim of the integration is to provide the immigrant with linguistic, societal, cultural and life management skills and preparedness which help the immigrant to cope with everyday life, function in working life and access education (Cited in Latomaa et al. 2013, 173).

Integration requires mutual adaptation and acceptance from both the receiving society and the individual in order to achieve integration. Successful integration requires that the individual adopts the basic values of the society while at the same time the society is prepared to adapt national institutions to the needs and demands of all the different groups co-existing in the plural society. This is called multiculturalism. (Berry 2006, 35-36.)

In order to achieve integration, the society has to accept the value of cultural diversity, to have low levels of prejudices, such as racism and discrimination, common, positive attitudes among different cultural groups and a connection or identification with the wider society, by all individuals and groups. Lalonde, Cameron (1993) and Moghaddam (1988) indicate that integration and separation are collectivistic strategies since they can only be achieved when the members of an ethno cultural group share the wish to maintain their cultural

identity. The remaining strategies, assimilation and marginalization are more individualistic. (Cited in Berry 2006, 36.)

2.5.1 Legislation

The integration concept was introduced in Finland during the 1990's. Integration can be divided into four different categories which are political, economic, social and cultural. Each category can also be divided into smaller areas of integration. (Jasinskaja-Lahti & Perhoniemi 2006, 13-14.) According to the integration law, the concept of integration means the individual development of an immigrant, aiming to participate into the society and working life while maintaining the native language and culture (Aarnitaival 2012, 26). The Act on Integration and other policies benefit immigrants on the macro level where ministries and the government are working and creating policies. Municipalities provide services for immigrants according to the national guidelines. The third sector for example non-governmental organisations offer services for immigrants on the micro level with a more individual approach.

According to the experiences of immigrants, authorities working in the field of integration and the third sector representatives, methods and models supporting integration are needed in day care centres, schools and working places. This is also the aim of the renewed Act on Integration (2010). (Latomaa et al. 2013, 172.)

The Act on Integration (1999) aims to support and promote integration and immigrants' possibilities to participate actively in the Finnish society. In addition, the act aims to promote equality and positive interaction between different ethnic groups. (Act on Integration 1999.) Since the first of September 2011, the new Act on Promotion of Integration includes a new regulation on the Government Integration Programme. The programme was prepared in the interdepartmental cooperation between the ministries responsible for integration. The programme also provided the basis for the preparation of Government resolution determining the Government's focus areas for the

development of integration procedures for 2012-2015. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2012, 58.)

The objectives of the resolution are to support good ethnic relations, participation by immigrants and interaction between various population groups. Promoting the employment of immigrants and supporting immigrant children and youth, families and women are emphasized in the regulation. The Government Resolution contains the aims of the integration and measures on the following areas:

    1)   Focus areas of communal integration

    2)   Supporting the integration of families through basic services

    3)   Immigrants into the labour market

    4)   Foreign students as a resource

    5)   Placement in a municipality for all people under international protection

    6)   Funding of the programme's implementation.

(Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2012, 58.)

The integration law highlights immigrants' own activity and at the same time offers tools for the official authorities to support the integration process. Integration law requires municipalities to create an integration program in cooperation with official authorities such as the Social Insurance Institution and the Employment and Economic Development Office. A personal integration plan is part of the integration services and it is conducted at the Employment and Economic Development Office. (Aarnitaival 2012, 26.)

The Non-discrimination Act (2004) requires authorities to promote equality in all actions. Each authority has to create a special plan to promote ethnic equality. The Non-discrimination Act includes wide prohibition of discrimination which means that no-one should be discriminated based on their ethnic background, nationality, language or religion. Discrimination is prohibited in working life and education as well as among all the services. (Koskenniemi & Makkonen 2013, 77-78.)

After joining the European Union, Finland has had to modify its immigration politics and accept relatively unrestricted mobility policies inside the Union. In the year 2010, the portion of immigrants of the whole population was 3, 1 - 4, 6 %, depending on the criteria of the classification. The majority of immigrants in Finland are from nearby countries. In 2010, 65 % of immigrants in Finland were originally from a European country. (Korkiasaari, Martikainen & Saari 2013, 37-38.) The aim of the Commission of the European Union is to promote equal status between the foreigners residing in the area of the Union and the citizens of the member states. The Schengen agreement, which was signed in 1985 and became valid in 1995, has facilitated the unrestricted mobility in Europe. Finland started following the agreement in 2001. (Koskenniemi & Makkonen 2013, 66 & 69.)

There are various organizations that address migration at the international level. One of the most important organizations is the United Nations. Other organisations are for example the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), Global Migration Group (GMG), the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). (Koskenniemi & Makkonen 2013, 58-60.)

3 THE MONIKA- MULTICULTURAL WOMEN'S HOUSE

In this chapter we introduce the Monika- Multicultural Women's House and its services for immigrant women. The importance of support for immigrant women is discussed.

The Monika- Multicultural Women's House is one of the units under the multicultural organization, the Monika- Multicultural Women's Association. It develops and offers services for immigrant women and children in multiple languages. The Monika- Multicultural Women's Association seeks to promote ethnic equality, functions as an expert in issues related to violence against women and promotes integration by supporting women's participation in civil activities. The Monika- Multicultural Women's Association educates, informs and works in cooperation with multi-professional networks, both nationally and internationally. It seeks to influence decision- and policy-making. The main supporters of the association are Finland's Slot Machine Association, the European Union, the Helsinki municipality and different ministries and foundations that buy the services. (The Monika- Multicultural Women's Association.)

The Monika- Multicultural Women's Association has multiple operational units which are the Monika- Resource Centre, the shelter home Mona and the Monika- Multicultural Women's Houses. The Resource Centre offers help for women and children with an immigrant background, who suffer from violence or live under the threat of violence. The shelter home, situated in a secret location, provides accommodation and special services for immigrant women and children who are in danger or have suffered from domestic violence, forced marriage, honour violence or human trafficking. The Monika- Multicultural Women's Association also operates a helpline which is available 24 hours a day. (The Monika- Multicultural Women's Association.) It is beneficial that the employees of the Monika- Multicultural Women's Association are multilingual since nowadays various languages are spoken in Finland, especially by

immigrants. There are approximately 150 languages spoken in Finland. At the end of the year 2011, the ten most common languages after Finnish and Swedish were Russian, Estonian, Somali, English, Arabic, Kurdish, Chinese, Albanian, Thai and Vietnamese. (Latomaa, Pöyhönen, Suni & Tarnanen 2013, 167.)

The Monika- Multicultural Women's House is an easy accessed, multicultural meeting place exclusively for immigrant women. They offer individual information and advice sessions, various group activities and support groups in order to assist with integration in Finland. In the group activities, immigrant women can study the Finnish language, gain knowledge about the Finnish society, discuss issues, learn handicraft skills and spend time with other women. The individual discussions between the employees and the clients include for example information about education, employment and practical placements. The discussions are confidential so the women can talk about difficult issues as well. However, in cases of violence or severe crises, the employees of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House direct the client further to the Resource Centre or other services. (The Monika- Multicultural Women's House.)

The Monika- Multicultural Women's House operates practicing person-centred support while executing individual client work. A new client always has an individual meeting when arriving at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House. During this meeting the client's wishes and aims are taken into consideration when becoming a client of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House. Immigrant women need a safe, comfortable and easy accessed environment where they can share their thoughts, learn the language and socialize. Several studies show that women face more problems and barriers than men in integration, for example in the areas of social and personal relations and employment (Kelson & DeLaet 1999, 40).

The Monika- Multicultural Women's Association is an immigrant organization. Immigrant organizations create space for ethnic and cultural diversity as well as

new multi-ethnic formations in the society. Local immigrant organizations participate in debates about the status that is given to an ethnic group, religion or the whole immigrant population. These organizations can be defined as filters that translate immigrant's opinions and experiences into administrative language. It is expected that the organizations promote cultural, social, economic and political integration. The organizations also benefit immigrants by introducing the society's mechanisms. Organizational work promotes an immigrant's structural and cultural adaptation to living in Finland. (Martikainen & Pyykkönen 2013, 284-285.)

