

**STRENGTHS AND COPING OF IRAQI KURDISH  
WOMEN IN PIRKANMAA, FINLAND**

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## ABSTRACT

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The aim of the research was to gain knowledge about the Iraqi Kurdish women, their coping methods and significant strength giving factors in their life. The research question was set as: what is a source of strength of the Iraqi Kurdish woman, and what are the supportive matters in coping?

The methodology of the research is qualitative and ethnographical. The material of the research was previous researches and literature. Data is collected by carrying out semi-structured and thematic interviews regarding topics presented in the picture of Conceptual Frame of the Study. Five middle-aged Iraqi Kurdish women, who have lived from 16 to 23 years in Finland, were interviewed. Due to small amount of the interviewees the study is not generalizing that all Kurdish women view the themes and the life similarly. The interviews are analysed by the ethnographical content analysis. The quantitative data is used as a basic information in order to find out the number of the Kurds living in Finland, and especially the number of the Kurdish women living in Pirkanmaa.

According to the research findings the Iraqi Kurdish women are great survivors whose strengths are built in their background, in their identity starting from the childhood and by father's encouraging influence. The family structure is strong and especially the children are the main strength giving factor for mothers. In order to cope and survive in the new culture the most significant point was to learn the language. Language is the key for learning the new culture, to have more skills and education in the new country and finally to have a job. Also, the Kurdish community and friends have their supportive roles in coping.

It can be seen in Finland that the focus is mainly in weaknesses and challenges while the discussion is about immigrant issues, especially about the refugees and asylum seekers. In the future practices the focus should be more on discovering and supporting the strengths of a person. All starts from the attitudes. In practice this means openness, sensitiveness and trust on people and their capacities. The social work practices should support individual's self-esteem, find ways to guide a person to be and to exist as an equal participant and influential person and to have control of his/her own life.

The information of the research is beneficial for social workers, other service providers and for public correspondingly while meeting with the Kurdish women and the Kurdish community in Finland. The knowledge always reduces tensions between the actors.

Key words are the Iraqi Kurdish women, strengths, coping, empowerment, minority status, qualitative research and ethnography.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The target group of my thesis is the Iraqi Kurdish women living in Pirkanmaa. The study would give me personally more knowledge about the Iraqi Kurdish women, their thinking and their culture. This is not only a research of something so long as I have done my thesis. The topic is related to my interests and has an aspect on professionalism builder. Furthermore, the study is providing knowledge for social workers and employment services in order to understand deeper potentials and cultures which are strong builders of multiculturalism in Finland. I wish my thesis could release the mind of reader to open his/her heart for these people as equal participants of the Finnish society.

The previous research materials brought out the feature that the research based on strengths is not very common. The main focus has been on challenges. It is stated for example in the research of psychology that the topic of strengths of a person is quite new research area and so far the concentration has been on negative sides of development and functioning of an individual (Aspinwall & Staudinger 2006, 232). That discovery strengthened my enthusiasm to go forward with this topic.

I have noticed that the Kurdish women seem to step forward despite of their difficulties. Through my long experience among the immigrants and refugees I have taken note that the Kurds take well their place in our society. This is one reason which supports the interest to study as a research question their strengths and coping in a new country as Finland. Where their strength is welling from?

The concentration of the study is the life situation of the Kurdish woman at the moment. Although, their escape stories when coming to Finland were not collected, every woman has her own story, own narrative with its effects. In my thesis the perspective is the Iraqi Kurdish woman's perspective. In order to have a good start I discussed first with one Iraqi Kurdish woman, weather she had a suggestion about important topics. She did not have. Additionally, I asked

about the Kurdish community and association, because I had heard that they have been very active and organized. She shared with me that there is a change nowadays with the association. Nobody has time and resources for it so much anymore. Hence, I decided not to concentrate on the community topic.

Firstly, I introduce the research question and theories related to strengths and coping, and the background of conceptual frame of the study. I concentrated on the themes that could be possible elements and serve as a source of strength and support in coping.

Secondly, I guide reader to attain a short description of the background and history of the Kurds. Besides, I introduce roughly knowledge about Kurdish family life and their traditions. Also, basic information about the Kurds in Finland and number of the Kurds in Finland, and in Pirkanmaa is offered.

Thirdly, I state the methodology I have used in the thesis. This chapter includes also the material gathering practice, method of analysis, how the process was realized in the practice and research ethics. This leads to the next part where I open up the interviews and research findings theme by theme in chapters of 5 and 6. The quoted parts from the interviews made the message concrete, alive and spirited.

In the chapter of the reflection I bring up the discussion between the theories, the themes, the interviews, and my experiences and observations. The conclusion chapter disclose the findings shortly. Finally, in the last chapter I ponder the social work practices related to the immigrants in Finland.

I recommend for social workers and other service providers this research to be read. Moreover, it is good basic information for all readers about the Kurds in Finland and especially about the Iraqi Kurdish women. The subject of strengths and coping touches all individuals. There is a need for discovering the strengths in order to live the life to the full and cope and make the dreams to happen.

## 2 THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY

In this chapter the aim of the study and the research question are introduced. Furthermore, it conducts us to the concepts of strengths and coping and also, to the wider themes which have been the guiding elements and theory for this research.

The goal of the study was to gain knowledge about the Iraqi Kurdish women living in Pirkanmaa. Even though, I concentrated to the life here and now, and I did not collect the life narratives of escape, I do not deny that displacement have a deep physical and psychological meaning in the lives of the Iraqi Kurdish women I interviewed. The discussions in the previous researches directed to the research question of strengths and coping, where the cultural features of the Kurds may occur. The research question was set as: what is the source of strength of the Iraqi Kurdish woman, and what are the supportive matters in coping? The supportive questions were; where their strength is welling from; and what has given them strength during the years in a new culture and country? The Kurdish women seem to manage well despite of their traumatic background. Likewise, Minttu Rätty commented that the Kurds have always lived as minorities in their home countries and therefore, used to fight for their rights. It has also remarked that the Kurds living in their new home countries work in the associations and cooperation more actively than other minority groups (Rätty 2002, 101.) In order to cope, they need to have supportive strengths which are empowering them.

Every person has strengths, without always noticing them. For this reason he/she might not feel empowered and might not have encourage to live full life and have enthusiasm of life. Strengths, resilience, coping and empowerment of a person seem to collaborate. Aspinwall and Staudinger pointed out that not all the strengths a person has are conscious. Moreover, not all a person does is intentional. It is a probability that the development of a person has created structures of strength. Also, it is assumed that development and appearance of



strengths has a connection with relationships. (Aspinwall & Staudinger 2006, 26 - 27.)

The article of Halcón (2007) described strengths as the coping resources. Likewise, it discusses that every person has resilience and capability to cope through their coping resources. (Halcón, Robertson, Monsen & Claypatch 2007, 187.)

...emphasizing that all people, regardless of their life experiences or psychological diagnoses, innately have internal coping resources to help them live a happier life (Halcón, Robertson, Monsen, & Claypatch 2007, 187).

According to National Network for Family Resiliency (1995), resiliency has meaning of the ability to normalize life back after the crisis and stress situation. It presents itself in individuals as creativity, optimism and strength. Saleebey (1997) described resilience:

Resilience is the continuing growth and articulation of capacities, knowledge, insight, and virtues derived through meeting the demands and challenges of one's world, however chastening (Saleebey 1997, 9).

In this research the concept of coping is not applied as the physical concept as surviving or coping with sicknesses, either it has not a negative aspect. Snyder shared that the life experiences infuse thinking, behaving and emotions of the individuals. We learn and grow from the happenings which start our coping responses, with the consequence that the coping has the important core meaning in human change process. The coping is not only elementary for survival. In addition, it is related to the quality and it has as a result positive meaning in our lives. We use coping in our daily life without noticing it. (Snyder 1999, 5.)

## 2.1 Themes of strengths and coping

The mind map of coping served as the guiding tool for the interviews and generated the conceptual frame of the study. I draw out the themes which I assumed to be the sources of coping and building materials of strengths for the Iraqi Kurdish women. Two doctoral researches about the refugees in Finland, written by Tiilikainen (2003) and Pentikäinen (2005), instructed me to the process of the basic prospect. Although, these studies are not about the Kurds, and they exist lot of escape narratives, nevertheless they open up the life and the thinking of the refugees living in Finland. Also, the book of Saleebey (1997) about strengths have influenced on the development of the themes.

Saleebey (1997) declared that nearly whatever can be as strength under the certain condition. This declaration includes features which people have learned about themselves, others and their world while they have been struggling and coped. Furthermore, strength is the knowledge about the surrounding world, which has been gained through the education and the life experiences. (Saleebey 1997, 50 - 51.) It is also known that after facing difficult and threatening events, and coping in those situations supports growth of a person (Aspinwall & Staudinger 2006, 28).

As strength can be named characters, potentials and features that people possess such as patience, spirituality, freedom, creativeness and sense of humour. In addition, the talents such as writing, storytelling and playing an instrument can be strength. The personal and cultural narratives and tradition are described as the remarkable source of strength, comfort, assistance, solidity, and change, although there significance might be undervalued. Moreover, every person has a pride which gives strength in difficult circumstances. The surrounding community is full of resources and can be a source of strength for an individual. (Saleebey 1997, 51 - 52.)

The researches show that moving to a new country is situated to the highest stress level of an individual, although every person has the personal resources

built up in the past from their way of noticing problems and solving them, and from their personality features and biological gene. There is lot of evidence that moving is frequently connected with the depression. Opposite to this it has shown also, that moving may have positive impact for a person. In any case the immigrants go through a culture shock and an integration process in a new country. From the cognitive perspective the immigrant is in the process of comparing the new and old culture. It is also possible not feeling identified to the new neither the old culture. (Schubert 2007, 179-185.)

While Tiilikainen described the life of the Somali women living in the diaspora, there came out the meaning of the home for the woman and its relation to the identity. The home is a space with everyday life going on and includes the domestic work, the daily routines. The identity of a woman is in a near relationship with the home also in diaspora situation. The experience of being at home brings also the continuity of the identity. (Tiilikainen 2003, 64.) Erikson (1982) defined the identity as a holistic understanding of a person about his/her own physical, psychological and social features, which are realised in a relation to the self and the social surrounding. One part of the identity is formed from in-born features such as the gender and the age. The other part is based on choices made by a person (for example the profession). The identity is a dynamic matter and changes and develops the whole life of a person. (Cited in Schubert 2007, 52.)

Furthermore, the religion may support the ethnic identity or it may build the religious identity without relation to the ethnicity. In the home country the religion many times have been self-explanatory, but in the new country its meaning needs to be thought over again. The experiences of sicknesses and their symptoms have a strong role in the life of the Somali women. These are not describing physical imbalance only, moreover, these include the cultural, religious and social relationships and meanings. (Tiilikainen 2003, 65 - 71.) It has proved that the religion can support in coping in the situations where a person has faced traumatic events of life. The religion may give strength and assist on situating the events to be a part of the own life narrative. (Schubert 2007, 137 - 138.)