Immigrant organizations are significant actors in supporting their members' integration. These organizations are helpful for immigrants since they are experts of the Finnish culture and the culture of the country or area which the organization represents. Many immigrant organizations offer different varieties of guidance and counselling which have a great impact on immigrants in the early stages of integration. There are different courses and counselling, for example, about applying to education and employment. (Rage, Nguyen & Puukari 2013, 319.)

4 RESEARCH QUESTION AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

We are interested in knowing about the person-centred support the Monika- Multicultural Women's House provides for their clients. The research question is; how the person-centred support at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House benefits its clients? The aim of the research was to study how the clients of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House have experienced the person-centred support provided for them and how to develop the person-centred support and the services in general.

The person-centred support immigrant women receive at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House, is an essential part of their integration since immigrant women need support as they might be vulnerable and in danger of exclusion. Due to these factors, we chose to evaluate the person-centred support the Monika- Multicultural Women's House provides for immigrant women in order to benefit and empower them.

Even though the person-centred support assists people on an individual level, it is connected to the wellbeing and functionality of a community, which in our case is the Monika- Multicultural Women's House. Thus, person-centred support can be seen as a part of community development work since the operation of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House is based on communality.

> *"Community development embodies the concept that collectivities of people who share common concerns have the potential capacity to deal jointly with those concerns in ways that advance the common interest" (Guzzetta, Lusk & Stoesz 1999, cited in Cox & Pawar 2006, 99).*

Similar research subjects have been studied in Finland. Even though in these researches the target group is also immigrant women or girls, the focus is different and the results differ from our research.

Ngoye (2012) has completed her Bachelor's thesis about how services for immigrant women have supported their integration in Eastern Vantaa. Her research aimed to raise awareness about the integration process. Her research examined a similar topic but we concentrate on the support provided by the Monika- Multicultural Women's House. (Ngoye 2012.)

Smith (2011) conducted a qualitative Bachelor's thesis on "Girls' Cottage in supporting the identity and growth among girls from a Muslim background". The aim of her research was to explain the context and raise awareness of the Girls' Cottage as well as to explain the working methods used there and to indicate the importance of girl-focused work. The data was collected by using interviews and observation. The data analysis was conducted by using thematic analysis. The research highlighted different dimensions of identity and how cultures, habits and background are understood as part of the identity. (Smith 2011.)

There have been three researches previously conducted about the Monika-Multicultural Women's House. Huuhtanen (2009) studied how immigrant women became aware about the Monika- Multicultural Women's House as well as their feelings and experiences in general about the facility. The study used qualitative research methods and the data was collected by interviews. Content analysis was used to interpret the data. The results indicated that the Monika-Multicultural Women's House is a beneficial and supports the clients to integrate into the Finnish society. (Huuhtanen 2009.)

Hiltunen (2010) developed a standard of activity for the Monika- Multicultural Women's House so that the different operators nationwide can use the same example. The study was conducted using qualitative methods of research. The data collection methods were observation, theme, and email interviews. Primarily, the purpose of the research was to gain knowledge about how the

Monika- Multicultural Women's House functions and how it corresponds with the needs of the clients. The results of the research created a model that can be used in other Non-Governmental Organisations and to design integration services. (Hiltunen 2010.)

Lindström (2013) conducted an action research at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House. The research included interviews of employees, creating a research diary and a Volitional Questionnaire observation form. Lindström used cartoon like ghost Blob-figure cards to map the feelings of the clients. The aim was to study the functionality of the Blob cards as a tool in interaction and emotions in multicultural encounters. The Blob cards encouraged the clients to express their feelings in various ways and practice interaction in Finnish. (Lindström 2013.)

Säävälä (2009) has conducted a research on women immigrant's integration in Finland as part of the European Union's project "Needs for female immigrants and their integration in ageing societies" (FEMAGE), which was implemented in eight European Union countries during 2006-2007. In the research, women immigrants were given the opportunity to freely share their thoughts about their own life, values and future expectations through interviews. (Säävälä 2009, 7 & 14.)

The interviewed women in Säävälä's research had been in Finland, legally, at least for three years, were in the working age and economically active or outside of the official labour market, for example working at home or unemployed. They had moved from their countries of origin after the year 1990. The interview method used was biographic narrative method. The themes that arose from the interviews were life course, family, education and labour, social status, integration, independence and women's status, religion, health, ageing, relation to the country of residence and country of origin as well as social and political attitudes. The research provided beneficial and current information about the integration methods implemented by the other European countries participating in the study. (Säävälä 2009, 14-15.)

Even though research has been conducted concerning the Monika- Multicultural Women's House, immigrant women and the services for them, no emphasis has been put on the concept of person-centred support. It is important to study person-centred support because it should be an important part of an immigrants' integration process and it has been found to be beneficial for immigrant women. Since the amount of immigrants is increasing and multiculturalism is a common phenomenon in the 21st century, it is important to research the subjects and themes that are related to immigrants and immigration. The subjects should be studied in order to develop the immigrant work and organizations as well as to gain knowledge about the themes.

5 METHODOLOGY

In this research we used qualitative research methods. The next chapter describes the methods used in our research process.

> *"Qualitative research can clarify the social, cultural and structural contexts associated with organizational problems and dilemmas"* *(Silverman 2004, 332).*

5.1 Data collection

In qualitative research the data is usually in the form of words. When comparing to statistics, qualitative research has a tendency to be richer. (Holborn & Langley 2004, 197.) Qualitative research is case oriented which indicates that the subjects of research are studied in a holistic way. This brings an in-depth understanding about the theme of the research. Qualitative research is naturalistic which suggests that the real life context of the subject and the research setting are not manipulated. (Schreier 2012, 25-28.)

Our data was collected by interviews. Interviews take a variety of forms and have several uses. The most popular form of interview includes individual, face to face verbal interaction. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured and they can be used for different purposes, for instance, research, political opinion polling and therapeutic reasons. Interviews are used for the purpose of measurement or to understand individual and group perspectives. Interviews can be onetime events or take place on several occasions. (Fontana & Frey 2003, 62.)

> *"The purpose of the qualitative research interview…is to obtain descriptions of the lived world of the interviewees with respect to interpretations of the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale 1996, 30).*

The qualitative interviews study the everyday lived world of the interviewee, their relation to it and the main subjects in it. The interviewer interprets the gathered data. Interviewing focuses on qualitative knowledge. The interviewer should not have ready-made interpretations and assumptions but remain open towards the studied phenomena. A qualitative interview focuses on chosen themes, which makes the questions not strictly structured but partly directive. The knowledge is gained through the interpersonal interaction in the interview. The interview experience can be empowering for the interviewee who may obtain new understanding about his or her life situation. (Kvale 1996, 30-31.)

We chose to interview six women individually. Interviewing individually has many benefits; it creates a feeling of trust between the interviewee and interviewers, which builds a rapport. Furthermore, the interviewee will not be misled or influenced by the other interviewees. (Haralambos, Holborn & Heald 2004, 905.) In order to analyse the data better, we recorded the interviews so that we could go through them again and transcribe the interviews into text.

Five interviews were conducted in English and one interview in Finnish, because the interviewee lacked English language skills. She preferred to be interviewed in Finnish and it was possible since Finnish is our native language. It is important to acknowledge that one of the interviews was conducted in Finnish language. We had to translate her interview into English. We used data from her interview but did not quote her directly in the research analysis because we did not want the content of her interview answers to change due to the translation.

We have to acknowledge also the fact that three of the interviewees brought their child to the interview. However, the children were at an age where they could not understand what was discussed in the interviews. The interviewees brought their children to the interviews because it was the only way for the interviewees to participate in the interviews and we wanted to give them the possibility to bring their children along. We did not want to limit someone's possibility to participate based on whether they have small children or not.

In our thesis proposal, the idea was to interview five to eight women, but after six interviews we reached the saturation point. We reached the level where we acknowledged that there was no need to conduct more interviews. The saturation point was reached when the quality and quantity of the information gained through the interviews was suitable for our research. In qualitative research, when no new information is obtained, the researcher can be said to have reached the saturation point. The researcher decides when the saturation point is reached based on his or her subjective opinion. (Kumar 2005, 165.) The researcher should gather as much data as necessary for the study. The saturation point cannot be reached unless it is clear what the researcher seeks to discover through the data. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 63.) The researcher should not have ready theory or assumptions, but he or she should know what the aim of the research is.