People have need for to be the member of the community which provides also dignity and respect. The home and religion with its rituals may bring the security and feeling of continuity when all the surrounding substances have changed. While looking from this perspective we may understand why the Somali women eagerly stay at home and are not always actively participating to the society. Also this makes it more understandable why occasionally the religion achieves bigger role in the lives of immigrants than it had in their home countries. They gain the feeling of being on home ground.

The festivals such as birthday parties, baby is born parties, weddings and religious celebrations are important for the women and collect the community together. Clothes, discussions, relaxing and dancing are the important features in the festivals. The Somalis have noticed a change in the family relationships while living in the diaspora. At the same time they could not create good and trusted connections with the Finns. The change in relationships has united the Somali women more together, which is giving them strength and guidance for the future. (Tiilikainen 2003, 151 - 153, 196.) An essential feature of life is that people live in human relation network their whole life until the end. Among the strengths significant matter is that the person has the skills for create and maintain the relationships with others. In these contacts they meet the positive emotions of love, happiness and satisfaction, which are supporting the coping while facing the challenges of life. (Aspinwall & Staudinger 2006, 48 - 49.)

With these elements in the life of the Somali women surface the meaning of the community and belonging. Saleebey (1997) mentioned that the strengths are practically described as knowledge, resources, skills and capacities which a person owns already. The strengths are flexible and renewable means, which have a connection with the belonging and community. Without the belonging there is a risk for the oppression and marginalization. The membership is entitled to the dignity, duties and respect brought up by the belonging to the certain group or community. (Saleebey 1997, 4, 9.)

The research of Pentikäinen (2005) is connected to integration or topics related to the Vietnamese and Somalis in Finland; their flight, displacement, culture and integration into Finnish society. The confusion in the identity, emotions of diversity and changes in the identity are described. Often the refugees identified themselves as the refugees and foreigners, although concurrently they construct their identity as a Finn. The culture, religion and festivities with the rituals remained the essential features of the life. Additionally, learning the new language is a significant matter. It is a key in order to reach work place. Many of the interviewed were suffering from lack of jobs and felt that they were marginalized without work. Work had a positive meaning and unemployment caused problems also in the economy of the families. Likewise, the women showed their interest to study and have work. (Pentikäinen 2005, 169-172, 175, 201, 204.)

In Somalia and Vietnam they did not have hobbies outside the home as in Finland. The families and relatives spent time together in the evenings. In Finland they have started associations where they can spend their leisure time now. Furthermore, they were praising the Finnish service systems such as education and day-care system, and health care. Social, psychosocial and mental health care systems were new for them. (Pentikäinen 2005, 231 - 234, 237.)

In the research about the Somalis and Vietnamese is noticed that the language skills and work in a new country were strengths and supporting coping. The new culture and society system produce lot of stress for the immigrant. Resilience has a core meaning as supportive matter. Every person has the need for decreasing the stress and to go forward in the life. According to Snyder the definition of coping has many different variations. One definition contains previous opinions that

coping is a response aimed at diminishing the physical, emotional and psychological burden that is linked to stressful life events and daily hassles. Therefore by this definition coping strategies are those responses that are effective in reducing an undesirable "load" (psychological burden). The effectiveness of the coping strategy rests on its ability to reduce immediate distress as well as to contribute to

more long-term outcomes such as psychological well-being or disease status. (Snyder 1999, 5, 6.)

It can be claimed that we are forced to cope. While the concept of coping has the aim to diminish the psychological and physical load, both problem- and emotion focused coping probably have a role in the response. (Snyder 1999, 6.)

In order to understand the concept of the community, it is needed to be clarified without going deeply to the larger description. One definition is that it is understood geographically as the surrounding area, the neighbourhood. It can be also described as the unique group which has the same ethnic history (as the Kurds) or social status (for example the homeless people). (Seabury, Seabyry & Garvin 2011, 499.) Oxford Dictionaries (2013) explain it as the people of the region or state measured communally, especially in the context of responsibilities and social values.

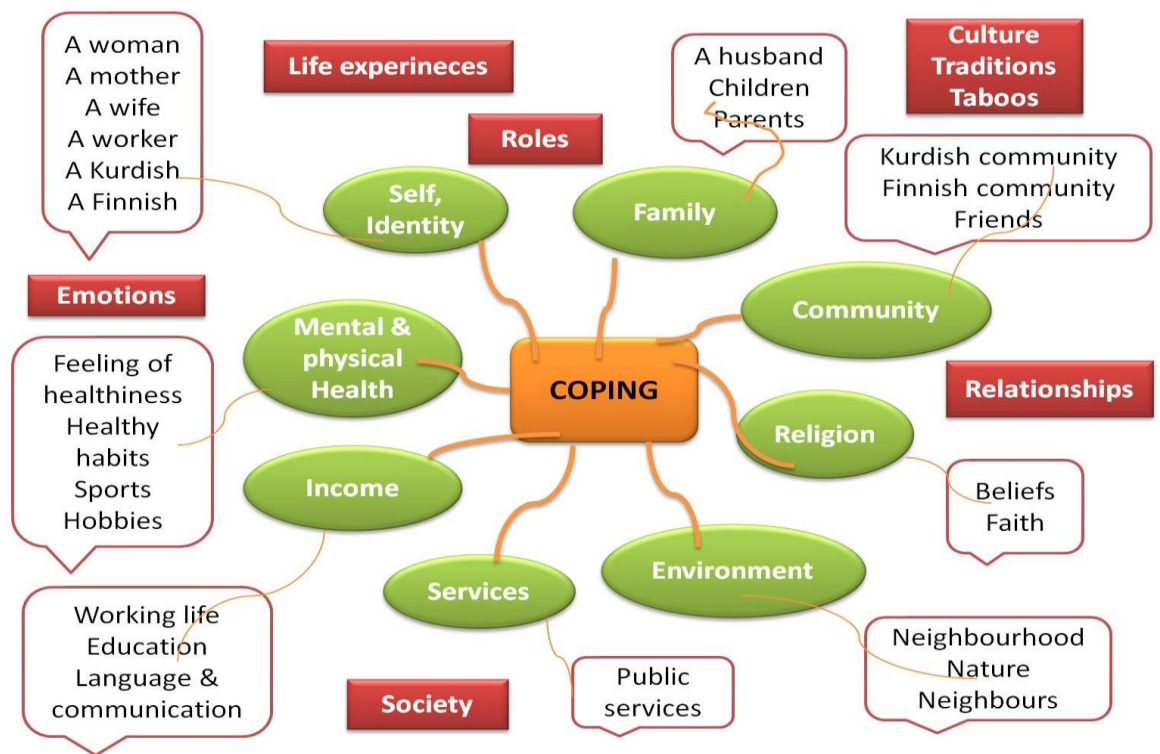
## 2.2 Conceptual Frame of the Study

I created the mind map of the themes following all the time the thinkable features which might answer the research question. A role of a woman in diaspora showed me the way to contain to the mind map the theme of the self and identity. This theme includes the roles of a woman, a mother, a wife and an identity. The interesting matter to know was, if the Iraqi Kurdish women feel their identity as Kurdish or Finns after living several years in Finland. With this theme in conjunction is the personality and attitudes. The resilience of an individual is seen in the self and identity, and what kind of inner capacity a person has in order to cope in crisis or in new situations. Motherhood cannot be cut out from the family and children and therefore, the theme of the family was initiated. The family contains the husband and children and also the parents of the interviewees. It means that the possible meaning of the childhood as strength exists. Also, if the educational background of the interviewees and educating especially them as daughters had an essential meaning as strength giver in their childhood.

The religion had a strong meaning for the Somalis and therefore I added the religion as a potential strength for the Kurds to be studied. The cultural celebrations and friendship with the own cultural community rose up with the both groups, the Somalis and Vietnamese. The theme of the community and friends was created in order to know, if they have supported the coping. The definition of the community brought out the theme of the environment and neighbours.

The feeling of healthiness, hobbies and public services were also discussed in previous studies. Therefore the theme of mental and physical health as well sports and other hobbies were included. The public services with the social services, the health care, the schools and the employment services are all in one essential theme to know as a supportive matter. The language studies and achieving the work life have their impact as the matters of integration or inclusion. These features are set under the theme of income which includes also the significations of education for an Iraqi Kurdish woman in her home country and in Finland.

Finally, eight themes were concluded to be situated to the Picture 1, which is named as Conceptual Frame of the Study. Coping is set as a main query in the middle. The green ovals describe the strengths and coping resources which can be the strength giving base elements in a person's life. These elements, which served as themes in the interviews also, are the Self and Identity, Family, Community, Religion, Mental and Physical Health, Income, and Environment and Services. In the balloons are written details which are included in each element. In the Picture 1 outermost are situated wider influential effects in a person's life such as culture, taboos, traditions, life experiences, roles, emotions, relationships and society. Appearance of new themes is expected to see as significant topics.



PICTURE 1. CONCEPTUAL FRAME OF THE STUDY



### 3 BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE KURDS

In order to understand wider the studied group, there is a need to know the elementary information about the Kurds and Kurdistan, their history and basic statistics about the Kurds living in Finland.

The collection of their background focuses on the Iraqi Kurds and to the area called Kurdistan located in the northern Iraq. The history of the Kurds is very wide and reaches to the several surrounding regions of Iraq.

#### 3.1 Background of the Kurds

It has been said that the Kurds are the largest ethnic group without their own state in the world. The Kurds cannot be defined by the linguistic or ethnological criteria. There are numerous Kurdish dialects and no single religion binds them. Furthermore, they are living in several countries. The Kurdish identity is not homogenous. Some of them build their identity by tribal, religious and national elements, while some of them believe fervently in the existence of the pan-Kurdish nation. (Yildiz 2004, 1, 9.)

The Kurds have a long history of battle of their rights and existence. They have faced human rights violations, the annihilation of their innate regions, military attacks and economic embargoes during the past century. The Kurds have been the object for the sustained oppression and violence committed by Iraqi regimes, and moreover, in other countries as Turkey, Syria, Iran and former Soviet Union. (Yildiz 2004, 1 - 2.)

Kurds have been the victims of village destructions, and evacuations, killings, torture, rape in custody, arbitrary detentions, censorship and other human rights violations. On several occasions, governments – the outlooks of which are otherwise opposed – have sought to collaborate in their efforts to suppress the Kurds. (Yildiz 2004, 2.)

The Kurds are inborn occupants of their land which have a long clan history with over 800 tribes living in Kurdistan. The name 'Kurdistan' was given by the Turkish Seljuk prince Saandjar in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and it means 'the land of the Kurds'. Geographically the region is located in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Kurdistan reflects more than geographical area, it embodies the old culture of the area. Turkey and Syria have denied Kurdistan being in their countries while Iraq and Iran have not had the willingness to talk about the topic. (Yildiz 2004, 7 - 8.)