Our interviews had features of a semi-structured interview method. According to Eskola and Suoranta (1998), in semi-structured interviews the questions are the same for each interviewee and the interviewees are able to answer in their own words (cited in Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 47). We chose to use a combination of both structured and semi-structured interview methods, as in our interview process we had features from both of them. We had some features of structured interviews since the form and order of the questions was the same for all of the interviewees. However, because the questions were open-ended the interviews can be defined as semi-structured (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 87).

5.1.1 Data collection process

The planning of the thesis project started in spring 2012. We faced some challenges when trying to specify our research topic. Similar research related to immigrants has been conducted and we decided to focus on the person-centred support. The plan for the thesis has changed from the original one during the process.

We asked preliminary, oral permission to conduct a research from the Monika-Multicultural Women's House. The interviewees allowed us to use the interviews in our research and they signed a permission form which was created by us. Later, we used a model contract by Diaconia University of Applied Sciences which was signed by us, the responsible teacher of our thesis work and the project manager in the Monika- Multicultural Women's House.

The interview questions were based on how the Monika- Multicultural Women's House states they support the integration of immigrant women. They offer an easily accessible environment, one-to-one information and advice sessions, various group activities and support groups for the women. The theme of the interviews was person-centred support and how it has affected the immigrant women.

The interviews were carried out from September to December 2012. Four of the interviews were conducted by Le Baron and Järvinen together. Two interviews were conducted by Le Baron individually because the interview dates had been agreed with the respondents earlier, and Järvinen was unable to participate. We made an agreement with the employees of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House that they would find the interviewees for our thesis from their client group according to our criteria, which was that the women have participated in the services and activities of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House for at least two months. We wanted the employees to assist us in finding the participants since they are more familiar with their client group.

The requirement for selecting the participants was that they had been participating in the activities and services at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House for at least two months so that they would have an insight about the services. The service users were informed about the interviews individually by the employees, and the ones who were willing to participate came for an interview. In the interviews we used a set of seven questions, which can be found in the appendix of the thesis. The first and second questions were not used in the data analysis or our research. We asked the first two questions to

make sure that the criteria for being a participant for the research are fulfilled. The concept of person-centred support was explained to the interviewees at the beginning of the interview.

The interviews were conducted in the facilities of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House. The interviews were arranged according to the interviewees' timetables. The interviews lasted from eight to 45 minutes according to how much the interviewees had to share. Some interviewees were very talkative and others went straight to the point. All the interviews were recorded with a tape recorder which was visible during the interviews. Every interviewee was informed about the recording and they gave their permission to record the interview.

In the beginning of the year 2013, Lehto joined the thesis work due to the challenges in her original thesis plan. Transcribing the interviews from the recordings was completed in the spring 2013 by the three of us. The result of transcribing was nine pages of written text. After transcribing the interviews, we analysed the results and started the writing process of our thesis. We wrote the whole thesis together.

5.1.2 Information about the interviewees

We interviewed six women who are clients of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House. The purpose of the interviews was to learn how the women have experienced the person-centred support provided by the employees at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House.

The interviewees' were aged between 21 and 62 years. The time that they have been in Finland varies from six months to 18 years. The interviewees have visited and used the services of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House from three months up to two and a half years. (Interviewees 1-6.) The age range and the time the interviewees have lived in Finland are wide since the client group at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House is diverse and we did not want to limit

anyone's participation. The client group consists of people from all age groups and different backgrounds.

The interviewees' backgrounds are diverse. The reason for coming to Finland varies between the women. Their current situations might have changed since coming to Finland. Each interviewee's family situations are different, some of them have children, some are single mothers and others do not have children. Also their educational level differs from each other, for example one of them has no education. (Interviewees 1-6.) Even though the group of interviewees is limited, it is well mixed and diverse. This presents the diversity among the service users at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House.

5.1.3 Research in a foreign language and with multicultural participants

The participants in a research group are never a homogeneous group; they differ from each other in many ways. The differences among participants themselves and between participants and the researcher include different dimensions, for example, values and attitudes, social habits, religious beliefs, ethnicity, gender, language, employment patterns and education. The cultural background of a respondent influences the way of answering to the interview questions, for instance, the level of education may affect how the participants understand and respond to the interview questions. (Oliver 2003, 91, 93 & 105.)

Recently, qualitative research is conducted more and more using interview data in a foreign-language. International migration and refugees have formed linguistic and cultural minorities in many countries. It is important to study these minorities in order to integrate them into the receptive society. In these situations, researchers have to use a foreign language while coding, categorizing and analysing the interview data and when interpreting the observations. This is why it is important to acknowledge that using a foreign language in research analysis differs from analysing interviews conducted with the researcher's native language. (Pietilä 2010, 411.) Analysing foreign-language data concerning another culture, sufficient language skills as well as

cultural knowledge are required (Hyvärinen, Nikander & Ruusuvuori 2010, 412). In addition, it is beneficial for the researcher to understand different cultures and ethnicities.

One key part of conducting research for both the researcher and the participants is language because it is the tool to provide and analyse data. The participants should have the opportunity to express their true feelings and ideas, especially when there are language differences between the researcher and the participants. There is a possibility that their ideas are better expressed with their native language. Women respondents might find being interviewed about their thoughts and attitudes unusual. Their living environment and the level of employment experiences affect how they view the interviewing. (Oliver 2003, 99 & 103.)

Many issues might be explained in more detail for a foreign researcher who is not assumed to share the same cultural knowledge with the interviewees. The difference in language between the researcher and the interviewees can be an advantage since the interviewees might start to explain and reflect on issues that normally would be ignored as self-evident when the researcher and the interviewee share the same culture. (Pietilä 2010, 415-416.) Still, there is a risk that the participants whose native language differs from that of the researcher do not fully understand all themes being discussed (Oliver 2003, 36).

Cultural differences might affect the way the interviewees see the foreign researcher and what they think about the values, opinions and ways of thinking of the researcher. Also the gender of the researcher influences the communication in multicultural interview situations. (Pietilä 2010, 416-418.) Women with a different cultural background might trust women researchers more. For example in our case, the interviewees felt comfortable answering the questions at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House since the place is designed only for women and because of the fact that we are women as well.

We had to consider that the research participants were from different ethnicities. Ethnicity is a concept related to religious habits, economic experiences and moral as well as political beliefs. Language is an important factor in ethnicity because through language the main aspects of ethnic identity are transferred. It can be considered that religious beliefs affect interview answers given by the participants because research usually involves aspects of values, attitudes and judgments. (Oliver 2003, 99-101.)

5.1.4 Possible challenges and risks in the research process

As researchers, we should aim to be as objective as possible. This implies that the researcher does not mix his or her own beliefs, attitudes or values with the research topic (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 17). We recognized the possible effects of our previous experiences, expectation and values to the process and outcome of the study throughout the research process.

When conducting a research, there is always a possibility that the researcher might be subjective with the topic which suggests that the researcher does not recognize his or her own values, beliefs and attitudes that might affect the results of the research. Objectivity is formed when the researcher recognizes his or her own subjectivity (Suoranta & Eskola 1998, 17). It is important to sustain objectivity and in our research process we aimed to leave our own attitudes and beliefs aside. It is essential to acknowledge all the facts that could influence the research process and the analysis. Being aware of the potentially influential facts promotes the validity of the research.

In a situation where a participant is taking part in an interview using a foreign language, it is possible that answering in a foreign language affects the interviewees' capability of transmitting his or her original ideas. This fact can influence the research results as well. In our case, it might have occurred that the women were not able to share or describe everything they intended to, due to the language issues. They might have had problems transmitting their expressions and descriptions since their meanings can change according to

different languages, or the expressions and descriptions might be impossible to translate. We concentrated on the possible effects of language and cultural differences between the interviewees and us, the researchers. We were aware that culture and language can affect the content of the data, the analysis and the research results. We concentrated on the information we interpreted from the data and we acknowledged that there might be factors that we had no impact on. For example we have to accept that the answer given by the interviewee might not exactly be what the interviewee intended to say.