The main language of the Kurds is 'Kurmanji'. The second main language is 'Sorani' which is spoken among the Iraqi and Iranian Kurds living in Kurdistan, in Iraq. In addition, they speak many various dialects. The main religion among the Kurds is Islam. They were compelled to be Muslims between 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries by Ottomans, but there are a number of diverse religions among them, e.g. Christians, Alevis and Yazidis. (Yildiz 2004, 8.)

Supposedly, there are 4 million Kurds in Iraq, 15 million in Turkey, 7 million in Iran, over 1 million in Syria, 200,000 in Azerbaijan and 75,000 in Armenia (2004). It has been said that there are no official numbers of the population of the Kurds due to Iraq, Syria, Iran and Turkey which try to prevent the Kurds from flattering politically influential. (Yildiz 2004, 9.)

### 3.2 Some historical turning points

Already from the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Persian and Ottoman Empires had permitted Kurdish self-government. With the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and the end of the First World War appeared the first occasion for the Kurds to found an independent state. In 1922 the British brought Sheikh Mahmud back to Kurdistan having a hope that he would resist Turkish aggressions on the area. Sheikh Mahmud established the Kingdom of Kurdistan and declared himself King of Kurdistan. This period lasted roughly two years until continuation of British occupation in Sulaimaniya. Finally, Sheikh Mahmud was arrested more than 20

years until his death 1956 due to the several happenings and reasons. (Yildiz 2004, 10 - 14.)

Iraq reached its independence from Britain in 1932. Its membership in the League of Nations demanded Iraq to protect the political and civil rights of the Kurds, and rights of the Kurds as a minority group. (Yildiz 2004, 14.) Anyhow, it was not realized in reality as Yildiz describes:

Subsequent history, however, is one of conflict, betrayal and dashed promises. Each of the regime changes punctuating Iraqi governance over the course of the past eight decades has had a significant and violent effect on the fate of both the Kurds and much of the rest of the Iraqi population. (Yildiz 2004, 14.)

The most significant Kurdish political leader has been Mullah Mustafa Barzani. He was a charismatic and an influential person, who started his political carrier already in 1940s. For some years he had to spend in exile in Iran. The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) was established in 1945 having Barzani as the president. (Yildiz 2004, 14 - 15.)

During the years the Iraqi government carried out several bombing operations in Kurdistan. The Ba'ath party started its time of possession in Iraq in 1963, and thousands of Iraqis were killed. The Kurds were dreaming to have their autonomy, but their discussions about the topic with the Ba'ath regime ended to crushing of the Kurds by the military forces and started the 'Arabisation' process of the Kurds continuing until 2003. In 1975 the Iraqi army formed a security zone in the border areas between the Kurdish region and Syria, Iran and Turkey. This resulted in the situation where roughly 1,500 villages were destroyed and occupied by the Arabs. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of the Kurds were resettled to the Arab provinces. Barzani was beaten and his leadership was given to his son Massoud Barzani. Also in 1975 was established the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) which was led by Jalal Talabani. (Yildiz 2004, 17, 23 - 24.)

The world-wide known shattering incidents happened in Kurdistan in 1988. They were called the Anfal Campaigns. 'Anfal' is a word from Koran and means 'spoils of holy war'. These campaigns were against the Kurds, where also was used the chemical weapons against both the civilian and military targets. Roughly 3,000 villages were destroyed and 1.5 million civilians were displaced and faced the mass execution. The estimated result of the Anfal Campaigns was that 180,000 people got killed. (Yildiz 2004, 25.)

Due to these several political reasons, insecurity and human rights violations against the Kurds, number of the Kurds have left their home countries and asked the asylum from other countries all over the world during the years.

### 3.3 Family and traditions

Saarinen discussed in her article about the Kurdish family culture and traditions. She shared that the Kurdish culture is not individualistic, but a communal culture. This means that the common gain is before the individual benefit. Although, over time there have occurred changes in the culture while people have moved to cities from the landscape. Traditional way of rearing children has been a responsibility of a village community. Now the change has influenced that the children do not learn the cultural values as before. (Saarinen)

The values of family have an essential sense for the Kurds. Normally the families have many members also, because many generations live together and their relationships are very close. Moreover, they keep the contact to the relatives who live farer by the internet and phones. The Kurds may decide whom they want to marry, if their families agree on it. The husband is the head of the family. (Saarinen)

In the Kurdish culture an important value is to respect older people and to be hospitable. The Kurds enjoy of being hospitable and being together celebrating their traditional festivals. Decent behaviour is a basic feature, and the women

dress themselves respectably. Normally they do not use the head scarves. Everyone needs to protect the honour of the family. (Saarinen)

The Kurdish women have participated actively to the working life in their home country. Zaki in her thesis refers to the Iraqi Iran war in 1980-1988, when the battles were fought in Kurdistan. Numerous Kurds (fathers and relatives) died and mothers carried their responsibilities to keep their children alive. Although many mothers were sick and tired or even physically disabled, they were working as cleaners, seamstresses and washerwomen. (Zaki 2006, 9.)

### 3.4 The Kurds in Finland

The Kurds have arrived to Finland as refugees and asylum seekers. Zaki reminded that the Kurds did not come to Finland in order to have work, but to have a safe environment to live with their families (Zaki 2006, 19).

#### 3.4.1 Displacement, minority status, integration and inclusion

Definition for a refugee is found in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees:

As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (UNHCR)

Definition of an asylum seeker is according to Refugee Council:

An asylum seeker is a person who is seeking protection as a refugee and is still waiting to have his/her claim assessed (Refugee Council).

Displacement causes lot of distress for a person. Many refugees have faced very traumatic incidents, which have psychological, spiritual and mental effects on them. (Malkki 2012, 103.)

Malkki articulates that the displacement has been described often as roots of the tree. It has quite a deep meaning of home country and on one's own ground deep-rooted tree as a picture of a big genealogical tree. While we think about the refugees and their up rootedness and transplantation to the new country, it happens with confusion and in the mind of original population is a picture of cut and hanging roots which cannot grow again. This causes a fear in the population of the receiving country. People start to talk about the refugees as a general concept and as a problem which needs to be solved. Again there is risen up a new process which is the exclusion of refugees. (Malkki 2012, 31, 39 - 41.) As an excluded refugee there certainly exist feelings of an outsider of the society and a strengthening consciousness of owning a minority status. The numerous studies convince that influences of ostracism are hurting and distressing for an individual (Butera & Levine eds. 2012, 107 - 108).

If the society refuses the contacts with the immigrants and the immigrants do not get adequate language teaching, and their possibilities to have a job are poor, they start to feel outsiders (Räty 2002, 126). Therefore, an assumption is that surrounding community and society has the impact for the integration and might make a conflict with coping.

When society's actions communicate to individuals or groups that they are psychologically invisible and inaudible to larger society, they become socially ostracized. By being marginalized in this way, they have no measurable impact on their society. They are not recognized, nor do they have voice. These effects translate into losing four fundamental needs: belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence. These basic needs nurture human survival, maintain motivation, and promote health and success. (Butera & Levine eds. 2012, 104.)

Furthermore, it is expressed the fact that many Kurds have a wounded identity and traumatic incidents in their past which might slower their learning process in

a new work place. Therefore the employers should know that the refugees might need longer time support, supervision and to gain the knowledge especially in the first work place than other workers. After experiences of the new working manners and language skills are achieved, they will be good and independent workmates. (Zaki 2006, 19.)

An essential feature is, how our society, integration policy and Finnish population include the immigrants to our society, or are they excluded. Important matters for the immigrant integration and readjustment are, how the immigrants see themselves in the community, how much they want to assimilate to the new culture and what are their needs and possibilities to hold onto own cultural values and traditions. An immigrant needs the information about the Finnish culture and language in order to be a full member of the society. After this it is thinkable for him/her to weight, how much to keep their own culture and how much to be a Finn. The relationship between the old and new culture changes depending on the life situations and during the periods. In some occasions maintaining the own traditions brings the feeling of security, and in some occasions there is a need for a change in order to succeed in a new life condition. (Räty 2002, 124 - 127.)

#### 3.4.2 Number of the Kurds in Finland

The statistics demonstrate that there were total 8623 people speaking Kurdish in Finland in 2011 (Appendix 1). The number includes all the Kurds coming from different countries (Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq). The exact number of Iraqi Kurds was not available. In Pirkanmaa Kurdish speaking population was 596. The statistics point out that there were 216 Kurdish speaking women in Pirkanmaa in 2011 (Appendix 2). (Tilastokeskus)

In the beginning of the study I expressed that the Kurds seemed to find their place in a new society better than other immigrant populations. While reading the article about the foreign nationalities working in Finland, there occurs a conflict with my statement, if we assume that the employment or unemployment

rates are the only features that indicate the coping or inclusion. In 2008 the employment rate of the whole population was 44,6 %, unemployed 4.4 %, students and 24.4 % and others (such as pensioners and conscripts) were 26.6, %.The biggest rate of unemployed in Finland was 21.9 % and this was among the Iraqis, while the lowest rate of unemployment was only 4 % among the Kenyans. The unemployment rate among the Finns was 8.7 % and totally in Finland it was 8.9 %. In the business worked 18.2 % from the Iraqis while the rate among the Finns was 10.1 %. Important to mention is that in the statistics in Appendix 3, the Iraqis include all the ethnic groups from Iraq and the Kurds are only a part of it. (Tilastokeskus)



## 4 METHODOLOGY

The research methodology I have used is qualitative and ethnographical. In this kind of research I have processed my experiences, meanings of different life aspects and explored the values of my interviewees (D´Cruz & Jones 2006, 60). The central research methods in qualitative research are interviews and transcribing, observations and text analysis which have been used in this study also (Metsämuuronen 2006, 88).

### 4.1 Ethnography

The ethnographical aspect and methodology in my thesis work deepened my subject. Usually, ethnography as a critical theoretical action is a long lasting process. While doing the ethnographical study, there is the need for critical awareness in order to notice the matters which are not easy to grasp. Social relationships, life, happenings and routings passes after each other, sometimes followed by boring periods without any special events. (Malkki 2012, 196.)

Generally, as a researcher realizing ethnographical study his/her whole body with all the senses and emotions are involved. Moreover, the intuitions might be in use. All that denoted that also me, as an ethnographic and a researcher, I had my impact on the study; my age, gender and social personality, social class, and background of origin and nationality, my subjectivity and past life had an effect to the whole process. The ethnographical research has a starting point in improvisation which produces also a great responsibility on ethnographic shoulders. This means that there must be creativity, imagination, flexibility, intellectual openness, and furthermore, previous experiences and the knowledge. (Malkki 2012, 196, 199, 202.) Hence, the qualitative research with the ethnographic observations offered wider perspective to the life of the Iraqi Kurdish woman in Finland.

The essential feature to notice in the ethnographical aspect is the relationship between the self of the researcher and the target group. As Amanda Coffey has explained:

What is central to the book is the recognition that fieldwork is personal, emotional and identity work. The construction and production of self and identity occurs both during and after fieldwork. In writing, remembering and representing our fieldwork experiences we are involved in processes of self-presentation and identity construction. In considering and exploring the intimate relations between the field, significant others and the private self we are able to understand the processes of fieldwork and practical intellectual and emotional accomplishments. (Coffey 1999, 1.)

#### 4.2 Data collection process

The material was gathered by doing semi-structured and thematic interviews with the Iraqi Kurdish women regarding the topics of the Self and Identity, Family, Community, Religion, Mental and Physical Health, Income, Environment and Services (Picture 1 in chapter 2.2). Also, I had some discussions with them by phone. A semi-structured interview can be called also a thematic interview which is a good tool to be used in situations where the researcher wants to know sensitive substances or matters which are not easy to be aware of, such as ideals, arguments and values (Metsämuuronen 2006, 115). Hirsijärvi & Hurme (1985) expresses that in the semi-structured interview there are themes to follow, but the questions are not defined as in the structured interview (cited in Metsämuuronen 2006, 115). Moreover, some observations were collected and wrote down.

In the planning stage, I thought that I would interview the Kurdish women from different ages which would have caused a great difference in the point, how long they have been in Finland. Also, it would not open and have so large life experience than the middle-aged women have. Later on, I decided to concentrate on those women, whom have a long experience in Finland, and they al-

ready have processed their life, emotions and experiences related to the life here.

The interviews were guided thematically according to the themes. The interview as a situation was formal with a certain agenda and therefore diverse from a normal visit. It is expressed that for the ethnographical interview the relationship has been built for a long time and this is the difference compared to the situation where the researcher meets the interviewee for the first time (Lappalainen, Hynninen, Kankkunen, Lahelma & Tolonen 2007, 164). In the interviews the interviewees were allowed to express themselves freely, but I assured that all the themes were discussed. Most of the themes started so that the interviewee shared, what kind of meaning the theme had for her and in her life, and how significant it was. For example, while the theme of family was discussed, everyone shared that the family is very important for her and especially her children. The importance of the children and emphasis of the feature came up strongly as a statement that they do not have anything without their children.

While having connections with the Kurdish community since 10 years I have heard about their challenges and had discussions with them already before my thesis. The plan was to attend to the Kurdish wedding and Newroz celebration (Kurdish New Year celebration in Helsinki), but it did not work out. The attendance for Newroz festival in Helsinki faced cancellation for the reason that the Kurds from Tampere region did not attend this year, because of a sad incident. Normally, the Kurds from Tampere area gather together and travel to Helsinki by the charter bus in order to celebrate Newroz.

Through the social networks I found Kurdish women whom I asked to participate in the research. In order to have more interviewees snowball sampling was used as a method. This method was useful, because the women to be interviewed were not living in a refugee centre or at the same area and so they could not be easy to reach. Moreover, the snowball sampling method is used while collecting information on few members of the target group. My target was set in a way specific to gain information from those Kurdish women who have

been living in Finland for several years and have a long experience in the new country. Kurdish women know their community well and they are the best guides in order to find the participants to the study. (About.com Sociology)

As I conducted a limited amount of five interviews and the areal focus was Pirkanmaa, this study is not generalization that all the Kurdish women look at the themes and the life similarly.

#### 4.2.1 Meetings in practice

I conducted individual interviews for five Kurdish women who have lived in Finland already from 16 to 23 years. Also, some discussions happened on the phone. All the interviewees are originally from the northern Iraq. They all represent the first-generation immigrants in the Finnish society. Their ages were between 39 and 62. At the moment of the study, one of the interviewees was retired, one was studying, one was unemployed and two were working permanently. Two of them were divorced and three were married. One of the interviewees did not have a chance to complete her studies in her home country because of the political reasons, one of them finalized 9<sup>th</sup> grade, but she did not study further and had not a profession until now, and three of them was educated teachers already in Kurdistan. These interviewees had from two to four children and two of them had also grandchildren. Their close family members were all living in Finland. Every interviewee, except one, had her father and mother in Iraq until now, some of them had already died. Still there existed in Iraq sisters and brothers and their families whom the interviewees missed a lot. Also, they had many relatives and friends living abroad in different countries.

I contacted the interviewees by phone, and we settled the suitable time. Only one interview happened in the working place and the others were at their home. While visiting the Kurdish women, I always felt that I was welcome. Four of them lived in a block of flats and one of them lived in a row house. The home decorations were different than the typical Finnish home decoration. Some homes had beautiful paintings and picture rugs from Kurdistan hanging on the

walls and some had Koran verses as pictures (suras). Every home had a big oriental carpet and a large television screen. In one home TV was open and showing the channel of Kurdistan and in the other home the program was coming from prayers in Mecca. It was easy to feel at home.

Every visit we started with discussion and updating, how everything was. The main topics were: how are you; how are your family and children; how is the life going on. Also, I explained about my thesis work, interviews and confidentiality. While we were sharing the life events we drank coffee and tea and ate homemade Kurdish cookies. I have learned before that in the Middle-Eastern culture eating together is very important as a sign of communion. The serving is always generous and the visitor is allowed to leave food. In fact in their culture it is a good sign not to empty the cup or the glass and to leave something on the plate. It means that the visitor has been served enough. If he/she eats everything, the hostess will fill the cup and the plate again.

I did not form exact interview questions, but I guided the speech with the themes when it was needed. Interviews were done in the Finnish language. Only with rare questions I gained a feeling that maybe the topic was not understood properly. I repeated the question by using other words. Anyhow, it did not have an effect to the results of the study.

#### 4.3 Method of analysis

I conducted the ethnographical content analysis method. Altheide (1987) has stated about the ethnographical content analysis that it is reflexive and in interaction between concepts, material gathering, analysis and a researcher. In the ethnographical analysis the message comes out in the rhythm, style and content of the study. The reflective analysis focuses on contents of the research material and estimating its meanings. The material can be both descriptive and statistical, but it needs to be always a product of social relationships. (Cited in Tuusa 2004, 63 - 64).

Interviews were made by recording them which I found the easiest part in the process. All the interviews were made in the Finnish language and there was no need for an interpreter. Then I did the transcription word by word and also, wrote down chuckles and laughs, and in order to remember the special emphasis the exclamation mark was used. The transcription for interviews took roughly 24 hours which was not a very easy task, partly because of broken Finnish expressions of the interviewees. It was helpful that I have 20 years of experience with the immigrants and I am used to listen to them speaking Finnish. Therefore, I did not have difficulties to understand them. In unclear expressions clarifying questions were asked. For the analysis recognition I named the interviews as Interview 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Whereas conducting the analysis what they said was not all what was taken into consideration, also I noticed the emphasis of the theme. Many of the interviewees could suddenly mention among the other theme that the family is very important for her. This means that after all the themes were processed one by one, I had to gather also the emphasis and to follow their expressions.

All the way as the guiding principle was followed by the question of what kind of matters have given strength and supported coping during the years in Finland. At the end I wanted to listen to, if they wanted to express something else that did not exist in the themes. So as to make analysing clearer, I created tables named by the themes and gathered the interview material of each interviewee under the theme. It was challenging, because sometimes the interviewees were jumping in their talking and I had to follow their moving suddenly from the theme to another and then back again. I underlined the remarkable findings and compared them between the answers of the interviewees and concluded them. Furthermore, I did a table where I counted how many times one topic occurred roughly, because it shows the significance of that topic. With the knowledge I created Picture 2 according to the findings. Picture 2, Strengths and Coping of Iraqi Kurdish Women According to Research Findings, helped in realizing and bringing out the outcomes of the research.

#### 4.4 Research ethics and reliability of the study

In the research the accountability and ethics have an essential meaning. The researcher needs to be aware of influences of the research for the participants and with the groups which might be affected by the research. Some very important ethical requirements to take into consideration as an ethnographic are to have an approval of the participants, their dignity and privacy need to be protected, and they need to be protected from risks. Although the researcher gains personally from the study, he/she must not exploit the participants. (AAA Code of Ethics 2009.)

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) asserts that

all ethnographic researchers should cultivate a strong foundation for the ethical conduct of research with human populations. This means that the risks of harm must be considered in relation to the potential benefits of ethnographic research. (AAA Executive Board 2004.)

Cultivating an ethical climate for ethnographic research requires trust among all involved in the process of implementing a research project. Because the ethnographer often resides in the participants' community or geographical area and participates in community life, trust develops between the ethnographer and participants as a result of on-going relationships. (AAA Executive Board 2004.)

The researcher is conducting ethical decisions while analysing the research materials and he/she is individually responsible about his/her work. Therefore, when publishing the study the researcher must be truthful and provide material where the possible misunderstandings are avoided. The study needs to be weighed carefully in order to elude all harmless consequences. (AAA Code of Ethics 2009.)

My thesis is meant to be ethically and methodologically trustworthy research (D'Cruz & Jones 2006, 78). For each interviewee I explained my research goals and implementation before requesting, if she wanted to participate. Before the interview started, I asked permit for recording the interview. All of them agreed

to it. I explained them about the confidentiality while using the interview and discussion material and also, that they will maintain their anonymity in the published thesis. In order to protect the research participants I have an ethical responsibility not to share the material for any other use without asking their permission (AAA Code of Ethics 2009).

The quoted answers of the interviewees used in the research I have translated them from the Finnish language to English myself. Because of this and because of some broken Finnish expressions of the interviewees, I could not make translation word for word exactly. I followed the original expression as much as possible and added important missing words in brackets. Furthermore, I avoided such kind of details to be mentioned in the analysis part, for example the profession at the moment, which could reveal the person, who was talking.

The Kurdish women had their possibility to express themselves freely and nothing was questioned. Moreover, I did my best to listen to them well. It is stated that this is the most difficult part for ethnographic: to listen and to hear (Lappalainen, Hynninen, Kankkunen, Lahelma & Tolonen edit. 2007, 211).



## 5 RESEARCH FINDINGS RELATED TO THE SELF AND IDENTITY, FAMILY, HEALTH AND LANGUAGE

The next two chapters 5 and 6 represent the findings according to the interviews. The content is opened up theme by theme. This chapter describes outcomes from themes of the Self and Identity; Family; Mental and Physical Health; and Income. I have translated the quoted texts from the interviews from Finnish into English myself. They are numbered with the order the interview was done as Interviewee 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. The chapter 7 is the reflection and discussion.

### 5.1 Self and Identity

In the thesis the theme of the self and identity includes the roles such as being a woman, a mother, a wife and also, is the identity of the interviewee a Kurdish woman or a Finnish woman. Through our background we may look differently at the issue of identity. It is easy to hear a Finn saying while he/she sees a foreigner: "There is a woman from the Middle-East / from the Arab country. Or she is a Kurdish / a foreigner / a refugee." Interesting to know is how they recognise themselves after living in Finland several years and having the Finnish citizenship and passport. What is their identity?