There can be cultural and religious differences between the researcher and the respondents. Apart from these differences there might also exist educational and social class differences. This may result in difficulties in communication and the respondents may have difficulties in understanding the purpose of the research which affects their ability to answer the questions properly. The research situation might intimidate some participants. There should be no cultural or any other hierarchy between the researcher and the respondents. The researcher should respect the fact that participants have various types of world views and perspectives. (Oliver 2003, 91, 93 & 105.)

In research conducted by numerous researchers, there is a possibility that the task division has an effect on the research results. Different researchers have different points of view and ways of interpreting the data. Researchers might write the results separately which could include different ways of writing and structuring the data. In this situation, the conclusions and discussion might turn out to be incoherent and the readers might be unable to understand the text. In our case, we conducted the transcription, analysis and writing of the thesis together. We have been able to create a coherent and consistent report about the research. If we would have written the report separately, the results and the structure might have been different.

Finding good literature and references that are relevant to our research was sometimes challenging. Looking for information about a specific topic was demanding. It is important to acknowledge what is relevant for the study and

what should be ignored. However, we managed to gather relevant and suitable literature for the research.

The research process has been long and filled with different phases and decision-making. We had breaks during the process. After the breaks we had to re-orientate ourselves and go through what had been done previously. It is beneficial to have some breaks because it gives time to reflect on the research and discover new perspectives. We have been able to follow our research schedule and it has facilitated the management of the process.

5.2 Data analysis

The definition of data is what the researcher sees, hears and what is recorded or collected by the researcher. The data analysis is a process of discovering and making sense of the gathered data. It is essential in data analysis to argument the findings because it creates a structure for the data discussion. (Holliday 2007, 89.)

It is beneficial for the researchers to conduct the interviews by themselves. The researchers usually remember many details about the interviews that might not appear in the recorded and transcribed interviews, for example non-verbal communication, facial expressions and the atmosphere of the interview. These might affect the interpretations of the interviews. (Pietilä 2010, 415.)

The different stages of analysis can be seen in the figure 3. Even though the different stages are separated, in practice they follow each other and might occur partly at the same time. The process of analysis does not always follow the same order of phases but it is possible to return to earlier stages. (Hyvärinen, Nikander & Ruusuvuori 2010, 12.)
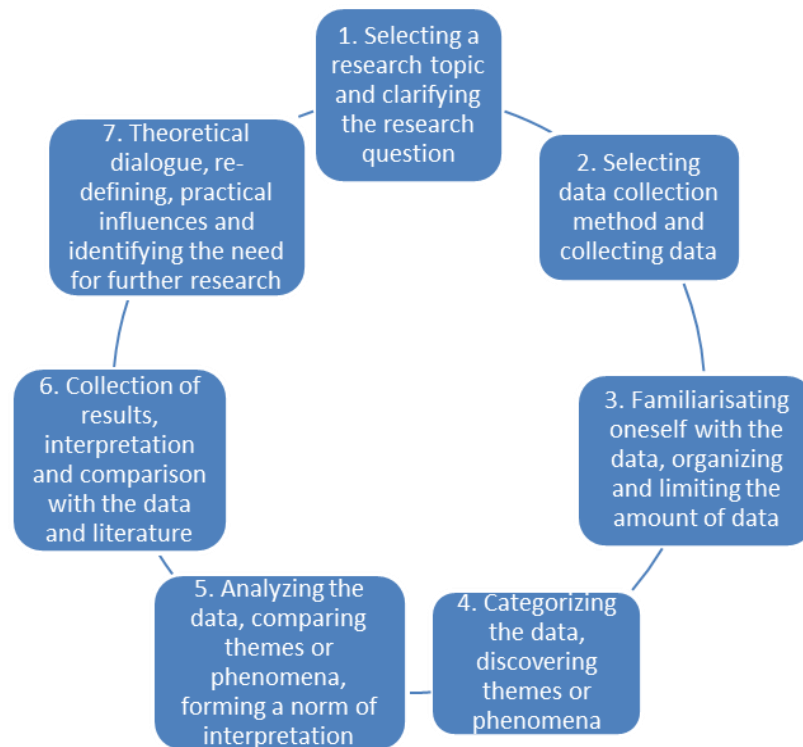
Figure 3. The seven stages of analysis (Hyvärinen, Nikander & Ruusuvuori 2010, 12).

The method we used to analyse the interviews is content analysis. Through content analysis, the researcher analyses the gathered material and tries to find common contents and themes which enable him or her to generalize the data and to answer the research question. Content analysis is reductionist, in other words, it helps to reduce the mass of data gathered into common categories within the target group. It is possible that the information emerged is not common to the entire group. In content analysis method, key themes and common characteristics are separated from the data. (Sheppard 2004, 179.)

> *"Qualitative content analysis is a method for describing the meaning of qualitative material in a systematic way. It is done by classifying material as instances of the categories of a coding frame." (Schreier 2012, 1.)*

Qualitative research is highly interpretive. It processes symbolic material that demands interpretation. Various interpretations can be formed using the same material and they are equally valid. Qualitative research concentrates on research questions that examine personal or social meanings. Qualitative research is inductive. (Schreier 2012, 21.) In our research we used an inductive analysis approach; we researched individuals' experiences and put them into general and wider perspectives. When interpreting qualitative data through qualitative content analysis, the researcher constantly produces more data. Qualitative data collection is inductive because it enables the key categories and concepts to appear from the data. It practices with open, non-directional measures. (Schreier 2012, 25.) In our data analysis, categories emerged from the interview data. We organized the data into units according to the interview questions and compared them with each other.

Qualitative content analysis is suitable when analysing data that the researcher has collected by him- or herself, for example interviews and verbal data, as well as when analysing rich data that demands interpretation. In qualitative content analysis, the researcher gives meaning to the collected data. Constructing meaning is a process of combining the researcher's perception of the data and his or her individual background, what is known about the topic, the situation where it is encountered and what feelings it raises. In qualitative content analysis, the researcher focuses on certain aspects of data which makes it easier to process large quantities of data. For example after conducting interviews, qualitative content analysis is used to describe what the interviewees have stated. (Schreier 2012, 2-4.)

In our research, we decided to use qualitative content analysis because it assists the researcher to organize and categorize the data collected from the interviews. In qualitative content analysis, it is typical to concentrate on selected aspects of data (Schreier 2012, 4). We focused on certain categories which were led from the interview questions. How the researcher chooses what data is relevant and what is used in the analysis, has to be justified. The justification can be based on the research problem, research questions or the aims of the

research. The limitation of the data has to be consistent. (Hyvärinen, Nikander & Ruusuvuori 2010, 15.)

The qualitative content analysis always follows the same order of steps (Schreier 2010, 5). There are eight steps in qualitative content analysis:

"1. Deciding on a research question

2. Selecting material

3. Building a coding frame

4. Dividing the material into units of coding

5. Trying out the coding frame

6. Evaluating and modifying the coding frame

7. Main analysis

8. Interpreting and presenting the findings" (Schreier 2012, 6).

In our research process, we followed these steps of qualitative content analysis. First we decided on a research question and chose how to collect the material and who the participants are. We chose to build a coding frame according to the interview questions and divided the data into units based on the same questions. For example, we gathered the answers for each question into groups of data. After categorizing the data into units, we conducted the main analysis of the material. The last stage was to interpret the results and present the findings in our thesis.

According to Boyatzis (1998) and Rustemeyer (1992), when using qualitative content analysis, the researcher has to be flexible with his coding frame and modify it according to the material. This makes the data valid and reliable. (Cited in Schreier 2012, 7.) A researcher should adapt his or her coding frame to fit the material collected and the categories of data should represent the concepts of the research question. The main categories of the coding frame are

the aspects on which the analysis is wished to be based. In qualitative content analysis, the research result can be presented by categories or case by case. (Schreier 2012, 7, 59 & 220.) We were flexible with the coding frame and made some modifications when needed. We present our results using categories based on the interview questions.

Research has validity when the researcher uses the process of triangulation, which means applying more than one perspective and theory to support the statements in the research (Sarajärvi & Tuomi 2003, 140). Triangulation involves analysing the data from different theoretical angles. Triangulation is most often associated with the use of multiple methods of data collection and the comparison of data. (Hammond & Wellington 2013, 145.) We have applied multiple theories concerning our research topic throughout the whole process and used triangulation as a method to support our statements and findings.