#### 5.1.1 A Kurd or a Finn?

Every interviewee said that they are Finns, but they confessed that they feel more their identity as a Kurdish woman.

Of course I am a Kurdish woman, but I always try to catch things which are good... I cannot only, while I am in Finland, to be a Finn – no. I always try to take what is good in our culture and in Finnish culture. I benefit from it. I do not say: "I am a Kurd and it is enough." Or I behave only as Kurdish women do. Or I am in Finland and I need to behave as Finnish women do - no. I am a Kurdish woman, but I take from both cultures what is good. (Interviewee 5)

My identity as a Kurdish woman is stronger than a Finn, but I have learnt lot of good matters from Finns. (Interviewee 3)

I am a Kurdish woman from northern Iraq or from Kurdistan, I say... I am proud to be a Kurd, because Kurdish women are brave. And they take care of their family and work at the same time. This is meaningful for me and I am proud about it, that we are brave... We have rights of women a little. (Interviewee 1)

### 5.1.2 A woman and a mother

While we discussed about being a woman, one of the interviewees shared her experience that in Finland the women have more security than in their own country. Moreover, she claimed that in the Kurdish culture women are respected and not underestimated. Another interviewee expressed that in Finland a woman can defend herself, think about herself and take care of herself. She had learned this way of thinking in Finland. The third interviewee expressed that a woman always copes and she needs to be strong.

Generally I feel that women in Finland are more in safe and they are stronger. We are able to protect ourselves and defend ourselves. We have same status than men. (Women are) even more rational and better (than men) normally, how I have seen women here. (Interviewee 2)

I defend myself first, but us, if I think about my mother. My mother thought always first that husband, children and relatives are more important than her. But I am opposite. I am first, I need to live well or how I say; I love myself. I learnt this in Finland. First think about you and then when you are well, your family is doing well and also your environment is well... I am a strong woman and a strong mother... My father raised us that way; equality between boys and girls. Maybe this is reason why I became stronger here... But I am satisfied on myself because I have learned a lot in Finland. (Interviewee 3)

One interviewee stated strongly that for her to be a woman means same than to be a man. They are equal. Furthermore she has noticed that in Finland there are more opportunities for the women than in her own country.

I feel that all women are the same, having same problems (Finns and Kurds). But there is one difference. Here it is more freedom or women have better opportunities. We have one thing, a bit different culture and religion effects on it. For example, if a girl is going to marry, she cannot decide herself straight away. It is a long process... Sometimes there are problems... A woman needs to be a strong person in society. (Interviewee 1)

I never complain that why am I a woman. I never think that I am inferior or have lower value than anyone else... I am equal as a man in a society. I have worked. (Interviewee 1)

Every woman has a dream to be a mother one day, explained one of the interviewees. Also, she expressed that it is a big responsibility which will never end although the children grow adults. She hoped that she can show lot of love to her children. All of the interviewees shared that mother is very important and as mothers they are important. One of them described mother beautifully saying:

The mother is the temple of the world, the most beautiful temple in the world. She is important. A mother can give love without having it back. She only gives love to children... The mother is essential because she is good... A child grows to be good, because his/her mother is good... She takes care of children, talks... answers and discusses. (Interviewee 1)

While their role as wives was asked, no-one spoke about it. Only one interviewee shared that she had had a disagreement with her husband in the upbringing of their children, and she was strong in her opinions. She was a strict educator but the husband did not want to set boundaries for children. However, they had survived on the situation. Also she shared that her husband is a good and understanding man and father of their children.

## 5.2 Family

In Finland we are used to see a family in a small concept as the parents and the children. Many other cultures as the Kurdish culture also, have an extended family where in addition belongs the grandparents, aunts and uncles and their families with a large number of cousins. Because in Finland the family structure

of the Kurds has changed more likely to the Finnish one, the theme of the family has a concept of immediate family. Moreover, the influence of their childhood and own parents rise up and also, the relationship with their sisters and brothers living in Iraq. Only one of the interviewees has her parents and siblings in Finland.

Every interviewee expressed that the family is the most important matter in their life. They were very happy that their immediate family is all living in Finland and they are not separated to the different countries. The one, who has her parents and siblings also in Finland, did not miss her relatives in Iraq as the others, who have their parents and siblings in Iraq. One of the ladies missed so much her family in Iraq that she had thought that she could leave her immediate family to Finland for a certain period and go alone and stay for a while with her old mother in Iraq before she dies (Interview 5).

The family is the most important thing than nothing else. Interview 4

I have heard that the Finns divorce easily. But we think for a long time. We carry lot of matters (difficulties) because of the family, we stay as a family. Not so that all members go different direction, stay alone. No. The family is important for us. Here we have had many troubles, with the children, with the husband, but always we endure, and we have the strength because of the family. (Interviewee 5)

### 5.2.1 Childhood as the source of strength

The importance of childhood rose up as strength for all my interviewees and especially the support which they have experienced from their father. Two of the interviewees expressed strongly how the father had had remarkable role in their life as encourager for his daughters to be educated and how he wanted to provide the best possibilities for his daughters.

I think that childhood is important for a person. A person, person's character, person's identity starts from the basis. If the basement is strong and he/she has a good childhood, if the child has had a value, parents have been able to love and appreciate child, he/she will have stronger character. I will always be grateful for my parents

that they raised me well. I have been highly valued in my family. (Interviewee 2)

My father trusted us... He provided schooling for his daughters and sons. But other families did not do the same... Always my father motivated me that education is important. The school is important. We were 19 siblings... All brothers and sisters went to school except two elder sisters... My father always said that he will have two worries in his heart until his death. I always wondered: "What do you mean, father?" He said that because he could not provide schooling for his two daughters. This happened in old time, in 1930s... My father always said that his daughter is as a man and he meant with that as strong as a man. "She is free and goes and I am not afraid. I trust on her", he said... He liked my personality. He appreciated that I knew languages. He always said to others that my daughter is capable... He was proud of his own child. (Interviewee 1)

#### 5.2.2 Children as the strength provider

There was no exception in opinions of the interviewed Iraqi Kurdish women that they expressed their children give them strength. It is seen that children bring to their life at the same time happiness, responsibilities and concerns. Every interviewee wanted to see her children succeed and they do everything to support them. They try their best to build the future for their children. Divorced interviewees sometimes felt the responsibility tiring in their life. Their cultural Kurdish thinking gave the impression that it causes some problems. In Kurdistan they are used to think that children go to universities after the high school. In Finland some of their children did not yet enter the university, and they started to work or they studied lower degree. The interviewees understood that this is very normal for the Finns that the children may study different kind of professions and might work in between, and then start their studies later or study a new profession. They knew that it is not very easy to have a study place in Finland. In spite of all they were worried about the future of their children.

You know that us, straight after the high school ends, straight we go to study. Here it is a bit different. Always, you know, parents want that their children go to study. (Interviewee 3)

Yes, of course. Of course because of them (children)! Because of them I have tried. I am strong. I WAS strong because of them. My only hope is my children... And then, for the children I wanted all the best, good education and good future. And always I think nothing will happen to them. The family is like that, that I always want to serve them, help them. (Interviewee 1)

For me it is source of proud and succeed and a big enjoy, if all goes fine with children. They succeed in the life. (Interviewee 2)

The family, I need to do because of them. If I would be alone, there is nothing to take care, but now, I think that I need to pick up children, take them, soon he/she is coming. I arrange, do... they make me to move and think and give the strength. My family... children. If they would not exist, I would sit here without anything to do, take a sandwich... then it is not enough. Or while a child is coming, I need to cook, I need to clean, check the clothes... Then the night comes and next morning, a new day. We wake up, take them... (Interviewee 5)

### 5.2.3 Family members in Iraq

Some of the interviewees expressed how important it is for them to be in connection with their siblings living in Iraq. It seems to be important to know what happens there in Kurdistan. They are in contact with their siblings by phone, regularly and also daily basis. I asked Interviewee 5 whether she thinks that talking with her sister every day is a strength giving factor in her life, she answered:

Yes, of course! With my sister, my mother, with my brother... Nearly every day I speak with my sisters... we talk and talk... every day. (Interviewee 5)

Also a trip to my home country is important matter in the life. While I travel, I gain strength. Always my children and husband wonder, why I like to travel every year. I tell them, I will be charged! A month or one and half months and when I come back, I can manage the autumn and spring... My relatives, my father and the grave of my mother, all these, my brothers and lot of people are important matters. (Interviewee 3)

### 5.3 Mental and Physical Health

With the theme of mental and physical health the knowledge was gained about what kind of meaning the feeling of healthiness has in their life. We discussed about the healthy habits, and if they take care of their health by doing sports. Furthermore, I wanted to know, if Kurdish women have hobbies and what kind of hobbies.

All of the interviewees shared that the feeling of healthiness is important for them. Four of them had faced problems in their physical health and three of them confessed that it had affected to their ability to cope. One of them expressed that the problems in physical health caused periods of depression.

Although you have lived here very long, it is not easy always. I do not know. A human is not made from iron... If you have all hope and all the strengths, but if you are physically sick and then you cannot do the things. You are willing. I always was worried that if I get sick and I am alone (with children). This was stressing for me a bit. (Interviewee 1)

I had big... operation. I depressed a lot and I was not at work... But the operation succeeded. I went to water aerobics and water running, every week I go (now also). Health is important for me. I love myself, I told you. And all the vitamins helps and healthy food. We do not eat same food than in home country... Sometimes of course we cook our own food, but not every day. We take care of our health. (Interviewee 3)

One interviewee stated that in their culture they do not normally have hobbies. They are not used to think that they could have such kind of matters in a life than hobbies. She felt that this point has affected to her. She said that it is a pity. Therefore, she named her hobbies as watching TV and cleaning at home. She felt that when her home is clean it gives her strength.

Another interviewee expressed that she does not have time for hobbies. Although, she felt that it would be important to go to the gym and do some sports. She believed that more important matter in her life is to spend time with her friends than to do sports. At the moment she had a plan to start to go to the gym

with her friend. One interviewee enjoyed sewing. She have made clothes for her grandchildren and stated it as a hobby. Two of the interviewees were reading books. One of them told that she reads the daily newspaper (in Finnish), also she reads books such as philosophy, novels and romances and the Bible. She reads in Kurdish, Arabic and Finnish. Furthermore, she painted the pictures and wrote the stories of life. The other one did also sports; she enjoyed walking, water aerobics, water running, dancing and her hobbies included winter swimming. While I asked her, did sports give her strength which helps her to cope, she answered: "Yes, very much" (Interviewee 3).

This is good area. We walk a lot, in summer every day... And we do winter swimming... And my children learned to exercise... The whole family we like dancing... When we go to celebrate, we dance Kurdish dance for many hours... (Interviewee 3)

This is a good experience which the stories have given to me...For example I wrote a story about my feelings at Christmas time. Name of the story was: Christmas Eve in Finland... I am such a fantasy person, but it makes a person feel free. (Interviewee 1)

#### 5.4 Income

The theme income includes topics of the educational background and its importance for the interviewee, the language studies and education in Finland, and working life in Finland. Moreover, we discussed what kind of importance has the income for a Kurdish woman. Three of the interviewees were educated teachers already in their home country, one of the interviewees did not have a chance to complete her studies in her home country, because of the political reasons, and one of them finalized 9<sup>th</sup> grade, but she did not study further in order to have a profession.

All the interviewees attended to the Finnish language courses, different periods of time. All of them spoke fluently Finnish and did not a need interpreter while they patronized in the public services or markets. At the moment one of them is retired, one is unemployed, one is attending to a course (coach to the work life)



and two of them are working. Two of them told that they have been working nearly all the time in Finland. The other one stated that during her stay in Finland (more than 20 years) she had been only 23 days unemployed.

#### 5.4.1 Importance of the language in coping

All of the interviewees expressed that to know the language is the key element in coping. One of them stated strongly that Finnish is their language, because she is a Finn.

The language is the key. It is so important, the language. Because many families do not know the language and stay at home, they always are depressed and they have problems. Although, I have had difficulties also, everybody has had, but when they fall down, they do not get up, because they do not have this power. If you have the power, you will stand. (Interviewee 3)

The language helped. Learning the language is important, because nothing else can help you. Because there are papers and office matters you need to clarify by yourself. Bills and all... In the beginning when I came to Finland, and I did not understand anything, some months, I felt sad, and even cried. I was afraid, how I will manage. But then straight away, when I learned the language, all is managed. (Interviewee 1)

Especially one interviewee shared that managing with the language help the immigrants to adapt into the new culture. Two of the interviewees opened up their thoughts about the language as the supportive matter in coping by answering following:

Yes, very much. It is so nice that you feel that this is your own country now. I know everything, I can manage in everything. (Interviewee 5)

I think it (language) is a key for everything. If you are in a country, and you do not speak the language, you are like a blind. (Interviewee 2)

#### 5.4.2 Education, working and income as the supportive elements

Three of the interviewees have educated themselves further after the language studies. One of them was also studying at the moment in university alongside with the work. One of the interviewees did not attend very much to the courses, because her children were small. While I asked about the importance of education, one of the interviewees shared:

Of course it (education) means a lot. And if a person does not go to school, she/he does not get certificate and will be totally as sunk in the world. She/he cannot reach anything; there are no possibilities for her/him, she/he is as sunk. It (education) is important. A person gains opportunities to keep herself/himself in society. (Interviewee 2)

Every interviewee had had internships or work in the kindergarten, some for several months and one of them worked for two years in the kindergarten. In addition, they had different other experiences of work places. One interviewee worked also in a factory for a time. One of them shared that adapting to the working life had been very difficult for her. She had felt that she could not do the things correctly and had distressing situations, which she did not want remember anymore. One interviewee who was at the moment unemployed explained that she shared the feelings of the Finnish unemployed people. She did not feel sad about her situation, because she knew that so many Finns have faced the same condition than her. Four of the interviewees told that the work has given them strength.

It is important for a person to have work, to be in a society. You will not stay outside of everything and you are able to provide all yourself with pride. You do not need to trust that you will get some benefit (social). It is inconvenient a bit. You feel shame. I feel that why should I be a healthy human; I have a sense, I am healthy, I have hands and feet and all, why should I not work? It makes all stronger. I feel, if a person is not working here, he/she is like a dead. He/she is not learning anything. He/she cannot integrate to this society and only stays in those matters that he/she knew before. (Interviewee 2)

Furthermore, an interesting matter was to know, if the income has a supportive part in the Iraqi Kurdish women's life and thinking. All of them answered that it was not an essential matter helping in coping in their life. One of them stated strongly that other things, such as her family were more important than the income. Two of the interviewees confessed that it was nice to have the income. Only one of them commented that it is a shame to live with social benefits. One of the interviewee expressed that in the work more important for her was that she could help and support other people than the income itself.

And of course also the income is important, but I do not want to look after only income. I was only 23 days unemployed... I wanted to work and do something. It is very important. I have another point more important: they (students) have a mother tongue. It is indeed, when I see students talking and their parents are very satisfied, of course I feel very proud and good... Of course this is good, when they succeed, although they are not my relatives, but we are from the same country. They get help and I feel happy. (Interviewee 3)

## 6 RESEARCH FINDINGS RELATED TO THE COMMUNITY, RELIGION, ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES

### 6.1 Community

The relations of the Kurdish women to the Kurdish community and the Finnish community were interesting to know. Topics of the culture and traditions and also friendships were discussed. In Tampere the Kurds have their own association. Last two years it has not been so active than before. The most important Kurdish festival is the New Year, which is called Newroz (on 21<sup>st</sup> March). It has been many years celebrated in Helsinki organized by the Kurdish association in Helsinki.

#### 6.1.1 Kurdish community and friends

Every interviewee expressed that the Kurdish community has a meaning in their lives. Someone had been active in the association before, but not anymore. Some of them complained that nowadays they did not have time for the Kurdish community and friends, but still the meaning of the Kurdish community is remarkable. Main features were their own culture, language and nation. Furthermore, they had fun together and they did not feel that they were alone.

It is good that we are not alone. It is so fun that it is possible to be with friends all the time... once or two times a week we are in connection. And although the Christmas thing does not belong to us, but together we celebrate the Christmas. And this is the same as you charge a battery – and when we see each other the battery comes full. It is very difficult if you are alone all the time... This supports indeed. For example, if we have set a time to meet tomorrow in order to do something and meet, it helps: you wait for tomorrow and make arrangements for tomorrow. And then again we make plans for the next time. It helps always forward and forward. (Interviewee 5)

Kurdish community is important to me. We have lot of cooperation. I try to be with the Finns from the beginning we arrived to Finland...

But I do not know, with the Kurds the mother tongue makes it closer. (Interviewee 3)

One interviewee told that 20 years ago it was very difficult for them during the first year in Finland, because at the time in Pirkanmaa were not so many Kurds, and she could not use her own language. She cried every day. But now, they had many Kurdish friends, they had books in their own language and they were able to follow news and programs from Kurdistan through satellite. She shared that all this gives strength for coping. (Interviewee 4.)

We have ourselves operated in it (in association) and it has united us all the Kurds together, Kurdish population and we have had lot of program together such as relates to our own culture. Dancing, festivals and as a group we are together, participate to friendship life. This means a lot and gives strength... As the Kurds we support each other a lot. We have stronger relationship to each other here now than we have relationship with relatives in the home country. We understand each other and, we have the same background and our history. (Interviewee 2)

We always do something together, have festivals or talk together or have a trip always. With Kurdish families we discuss a lot and it gives strength to all of us. (Interviewee 4)

The Kurdish community has its importance in happy times, but moreover, they support strongly each other in the times of the sorrow and death. Roughly one month ago one Kurdish man died. I heard about it while I talked on the phone with one Kurdish woman and asked if I could go with them to Newroz in Helsinki. She told me, that the death of the Kurdish man was a shock for the whole community and nobody from Tampere was going to Newroz this year because of the incident. (Discussion on the phone 13.3.2013.)

I wanted to know, how the Kurdish community is supporting each other in such kind occasions. I visited one Kurdish woman and discussed with her. She explained to me that families went straight to the widow's home and stayed there for two days and cried and talked with her. After that they visited her every day after the work. (Discussion 18.3.2013.) While discussing on the phone with the third woman, she shared with me more about the burial. Ten days after the

death was the burial and the relatives and friends came from Finland, Sweden and Norway. There were proximately 200 people attending, because this man was highly appreciated among the Kurds and he had been active in the politics in Kurdistan. The whole mourning lasted 40 days. On the 40<sup>th</sup> day they gathered again to the graveyard and after that spent time together. The Kurds do not sit silent in burial. They show their emotions and cry loudly together. (Discussion on the phone 18.3.2013.) I asked, if the widow, her children and close friends got any support from Finnish public systems such as meeting with psychologist or debriefing in this kind of situation. They told me that the family has got the help and counselling and it was possible also for friends who were willing to have it. But until now they had been supporting each other as the Kurdish community by talking and grieving together. (Discussion 18.3.2013.)

#### 6.1.2 Finnish community and friendship with the Finns

An interesting finding was, that no-one of the interviewees mentioned anything about the Finnish community. In the interviews only one of them told that she had Finnish friends, and two of them told that they had Finnish friends just after they arrived to Finland, with who they were still in connection, but not frequently. Two of the interviewees told that they did not have Finnish friends.

The concept of friendship is different for the Kurds than to the Finns. Although, one interviewee told that she had a Finnish friend, she also shared that she did not see her for last eight months. She expressed that with the Kurdish friend it could never happen. Moreover, she stated that in this sense there is a big difference in the culture. Also, she explained that if her Kurdish friend calls her that she is coming just now, she could never say: "Sorry, I cannot meet you now, because I am busy at the moment." She knew that for the Finns she was able to say, if she was busy and could not meet, because it is normal (Interviewee 5). Another interviewee shared that she has met many nice people, but after meeting them it has taken very long time before they were again in connection and she did not hear anything from them (Interviewee 2).

Here it is difference in friendships that always it will be cut. It is always temporary and for short time, life is busy. Strong relationships between friends are not built. It is a pity. There are good, friendly people I have met and I have been in connection with them, but after we leave, there will be long times in between before we hear nothing from each other... The relationship is not continuing as in our culture. Maybe it is cultural. In our culture relationships and friendship and bonds are stronger. They mean more. But maybe here in Finland is not the same and for the Finn it is not so. (Interviewee 2)

Importance of the Finnish friends as a cultural teacher and language supporter has been essential for some of interviewees. The interviewee 3 described it this way:

I always be thankful for those friends (Finnish friends), because without them we would not have known. Although, the language is not enough if you speak the language, the culture is very rich when you start to know the culture. We went to all their festivals such as birthdays, Christmas parties and all the parties. Without them I would not... know anything what kind of culture you have. It is not enough that I only study the language... all these festivals are very important to know. This is why I am very rich now at the moment, because I do not know only the language. I have learned about the culture, it is really important! Many of my students say: "Teacher, how we can learn from them, while we do not have any Finnish friend family?" (Interviewee 3)

A Finn learns and we do also. And for us it is more important, because we live here... The culture is not only talking. You explained me something for example Christmas time so and so. But it is not same than if I go to (Finnish) home and then I know what is Christmas. And now I am thankful to those friend families we had. I learned a lot from them. (Interviewee 3)

It is clearly seen that there is a lack of Finnish friends for the immigrants. The retired interviewee told that in summer with her husband she saw an advertisement in the newspaper about a trip for pensioners. They were so brave that they called to the given phone number, registered themselves to the trip by the lake and enjoyed one day with the Finnish pensioners talking and eating together. Otherwise she described her feelings about this matter:

No, we do not have (Finnish friends). I like Finns, but no one come to us and be a friend. Sometimes, in the church there are good people who invites us and we make a trip with them. It is very good. (Interviewee 4)

## 6.2 Religion

In the meaning of religion I included also some cultural aspects and traditions. As presented in the background of the Kurds they were forced to convert to be Muslims by Ottomans. Until now in general discussions with the Kurds they mainly express that they are Muslims, but maybe they are not performing the religious rituals and prayers.