5.2.1 Data analysing process

We focused on analysing the content of the interviews and compared the interview answers with each other. We conducted a data-based analysis combined with theory. In qualitative research, validity and reliability are measured by how systematic is the analysis and how reliable is the interpretation. In systematic analysis, all the choices, limits and principles of analysis are explained and decoded step by step. To increase the reliability, the content of the data should be presented and the parts of the data where the main observations are based on should be described. The possible limitations of the data analysis should also be considered instead of concentrating only on presenting the strengths of the analysis. Validity in qualitative research indicates the suitability of the collected data and the analysis in relation to the research question. (Hyvärinen, Nikander & Ruusuvuori 2010, 27.)

Transcribing signifies transforming speech, or picture into text. Recently, it has become more common to record interview data with a recorder or a video camera. A very specific transcription is not necessary if the interest of the

interview is focused in the content of the interviews. Interviews contain more information than the words. Interviewees use non-verbal communication and expressions as well. While transcribing, the researcher constantly chooses what is relevant for the study. (Hyvärinen, Nikander & Ruusuvuori 2010, 424-427).

Transcribing is an interpretative process itself. The usual procedure is having the taped interviews transcribed into written texts. Reliability and validity of the transcribed data are important. When there is more than one transcriber for the interviews, the same methods should be applied. (Kvale 1996, 160-170.) The fact that all the three of us were present when transcribing the data makes the written text reliable since there was more than one person listening to the recorded interviews. We were able to discuss the content and meanings of the interviews together while transcribing.

In our case, the focus of the transcribing and the analysis is in the content of the interviews, not in the interaction between interviewers and interviewees or narrative descriptions. We concentrated on transcribing only what the interviewees said and did not focus on the interviewers' comments. We did not pay too much attention to the transcribing of, for example body language or time between words. The transcribing was implemented in the beginning of the year 2013.

We printed all the transcribed interviews and studied them together. We highlighted points that were relevant to our interview questions and research topic with coloured markers, to see the important points for the research question. We found common factors and themes, such as the importance of education, person-centred support and social contacts for the women, as well as some differences from the interviews, for example the level of suitability of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House for the women.

Together we gathered the common and differing data and analysed them. When analysing the data, we referred to what the interviewees stated and used straight quotations to support our findings. We quoted all the six interviews, five

of them with direct quotations. This gives our analysis validity because our assumptions are based on direct quotations given by the interviewees. We also used literature to support our results. After analysing the data and completing the research project we destroy the interview data. We delete the files including recorded data and eliminate transcribed interviews. This way we ensure the confidentiality of the participants.

6 ETHICS

In this chapter, we discuss the ethical principles and issues concerning research. We demonstrate the importance of ethics while conducting a research and the ethical factors we had to consider in our research process.

Ethical issues should always be considered while producing research that includes human beings. Ethical matters should be considered already in the early stages of a research project. Social sciences' research often includes data collection from people. Researches that involve data gathered from human beings require that the people are treated with standards and values which confirm their essential humanity. (Oliver 2003, 3, 9 & 13.)

The principles of research ethics are divided into three sections: respecting self-determination of interviewees, avoiding disadvantages, and privacy as well as confidentiality (Pehkonen & Väänänen-Formin 2011, 239). Confidentiality is an important issue in research ethics. Participants have to be respected and the confidentiality and privacy have to be taken into consideration when analysing and publishing data. (Smith 2003, 56.) We have maintained the confidentiality of our interviewees by not revealing any personal information from which the interviewees' identities could be recognized. In our research we use only the information relevant for our research and exclude the data that is not relevant for the study.

In research, confidentiality signifies that no private data which could reveal the subject will not be exposed to the public. In order to protect the participants' confidentiality it is useful to create a system of how to refer to the participants without using names or identifying features. (Kvale, 1996, 114.) We used numbers from one to six when referring to the participants in the analysis.

A researcher should consider the ethical principles, such as responsibility to discover if there exists any restrictions, or legal requirements concerning the

subjects. There might be ethical guidelines, or protocols and the researcher should make sure whether they exists or not. The research participants should be informed about every aspect of the research. Confidentiality or anonymity is promised to the participants. The researcher should not make any promises which they cannot keep. When publishing results of the research, permission has to be obtained from the people and institutions concerned. (Bell 2005, 57-58.) The permission can be an oral agreement or a written contract (Oliver 2003, 31). Our research has been approved by the Monika-Multicultural Women's House and we had permission from the interviewees to use the information gathered from the interviews in our research.

When selecting participants for the interviews, the researcher should reflect on the research's aims and the research questions, the overall research plan and the data collection methods. The researcher considers the study population, sampling methods and the potential data providers. The researcher might have the study plan completed but there is a possibility that he or she has to modify the plan because of ethical issues. In order to avoid ethical contradictions, ethical issues should be reflected on throughout the research process. When ethical issues are taken into consideration, the researcher can be sure that the research process is straightforward for the participants. The relationship between the researcher and the participant should be sensitive and take into consideration the possible concerns of the other. (Oliver 2003, 26, 27 & 31.)

It is essential to inform the interviewees thoroughly about the research project so that the interviewees can decide about their participation in the research with sufficient basis. This is called the principle of informed consent. The idea of the research project should be explained to the participants in an understandable manner. (Oliver 2003, 28.) In order to motivate the interviewees, it is important to tell them what the study is aiming for and how the research results can be beneficial in the future (Kuula 2006, 105). The interviewees should be asked permission to record the interviews (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 90). All of our interviewees gave their permission by signing a contract that allowed us to record, analyse and use the interviews for our research purposes. The

participants were clearly described the purpose and aim of the research and the interviews.

Interviewees in our study were informed that their participation is voluntary from the beginning until the end of the research. Respecting self-determination does not mean only voluntary participation in the study. An interviewee has the right to stop participating or participate in some parts of the study only, for example, by not answering all the questions. In case the interviewee refuses to answer some questions about a certain topic, the interviewer must avoid manipulative persuasion. (Pehkonen & Väänänen 2011, 241.)

Even though the interviewees participate in the research voluntarily and may withdraw from the research if they wish, there might still appear areas or themes about which people have strong emotions and which they would prefer to avoid. It should be clear that interviewees can refuse to answer a certain question or to discuss about certain topics. (Oliver 2003, 32.) However, in our research all the participants answered voluntarily to all the interview questions. It is essential for the researcher to consider what consequences the study might cause for the participants (Kvale, 1996, 111).

Even though participants might not receive any concrete benefits from being interviewed, they can gain a sense of being valued and an increase in their self-esteem. When participating in a research process and interviews, the respondents are able to clarify and formulate their thoughts and ideas. This is an important benefit for the participants. (Oliver 2003, 35.)

> *"…the research interview is not merely a one sided process, designed to help the researcher complete research exercise, but rather a process of mutual help where the interviewee achieves a certain level of fulfillment through the exercise of reason and reflection" (Oliver 2003, 56).*

Interviews tend to be recorded using a tape recorder. Recording data also raises ethical questions. Some people might feel uncomfortable or not at ease when their interviews are recorded. They might be concerned that the recordings might not remain confidential. It is important to ask for permission to record the interviews and make sure that the interviewees are aware of the recording. (Oliver 2003, 46.) Having the interviews recorded, offers the possibility to confirm the content of the interviews and not rely only on the researcher's memory and notes.

If there appear issues or concerns during the interview that need assistance, the researcher's moral responsibility is to do their best to provide assistance for the interviewee. The researcher might, for example, guide the interviewee to possible services. (Oliver 2003, 49.) For instance, in our research one of the interviewees spoke about her issues of loneliness, so after the interview we guided her to an employee at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House.

7 SUPPORTING WOMEN

In this chapter we analyse the interview results using content analysis based on our interview questions. We quote the six interviewees and refer to them with numbers from one to six (1-6).

The interviewees discovered the Monika- Multicultural Women's House through various sources. Two of the interviewees became aware of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House through a friend. (Interviewees 1-2.) Two of them became familiar about the service through women's shelters (Interviewees 4-5). The rest of the interviewees learnt about the service from the Employment and Economic Development Office and from a nurse (Interviewee 3 & 6).

> *"I am two months in Finland, I have nothing to do, I don't like sitting in the house, never do that in my life. Then she told me, okay, there is a place called MoniNaisten Talo…" (Interviewee 3.)*

There exist different forms of support. According to the interview results, the Monika- Multicultural Women's House provides multiple forms of support, such as practical support, social support, emotional support and cultural support. The clients of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House have also received peer support and instrumental support. Based on the interviews, one of the most common forms of support received at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House, is the informative support.

7.1 Person-centred support

The theory of person-centred support, discussed in the section 2.1, complements the interview results. The interviewees have received different forms of support and advice from the Monika- Multicultural Women's House. The reasons behind asking help or advice from the employees of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House varies between the interviewees. The main

reasons for asking advice were issues regarding study applications and finding employment. Other issues were dealing with bank, police and official documents. Issues related to day care services and applications to day care are among the reasons. The interviewees have also been interested in the Finnish culture and lifestyle in general and have asked questions related to them. (Interviewees 1-6.)

Some of the interviewees have accessed Finnish language courses and vocational training with the support of the employees of the Monika-Multicultural Women's House. The employees have assisted the interviewees with course applications. (Interviewees 1-5.)

> *"…they told me that there's the application going on so if you are ready let's try it, and we tried it and got it" (Interviewee 3).*

The interviewees have also received support in applying for work and some of them have been employed (Interviewees 2-3). Employment is one of the measures of integration. Nevertheless, for immigrants it is more difficult to get employment and to integrate into the society than for the main population. The possible barriers for employment are lack of language skills and knowledge about the Finnish society, as well as different educational background. (Lamppu 2001, 30-31.)

At the Monika- Multicultural Women's House, the interviewees have received general information about the life in Finland, for example about the Finnish society and the Finnish rules and regulations. It is important to know how the Finnish society functions in order to fully participate in it. This is defined as informative as well as cultural support. The most beneficial environments to gain the knowledge are educational institutions. Knowledge and education enable a person to gain more networks and relations. (Lamppu 2001, 17.)

> *"And also asking how is life in Finland… So that at least you get to know where you start and how to go about it." (Interviewee 3.)*

The support and advice provided by the Monika- Multicultural Women's House also includes guidance in using a computer and guidance in personal issues, such as relationships and for example reserving a doctor's appointment (Interviewees 4-5). The interviewees have been provided with childcare services while they have been taking care of personal matters such as visits to court houses and other offices. One interviewee stated that the employees from the Monika- Multicultural Women's House have also accompanied her to the bank, police station and other offices. (Interviewees 4-5.) Another interviewee specified that during the Finnish language classes she was provided with childcare (Interviewee 4). The examples mentioned above belong to both practical and instrumental support. At the Monika- Multicultural Women's House, instrumental support includes providing time and assistance.

> *"…they are so friendly because when I came here they used to take care of my son…" (Interviewee 2).*

All the interviewees agreed that the person-centred support is important. The majority of the interviewees stated that the support and advice given has helped them and taught them very much. Some of them said that the employees at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House have told them everything they did not know. Their opinion was that the employees have provided them with the help they have needed and answered the questions they have asked. (Interviewee 1-6.) However, one of the interviewees stated that the Monika- Multicultural Women's House is a good place, but not exactly suitable for her because of the differences in religion and cultural habits (Interviewee 6).

> *"But so many people from Africa and Arabia, so the religion is not the same" (Interviewee 6).*

One of the interviewees explained how the person-centred support was provided for her. She had reserved an appointment with an employee at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House. During the appointment they discussed her issues and she got help and advice from the employee. The employees

have also supported the clients by accompanying them to take care of errands. (Interviewee 4.)

> *"…I just came, I learnt what I wanted to, after I go…" (Interviewee 2).*

According to the results of the interviews, the existence of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House is relieving for the women. They know there is a place where to get help and support whenever they need it. This is indicated in the answers of the interviewees, when they stated that they have received help and advice for whatever concerns they have had.

> *"…for me I can say it's very good because they are helping many woman" (Interviewee 2).*

The social support provided by the Monika- Multicultural Women's House can be called social capital which is defined by Faist (2000) and Ruuskanen (2001), as the social networks between people, the norms and values connecting them and the mutual trust. These factors promote people's cooperation, use of resources and coordination of functions. (Cited in Forsander 2013, 234.)

According to the results of the interviews, the person-centred support provided by the employees at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House has benefitted the interviewees in many ways. They have received different forms of person-centred support and assistance. The support and assistance include help in accessing education and employment, advice with official documents, childcare and accompanying clients in running errands, as well as social support which decreases stress.

> *"... if I need some school I can ask them, they help me, they can find and tell me some place for me... Yes, it helped me so much because when I'm here and I don't know anything, they tell me everything and they teach me everything about my social work,*

how to fill my papers, my social papers and Kela papers, for everything they help me so much because before I don't know anything." (Interviewee 5.)

The interview results indicate that the Monika- Multicultural Women's House has helped many clients to move forward in their education, career and life in general. For example, the employees have assisted one interviewee in educational issues and she has received help when applying to schools (Interviewee 4).

"So I got the job, I got the school, those are the things I used to ask them" (Interviewee 3).

In 1992, the Finnish National Board of Education launched their first recommendation on the goals and principles of immigrant education. Education is one of the main elements in the process of integration. (Lamppu 2001, 4.) Based on the importance of education, the Monika- Multicultural Women's House encourages the clients to pursue education and provides them help to seek for it.

Person-centred planning is an effective way of supporting a person to recognize their objectives and to gain self-determination. It is essential to acknowledge that person-centred planning is a process. The individual has to be engaged in the process and supported to direct it. (Kilbane et al. 2008, 87.)

An immigrant's economic situation can improve due to migration. However, immigration can also decrease the social status or it can be lost in the process, which debilitates immigrant's experienced wellbeing. (Anis & Malin 2013, 151.) The Monika- Multicultural Women's House is beneficial especially for immigrants from developing countries because at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House they receive support in learning commonly accepted behavioural- and civil skills in the Finnish society. This way the immigrants can increase their involvement in the society and reinforce their social status.

Based on the interviews, the person-centred support provided at the Monika-Multicultural Women's House is very significant for the clients. It is possible that some of the clients lack the knowledge about different services and where to search for assistance for their issues. It is easier for the clients to search for support in the easy-accessed Monika- Multicultural Women's House rather than in the official bureaus. The person-centred support is meaningful in many aspects of the clients' lives, such as personal issues, educational and employment matters and social networking. The easy-accessed support is important also in a case where an immigrant woman has recently arrived in Finland and does not yet have a social network or knowledge about different services. In this situation it is helpful to know that there exists a place where it is possible to find assistance and guidance. The support is also valuable for immigrant women who have already lived in Finland for a while, because they might still need assistance or a place to visit and meet other people.

> "...the people here are kind, friendly, they are social, so anything you want you ask them, they help you" (Interviewee 3).

7.2 Peer support

> "…when I am in MoniNaisten Talo, during that period I just feel like I am at home" (Interviewee 3).

Peer support includes emotional and social support. Often people who share the same language and cultural background provide important support and assistance for each other. People from the same community can form a social network, which they use to improve their economic and social status, and situation. These networks are especially important for immigrants who have recently arrived in the country because they might lack qualities, for example language skills, education and work experience which are required in the labour market. (Forsander 2013, 234.) However, sometimes an immigrant prefers to seek for assistance from a Finnish employee. The issues immigrants want to

discuss might be sensitive and it could be easier to discuss them with a Finnish person, rather than with a person from the same culture (Harju-Tolppa 2004, 19).

Many of the interviewees stated that the Monika- Multicultural Women's House provides them a comfortable place to meet other women and talk with them. Before coming to the Monika- Multicultural Women's House they stayed alone at home. They said that they feel like home at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House. According to the answers, the Monika- Multicultural Women's House has decreased the loneliness of the interviewees. (Interviewees 1-6.)

> *"...if I don't feel good in my home, I come here and meet with some people here and talk with them" (Interviewee 5).*

It is important to understand the possible differences between community-centred and self-centred cultures. In community-centred cultures, it is typical to discuss issues and problems with familiar people. In Western countries, it is more common to rely on professional assistance. People from community-centred and self-centred cultures have different ways of perceiving themselves as individuals and in relation to other members of the community. In Western counties, one's own personal identity is separated from other people, while in community-centred cultures one's own identity is often defined through other members of the society. (Korhonen & Puukari 2013, 13.)