Four of the interviewees stated that the religion is important for them. One of them reflected that religion gives her more strength than her own culture. Moreover, she bound the religion and the importance of the family together with the conclusion that they stay together, respect each other and do the right matters in the life.

I believe, I believe in God... When I am in distress, I always have a hope. This is a secret, a strong hope I always have. If I do not succeed today, I say to myself, tomorrow I will succeed... I always express that when I pray, ask something from God, it happens... this makes a person free... I need to think myself what suits me... we were forced in Iraq all the time... Under the threats and then. I hate this! ... People are people. We do not diverse. Countries are separated but people are same. (Interviewee 1)

God provides. I am a Muslim and always it is said that God gives strength and God helps us with the Finns here. Strength, yes, God provides. (Interviewee 4)

Two of the interviewees stated strongly how God has helped them:

While I had really difficult time... I thank God – as a miracle happened inside me! All the past was gone. I was as born again. I believe God loves me, because I did not do anything wrong. All old matters were taken away at once. It was a miracle. I felt so free. I thank God! Normally it takes time to be recovered, but this was a miracle. (Interviewee 2)



God helps always. He is always with us... And for example if I had a problem, I always asked help (from God) and I got it. And this supports me. (Interviewee 5)

One of the interviewees declared that she is not a believer, although, she is a Muslim and they raised their children to Islam. She assumed that she had learned from her father this kind of way of life that she is not praying and fasting. Despite of this their family celebrates all the Islamic festivals. While I asked her if the religion gives her strength for coping, she answered:

No. I say Kurdish community is more for me. (Interviewee 3)

Furthermore, the interviewees stated that they respect all other religions also. One of them missed the possibility to practice Islam which was easier in her home country than in Finland. She expressed that it was easier there, because the majority were Muslims. She said:

I am a Muslim and I respect all other believers also, whatever they think... Here it (Islam) is not ruling the life. But inwardly it has an effect and sometimes I hope to follow all what our religion demands us, I mean the rules. I feel that I cannot follow them here. Then I have to go along with it that my life here is like this. Mainly I am a Muslim, inwardly I feel it strongly that the religion is carried in my heart. (Interviewee 2)

Religion is important. I am not a racist in religion. I respect others. I respect Islam. There is no need for violence, no need for anger, no need for quarrel between people... I am a human and every person is. Muslim is a human, Christian is a human... all are humans. Same God created all. We have right to live. God created us as his images... Everybody needs to try to be pure from inside... We should not be against each other; we do not need to be envious... We need to think... that I need to change first myself and then, after I am recovered, I may teach others... Friendliness is the most important. (Interviewee 1)

Two of the interviewees open up a topic such as the women using the scarfs. No-one of the interviewees used head scarfs. The other interviewee felt that it was related to Islamic regulations. She shared that in her family in Kurdistan

nobody used the scarfs, although her mother was religious. The other interviewee expressed that the head scarf is not religious, in her opinion it is cultural.

I do not accept that kind of tough rules for example that you must put a scarf. Ok, I do not say that this is from religion. This is culture. In the old culture it was so that they put the scarf... When I was a child, I do not remember even my grandmother had used a scarf... We had short like that... not a scarf but something viscose, beautiful and we put it beautifully. And the hair was seen... And then women had their national dress, but nowadays no more, now modern. People changes... I do not say that they dress thin clothes... they respect... Culture is different. (Interviewee 1)

### 6.3 Environment

Do the surrounding nature, environment and neighbourhood have an impact to the Iraqi Kurdish woman as a strength provider, was the interest to know. Also, we discussed about the neighbours and relationship with them.

#### 6.3.1 Nature as strength provider

One of the interviewees had moved to a new flat recently. In the old flat the sun was shining to the windows and brought light into the home. Although, now she had a brand new kitchen in the new home, she felt depressed, because there was lack of sun in the apartment. She dreamed of moving again. Another interviewee said that the house and environment had no meaning in her life, but the importance was the school of their children. The school was near and the school friends of their children lived near, and this was an essential point of their environment. Two interviewees commented how they really felt that the nature in their environment is giving them strength. In summer the area is beautiful with the lake and forests, and it is easy to go and have a walk outside. In the beginning in Finland, the silence was strange for them.

Before, it was same to me, where I live. But now, near the lake and near forest (is good), but I do not like silence. I say to people, why they go to countryside or summer cottage. Here is summer cottage everywhere... Silence, and the whole weekend is very quiet... The

nature is very important to me now. It is same as in home country, when you go to mountains. We had so many mountains, oh, and waterfalls in Kurdistan... Here forest and lake are important, that is true. But it is not a same feeling than if I see mountains and a waterfall there. It does not feel the same. Maybe, because I am used to it from my childhood... (Interviewee 3)

### 6.3.2 Relationship with the neighbourhood

All of the interviewees had very little connection with their neighbours. All of them greeted their neighbours on the yard while they met each other, but some of them did not even know in which apartment those neighbours lived.

I like in our culture the matter that always neighbours visit us and we visit them. We drink coffee together and talk. But here, no-one comes. I do not know my neighbours. (Interviewee 4)

Two of them were a bit scared, if their neighbours would receive them or not. Also, they were worried that if they would serve something to their neighbours and someone gets sick, they could possibly accuse immigrants. In one housing company they organize voluntary work several times a year and the interviewee attended with her husband whenever it was possible for them. Furthermore, they had two neighbours whom they were visiting and the neighbours visited them, but not often.

Here we had two families, but it is twice a year (visiting neighbours). It is very little. The reason can be us also, not only them. (Interviewee 3)

One of the interviewees expressed that a good relationship with the neighbours is very important. She had faced good neighbours and also she had received bad experiences. In a good situation she felt that the relationship was similar to the neighbour relationships in Iraq while they were visiting each other and having fun together. But in the other neighbourhood she experienced that even she tried to obey all regulations of the building, she gained always the racist comments and complaints. Some neighbours showed by their face mimicry that they did not like the immigrants.

Another interviewee shared that she had brought homemade bread to her neighbours which they really liked. Moreover, she had good experiences that the neighbours praised her children, how well they behaved. They did not face any problems and they liked the area. In the same breath, she sighed that she feels homesick and she missed her mother and the place of birth.

#### 6.4 Services

The theme of services is referred to the all kind of public services such as the health care, hospitals, schools, social office and allowances, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela) and employment services.

All of the interviewees praised the services that they are very good in Finland compared to their home country, especially the health care. One of them assumed that it is even better than in Europe. Everybody of them has had their children at the school. Some of the interviewees had been treated in the hospital. All of them have dealt with employment office, social office and Kela.

While I asked, if the public services support coping in Finland, one of the interviewees shared that the social workers have supported her more than her Finnish friends. Two of the interviewees praised the health care system while two others of them complained the system of health care in a sense that if a person needed a doctor's appointment, maybe he/she had to wait for some days or several weeks in order to have the appointment. One interviewee expressed her experiences:

It was so secure here... and when I got sick, they helped me so much and took care of me. It was very good in the hospital and all the nurses (were good). All is very good. (Interviewee 4)

Or it had happened, when the interviewee called to health care centre, a nurse asked many questions and the interviewee complained that although she was sick, she had to explain first to the nurse and then repeat everything to the doctor. She expressed her frustration:

The services are so good. The health care centre, if I need doctor's appointment or I call there, I always get the appointment. But sometimes I am irritated... Long time I talk in the phone and I am asked: what is wrong with you, did you take the medicine, did it help you... A long phone call for nothing! Once I got angry to her and said that I need a doctor! I am not calling them in order to have long conversation such as what, what, what. (Interviewee 1)

## 6.5 Other subjects

Although, at the end of the interviews I asked, what other matters have been a source of strength and supported their coping in Finland, only few things raised up. Some of the topics came up during the discussion on another theme.

### 6.5.1 Kurdish woman as a survivor, and the content of the life

All of the interviewees praised the fact that Finland is a safe country and they feel safe here. Three of them expressed that the women have more independence and possibilities than in their country. These matters have made them stronger. One interviewee thought that she just need to survive. In addition, she expressed how important it is for her that she can be an influential member of the society. She wanted to help others, work and participate. She believed that the community is first and then the individual. The cooperation is a remarkable matter according to her. She told a folk story among the Kurds related to the Kurdish woman as the survivor:

If a husband likes to have good food, he should marry Azeri or Turkish woman. If he is active with associations and laws, he should marry Iranian woman. But if he likes to succeed economically, he should marry Kurdish woman. Kurdish woman is a survivor. She decides and survives. Her home is always clean. She works. They love working and their home and family. Kurdish woman has been always working alongside the man. The Kurdish history tells about it. She worked on fields, took care of matters and did the work of man. If a husband is a fighter, for example political fighter, his wife survives and takes care of everything at home. Also, she receives guests and discusses with the men, when a man guest visits. The husband trusts his wife... She cooks and serves and discusses about politics and social matters as a normal thing...

This kind of we have a bit, not the equality, but I feel that the men respects women. (Interviewee 1)

The matter of the attitude rose up in an interview and its affection to a person's life. The interviewee shared that it is the strength if a person has contented attitude towards the life. This attitude brought the thankfulness. She felt that she was very rich despite of all the difficulties of life, if she stayed content. Moreover, she compared the situations here in Finland and with the countries in war situation, and she verbalized that we are living in a paradise in Finland. Also, she stated that here people did not have enough reason for complaining. The reason for complaining comes from inside of a person, from the attitude and not from circumstances, she assumed.

#### 6.5.2 Lessons of the life difficulties and the role of the self in coping

One of the interviewees expressed that hard life experiences have taught her the patience. She shared her thoughts about it:

I believe that patience creates a lot of strong matters that you can do what you want. I do not know but I feel that you need to cope yourself, because you will not get help from outside. It comes from inside a person that you have willing to learn and you need to cope by yourself... I am a person who believes in freedom. I always feel. I never wanted some-one to say me what to do, even my own husband. I have always resisted. I have my rights. I am always just. I like myself as I am. This made me succeed. (Interviewee 1)

Furthermore, another interviewee stated that it depended yourself, also. While she have worked well and got good feedback from her customers and work maids, it made her stronger. She felt that she could trust herself and be satisfied. These matters were the source of strength and supported coping. The other interviewee assured that the difficulties of life have taught her to be strong and made her strong. Although, the personality and background have its effects, but also the willingness to learn all the time and survive supports coping, she verbalized. (Interviewee 2 and 3.)