In self-centred countries, such as the European nations, an individual is valued more than the social group and is seen as independent and self-sufficient. On the contrary, the collectivist countries such as the Asian, African and South American societies are described by strong social networks and family cohesiveness. The priority in collective cultures is the group, family or tribe which forms the identity of a person. (Maude 2011, 8.) At the Monika- Multicultural Women's House, the clients meet with other women who share the same background of community-centred culture. It might be more natural for the women to discuss with each other rather than with the professionals. Still, some

of the employees at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House have multicultural backgrounds and have the skills to understand the clients' backgrounds. This is cultural sensitivity.

Many immigrants come from community-centred cultures where social networks are significant in everyday life. When there exists a lack of social networks in a new country it creates loneliness and challenges in immigrants' lives. (Harju-Tolppa 2004, 17.) The Monika- Multicultural Women's House provides a safe environment to create social networks and discuss with other women. Good and satisfying relationships and mutual support promote wellbeing and even prevent illnesses. Social support is especially vital in life's crisis because it reduces stress that affects health and wellbeing. (Anis & Malin 2013, 153.)

> "This place is good, I say it's good because it's keeping somebody busy and giving somebody courage to live, to live not always at home, giving somebody courage" (Interviewee 1).

The feeling of belonging to a community is an important factor in wellbeing. Saksela-Bergholm (2010) states that immigrant organisational activity strengthens the sense of community. According to Pehkonen (2006), social interaction and relationships with the native population help the immigrant to integrate into the new country. The interaction with the native population and the support from one's own ethnic group improve immigrants' psychological and social wellbeing. (Cited in Anis & Malin 2013, 154.)

> "…you need different people and you can talk, you can discuss, that is so good… Yes, social life." (Interviewee 2.)

7.3 Prevention of exclusion and stress

> "…I was just feeling lonely, I was living at home, I don't know friends. But when I came at MoniNaiset… I got friends, you can talk even if you have some your own problems… "(Interviewee 1.)

Many of the interviewees stated that the discussions with the employees at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House decreases their stress and it is helpful for them to have a person to discuss with (Interviewees 1-2). According to Jasinskaja-Lahti and Perhoniemi (2006), discussion and support are important because many immigrant women experience a great deal of stress, which results from the fear of racist violence, the negative atmosphere of attitudes in the society, being excluded from working life and the lack of Finnish language skills (cited in Anis & Malin 2013, 152).

Jasinskaja-Lahti and Perhoniemi (2006) state that discrimination affects health in multiple ways and the health impacts can be transformed from one generation to another, for example through material deprivation. Discrimination weakens psychological wellbeing, for example by reducing self-esteem and causing stress. Long term stress is a risk to health and to the ability to function. (Cited in Anis & Malin 2013, 152.)

> *"When you come here you chat with people and you see everybody is happy and you will be happy and you forgot a little bit what you had in your mind…stress" (Interviewee 1).*

According to the results of the interviews, the Monika- Multicultural Women's House prevents exclusion among the immigrant women by creating a feeling of belongingness and a possibility to participate. If an immigrant woman does not yet feel as part of the Finnish society, she can still feel as part of a multicultural community. The services of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House promote mental well-being since the clients feel that they are not alone and are able to share their thoughts and feelings with someone. A network that is formed by supportive relationships eases the intercultural adjustment. Rather than being large, the network should consist of both other immigrants and native population, who can support immigrants in their emotional and informational needs. (Berry 1997 & Neto 1995, cited in Bochner et al. 2001, 204.)

> *"So just I learnt a lot of such many places through this place, because I only knew MoniNaiset, I didn't know Pasila, I didn't know Kalasatama, I didn't know Family Club. I didn't know where Kenyans, they met. Those things I got from MoniNaiset."* (Interviewee 1.)

According to the results, the person-centred support and the existence of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House are crucial and extremely beneficial for immigrant women. Immigrant women tend to lack social networks which can make it difficult for them to find help when they need it (Kauppinen & Evans 2007, 10). In certain cultures, the power relations between husbands and their wives might not be equal. It could be easier for the husbands to accept their wives to visit a place where no men are present. It is more comfortable and accessible for immigrant women to take part in the activities and discussions when men are absent. The possibility of bringing the children with the women is important and beneficial. This prevents the women from staying at home. Person-centred support is important for the clients of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House and promotes the integration of the immigrant women.

> *"You know, sometimes you just sit home and don't have nothing to do and you know when you just sit home without doing nothing you start to think, think too much so stress is coming"* (Interviewee 2).

7.4 Development of the person-centred support and the services of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House

Based on the interview results, not everybody finds the Monika- Multicultural Women's House suitable or current in their actual life situation. This can be due to the fact that they do not share the same life situation with other clients and have, for example a different background, culture or religion. Clients might have a notable age difference and no common interests, for example some of them do not have small children like many of the other clients. This causes feelings of

not belonging to the client group or not having anything in common. One of the interviewees said that the class room environment in the Finnish language club is restless (Interviewee 6).

> *"It's good place, but not for me, it's not so good. Because so many mother take their children and the age of women can be different so I can't concentrate... Because we have different culture and the habit is not same." (Interviewee 6.)*

The interviewees agreed on the fact that there is not much to be developed in the person-centred support provided by the Monika- Multicultural Women's House because the help and support they need is always provided (Interviewees 1-6). However, even though it is important to guide and give advice to the clients, it is equally important to encourage and empower them to be independent in decision making and taking responsibility. It is beneficial that the clients are shown, for example, how to fill in an application instead of the professionals filling applications on the clients' behalf. Empowerment is a process where people can promote control over their lives and find methods to solve and prevent problems on their own (Harju-Tolppa 2004, 16).

> *"...and I found job for this school I was looking for me, they applied for me and I get this place there and now I am working" (Interviewee 2).*

Empowerment indicates voluntary self-assistance. People should be motivated and supported to take responsibility of their own well-being and that of other people and the environment. In empowerment, the dependency on other people is replaced with self-dependency and constructive dependency between people. Empowerment is an endless process that progresses, regresses, stops and progresses again according to individual's personal life situations. Empowerment includes respecting individual's life values. The biggest changes in empowerment are experienced on an individual level. In order to empower,

humane caring, encouragement, security and support is needed. (Heikkilä & Heikkilä 2005, 3-5.)

"…now so many things I can take care of myself" (Interviewee 5).

Even though the research participants were satisfied with the services of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House, there are possible areas that can be developed in their services. The clients could be informed more about the possibility to participate in individual person-centred support sessions. Since the service is not widely advertised, there is a possibility that all the clients do not know about the service. It could be mentioned in the weekly schedule that there is an opportunity to reserve an appointment for a person-centred support session.

There are some peer support groups at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House, but there could be more meetings and free discussion groups between the clients, because it is helpful for them to share experiences and discuss their issues with other women. In our research we discovered that the interviewees have benefitted from meeting with other women and they like to spend time with others in a similar situation which is a source of strength.

In order to integrate into the Finnish society and to develop the Finnish language skills, immigrants need contacts with the majority population and with speakers of the native language (Latomaa et al. 2013, 181). At the Monika- Multicultural Women's House, clients are in contact with the employees and other immigrant women but might lack wider contacts and social relationships with the native population of Finland. Even though the employees often speak the Finnish language to the clients, there could be more encouragement to use the language in everyday interaction and activities, such as discussion clubs in Finnish. It is relevant to learn the language as it is used to maintain social relationships, to create connections with new communities and because language shapes one's identity. The development of language skills is an individual as well as a communal process. (Latomaa et al. 2013, 182-183.)

8 CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the conclusion of the research results. Further research ideas are introduced and professional development, both collective and individual, is reflected on.

8.1 Summary of the results

Immigration is a challenging process and different factors affect an individual's ability to adapt to the new situation. For example, a highly educated immigrant from a Western country who immigrates for employment reasons might find it easier to integrate to the new society, than a refugee whose language skills and educational background do not correspond with the Western societies' employment expectations and assumptions of norms and behaviour. In addition, it is easier for highly educated immigrants to profit from the society's services and possibilities. Working life- and civil skills increase steadily within immigrants from developing countries. (Anis & Malin 2013, 142.)

One of the interviewees did not agree that the services of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House are suitable for her. The interviewee thought that there is a mixture of too many cultures and habits which makes it difficult for her to concentrate in the premises of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House. The interviewee thought that the presence of the children is disturbing for her. Even though it might be bothersome for someone to have children around at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House, in our opinion there is no need to limit the clients from bringing their children with them, because many of the clients are mothers. If the clients could not take their children with them to the Monika- Multicultural Women's House, it would be very challenging for some of them to participate in the services and activities. Multiculturalism is one of the main principles of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House and it would be against

their ideology if the client group would be limited based on family situation, ethnicity or nationality. Everyone has the equal right to take part in the services.

The experiences of the interviewees indicate that the person-centred support provided by the employees at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House has been mostly beneficial to the clients and has had a positive impact on their lives. For some of the clients, the Monika- Multicultural Women's House has been the key to integration into the Finnish society and culture. It is clear that the person-centred support is important and helpful for the clients because they receive support and advice to their issues and concerns in various ways.

"…I think they are doing enough" (Interviewee 3).

8.2 Further research ideas

After the analysis of the data is complete, the studied phenomenon opens up for new perspectives and further possible studies (Hyvärinen, Nikander & Ruusuvuori 2010, 29). In our case, the subject can be studied further for example by interviewing the clients of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House more deeply and several times. Another possible way of developing the research further would be to interview the employees of the Monika- Multicultural Women's House and study their opinions and experiences. It would also be possible to combine both the employees' and the clients' perspectives in a research project.

In order to support the further development of cooperation between the society and organisations, it is important to study immigrant organisations. It is essential to study these organizations in order to develop their services further. Society has a big role in how the immigration services function and what services are provided. It is necessary to research the influence of the society on the organizations. Immigrant organizations represent immigrant issues in the society. Different organizations try to influence in the policy- and decision

making and speak on the behalf of the immigrants, for example, by defending their rights and possibilities.

8.3 Professional development

Conducting the research and the thesis has been a multidimensional learning process. During the Bachelor's studies, we have implemented various assignments and group works together. Already before the thesis process, we were comfortable with each other and shared trust, areas of interest and the same working habits. The choice to conduct the research together was natural to make and the topic appeared from our similar interests and experiences. The thesis was the first academic research for all of us and it was beneficial to work in a group and support each other through the process. Since it was our first wider research, we learnt to use methods, strategies and analysis through practice.

It was easy to work together and to make the decisions regarding the research. Creating the research schedule was uncomplicated, but combining three individual schedules together was sometimes challenging. Despite the challenges, we managed to organise the timetable to be suitable for all of us. The timetable was appropriate for the thesis process and assisted us to proceed systematically. Our team work skills have developed significantly since we have been working together intensively during a long period of time. We have been able to share thoughts and opinions and through them form relevant reflection for the thesis. According to the degree-specific analysis of competences, a Bachelor of Social Services is able to work as an active manager in a group or team with self-initiative (Degree-specific analysis of competences).

The thesis process taught us the importance of self-initiative and determination. Finding the topic of the research and the participants for the interviews, were initiated by us. We ensured that the timetable, both ours and that of the thesis

guidelines, was followed, and that we received the support and assistance that we were entitled to, from the thesis supervisors. We were able to find literature regarding methods and apply it to our data in order to support the results. A Bachelor of Social Service should be able to apply reflective and explorative approach to work and can implement evidence-based theoretical knowledge as well as produce new information (Degree-specific analysis of competences).

We have gained knowledge about immigration and multicultural issues in the Finnish context. Through references and the results of our research, we have gained information about the topic of immigrant women and their experiences in a foreign society and culture.

The thesis process has benefitted us in multiple ways. Due to the experiences gained through the process, we are more prepared to confront the future professional challenges and to apply our knowledge in practical working environment. Even though the process has been long and we have also encountered some challenges, we are satisfied with the results and feel that the process had a successful outcome.

Professional development of Järvinen: Conducting a research about immigrant women was a new learning process for me as a whole. Previously I was not particularly familiar with all the various matters and types of research that exist. Through the process of conducting research I gained a great amount of important knowledge concerning research. I also feel that as multiculturalism and migration as a phenomenon are becoming more common, the knowledge achieved through our research will be relevant information when working in the field of social work.

The most challenging part of the process for me was time management. It demanded a great deal of organizing in order to combine thesis work, studies, work and personal life. However, the support I received from my co-researches helped me and we were always able to agree certain dates when working on our thesis. Making personal timetables assisted me in taking care of all the

compulsory duties during the thesis process. I believe that this will be a factor that will benefit me in the future professional life as well as in personal life; in my opinion good time management reduces stress.

I believe that during the research process I have been able to develop my academic skills, team work experience and gained valuable knowledge that could benefit me in a future academic life as well as when working in the social sector.

Professional development of Le Baron: For me the whole research process has been an enriching learning experience. Planning, implementing and writing the research in a group, has been an interesting journey. As a part of a group, I was able to learn and get support from the other group members through the whole thesis project.

The importance of planning a schedule for the research already in the early stages was clear for me from the beginning. After completing the research, I have really understood why scheduling is important. Especially after gathering the data, when writing the theory part, I realized it was easier to move to the next step and plan what to do next, when our timetable was clear for all. At times it was complicated to combine my personal life responsibilities and issues together with our tight schedule but fortunately I managed to cope with it all.

The most significant development area for me has been learning more about fluent academic writing, how to structure the text so that it is both academic and fluent. At times it was challenging for me to form my thoughts into fluent sentences but together with Lehto and Järvinen, we were able to accomplish that.

I have gained more self-confidence and knowledge in implementing a research. It was very beneficial for me to carry out my first research with two other people. I was able to ask for advice, opinion and discuss with them at all times. I am very pleased with the outcome of our research. I have understood that the

meaning of the thesis is not only to show what has been learnt during the studies but also to practice for future professional work. The self-confidence and knowledge I gained have empowered me and will help me in the future, when working as a professional in the field of social services and carrying out new projects.

Professional development of Lehto: The writing of the thesis has been a process filled with challenges and feelings of success. In my case, I have had to adapt to changing situations and modify my original thesis plan. The original proposal for a thesis did not succeed and I had to change the subject. Fortunately, I could join my fellow students and complete the thesis with them about a subject that is interesting for all of us.

During the process I have learnt to be flexible and open-minded since I have had to change my thesis plan and adapt to the changes. I have gained knowledge about conducting a research and it will be an advantage for me in the future professional life. One of the most important supporting factors in the thesis process has been the group work. There have been no challenges, apart from timetable, in conducting the research and writing the thesis in a group of three people. It has been a great assistance for me to work together and the cooperation was extremely pleasant and useful. Learning about individual as well as group work benefitted me greatly.

There have been challenges during the thesis process. Sometimes there have been moments with lack of motivation or times when it was not clear what needed to be done next. By being organized and by following the schedule, I could overcome these challenges. Luckily, there has been a great amount of time to conduct each stage of the research and the schedule was planned carefully.

After the thesis process, I think that I am more capable of planning and conducting a research. I am more confident about my opinions and findings as well as more competent to recognize possible challenges. The thesis process

has been an essential experience when reflecting on my educational path and I have also learnt about my own personality as well as about my habits of learning and conducting a research. I have gained a lot of knowledge by conducting the thesis, and the thesis process, as well as my studies, will form the basis of my future professional life and development.

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APPENDIX

The interview questions:

1. Where are you from? How long have you been in Finland?

2. How old are you?

3. How did you find out about the Monika- Multicultural Women's House? How long have you been coming to the Monika- Multicultural Women's House?

4. What kind of advice or support have you got from the Monika- Multicultural Women's House?

5. For what kind of issues or questions have you asked advice from the Monika- Multicultural Women's House workers?

6. Did the advice or support you got from the Monika- Multicultural Women's House help you? How was the support provided?

7. In your opinion, is there something missing in the person-centred support provided at the Monika- Multicultural Women's House? What could be developed?