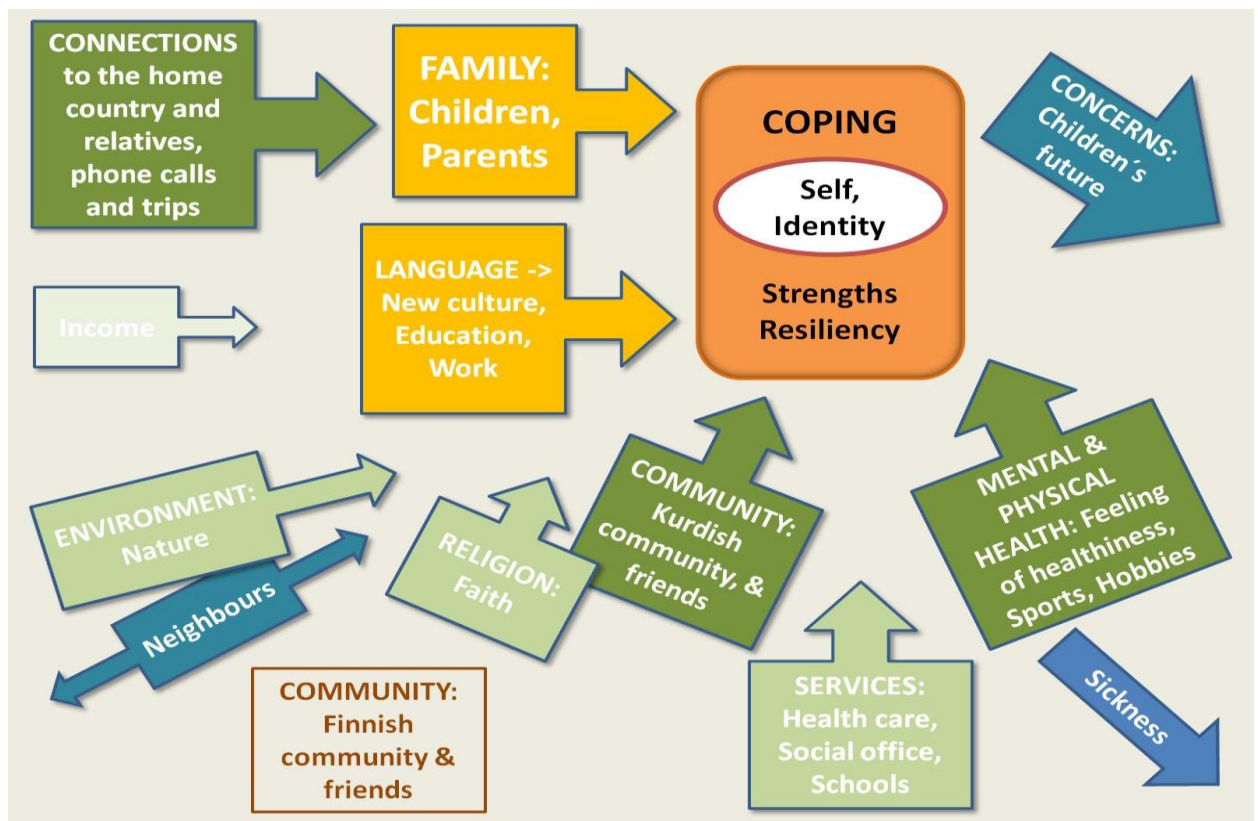
### 6.5.3 Home country, Kurdistan

Three of the interviewees articulated that they gained strength while they travelled to their home country and met their relatives. One interviewee stated that it was as recharging for her to travel every year and spend one month in Kurdistan. After that she could cope and manage the winter in Finland.

Moreover, one interviewee dreamed that she could see the independence of Kurdistan before she dies; the country without war, where would be peace and all fine. In that situation she would like to live there the winter time and spend her summers in Finland.

## 7 REFLECTION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The strength giving and supportive matters in coping as identified themes according to the interviews are clarified visually in Picture 2, which is named as Strengths and Coping of Iraqi Kurdish Women According to Research Findings. Although, every theme was discussed separately, they are linked with each other. In the theme of the Self are the roles such as a mother and a wife which are impossible to separate from the theme of the Family. Also, the Self and Identity is linked with the Kurdish community, which is partly linked with the Religion. In this chapter I conclude each theme and findings by using Picture 2, where the themes are no more totally same than before the interviews. Moreover, in this chapter I share my own thinking and experiences concerning the matters.



PICTURE 2. STRENGTHS AND COPING OF IRAQI KURDISH WOMEN ACCORDING TO RESEARCH FINDINGS



### 7.1 Self and Identity as strength characters of coping

As expressed in the theory part the concept of coping means responses of a person which starts after the diverse of incidents or in easy scale in the natural daily life happenings. Resilience is an essential matter in the life and coping as normalizing factor after challenges. A person learns from events, even from the life difficulties as some of the interviewees mentioned. Also, the self has capacities and skills which have grown during the years starting from the childhood. In the Picture 2 coping is the main feature with strengths and resilience. The theme of the Self and Identity is included into Coping and therefore, it is drawn inside the box of coping.

According to the analysis every interviewee had very strong Kurdish identity despite of living many years in Finland. All of them had the Finnish passport, and they spoke fluent Finnish. At this juncture the meaning of the minority status of the Kurds cannot be passed, which I assume has a strong influence for the forming of their identity. As it was shown in the background of the Kurds, they have faced the minority status and a repression as a nation already in Kurdistan. They have always fought for their rights and therefore the minority status is built in their identity. They are used to survive and they are survivors as they stated themselves in the interviews.

Pentikäinen described the confusion of the identity of Somalis and Vietnamese in the new culture. Some Somalis faced humiliation and racism first time in their life. These features always influence to the self and the self-worth. The feeling of being different comes up. Despite of this, some of them stated that they are proud to be Somalis. According to the interviews it was shown the change on the identity from Somali and Vietnamese to the refugee and foreigner identity having at the same time a sense of belonging to the minority group. (Pentikäinen 2005, 169 – 172.) The findings of all these studies show that the identity is strongly build in the inborn Kurdish, Somali or Vietnamese identity. All of them have faced the minority status, the Kurds already in their past history.

As a woman living in Finland the interviewees felt safer than in their own country. Moreover, they had a feeling of equality between men and women and some of them expressed with laughing that they were strong women who can defend themselves. An experience was raised up that the woman is the same everywhere with the same kind of problems. In that sense one interviewee identified herself with Finns. To be a mother was recognized as a great responsibility, especially among the single parent mothers. Somehow it was expressed as a burden. Only one of the interviewees shared that she had faced some problems with her husband, because she had learned the Finnish way of upbringing children and they did not agree straight away. But also she shared how good husband and father he has been. Otherwise the interviewees did not open up the features of their marriages or their role as wives.

Tiilikainen opened up how the Somalis faced racism in Finland. They did not have the feeling of security as the Iraqi Kurdish women. Sometimes Somalis have been victims of violence. In Kontula 1997 there happened a fight between Somalis and skinheads. Somalis did not believe that they could trust on police forces and they felt that police prejudiced against them. (Tiilikainen 2003, 163 – 169.)

While I asked about the other themes or topics to be added, the matters the interviewees shared, is good to mention under the Self. They expressed that Kurdish women are strong and they are survivors. The opportunities and independence which women have in Finland have made them even stronger, although they assumed that the respect of the woman exists in the Kurdish culture. One interviewee shared that the life difficulties have taught her. Furthermore, the right grateful attitude was one supportive matter in coping. Some-one brought up the influence of the personality, background, willingness and the good self-esteem, which has grown when one interviewee received good feedback from her successes. Shortly expressing in the theme of the Self and Identity is found the sources of strengths such as the strong Kurdish identity, strong and respected women, personality, right attitude, background, good self-esteem, lessons learned from past and willingness.

We may see some similarities occurring among Somalis than with the Iraqi Kurdish women. Diaspora has offered them also more opportunities such as professional skills and economical independency which have given them larger influence in their family and community. At the same time Somali women were suffering but also active actors who tried to reduce distress. Another feature among Somalis was the symptoms of sicknesses having strong meaning in the daily life of Somali women in Finland. They expressed that Finland has made them sick with the integration difficulties, strange culture, loneliness, unfriendliness and cold weather. (Tiilikainen 2003, 281 – 285.) Although the opportunities and the development of the independency were not expressed as strengths for the Somali women, it can be seen there in the light of the theory of this study. Similar expression with the feature of sickness was not brought up in the interviews of the Kurdish women.

## 7.2 Main resource of strength

The Family-theme is the main resource of strength and therefore, in the Picture 2 it is coloured orange in order to show its emphasis and its weight for the interviewees. According to the interviews the main resources of strength were two remarkable substances: the meaning of childhood of the interviewees as strength builder, and their own children. Every interviewee expressed that the family is the most important matter in their lives. This matter was brought up with emphasis.

Although the Somali women wanted to stay at home, they felt tired with their children. They shared how in Somalia their mothers had helped them by taking care of their children and now in Finland they had to manage by themselves. Moreover, they felt tired, because they had to take care of the home alone without any help. Their tiredness had started in Finland. (Tiilikainen 2003, 204.) The Iraqi Kurdish mothers were worried about their children's education, but they did not express tiredness same way as Somali women. For the Kurdish mothers their children are their life.

The interviewees shared how strong and essential meaning their fathers had in their lives. They talked more about their fathers than their mothers. It can be said that the relationship between fathers and their daughters in the cases of my interviewees were strong. Mainly the fathers were encouraging towards their daughters and willing to educate them well. The expression of the trust came up many times. The daughters had experience that their fathers trusted them. Furthermore, some interviewees felt that their fathers valued them highly and showed them that as their daughters they were equal with the sons of the family. This fact also has built them to be strong and have a good self-esteem and it is linked with one's self and identity. This feature was special in their families and they shared that of course there are always diverse of family cultures. It means that the feature cannot be generalized.

One interviewee expressed that to be a mother is a dream of every girl. All of the interviewees were mothers and two of them were grandmothers also. The existence of children in their lives was the main resource of strength. Children were the spring of the joy in their lives. Because of their children, they can manage the life. They were ready to do everything because of their children and their whole life revolves around the children.

In the Picture 2 there is a blue arrow with a concern. At the same time with all the happiness about the children, they raised up also concerns. The interviewees shared how they were worried about the education of their children. Moreover, here the cultural differences came up. In Finland also the professions studied in the lower education are respected and may have good salaries. According to the interviewees in Kurdistan it is important to study in the university. Similar feature I have met in the Middle-East. Even though the interviewees understood the Finnish system and the way of viewing the topic, they could not help themselves not to be worried about the future and education of their children. Now it is good to remember, that all the interviewees were the first generation immigrants in Finland. Besides, especially the single parent mothers were worried about the cultural differences noticing that for example in Finland it is normal to go and stay the night in friend's home but in their culture it was not usual.

They were worried for their daughters particularly. One grandmother shared that she understood that it is normal that the culture changes, but she wished that her grandchildren will change only a bit.

### 7.3 Language is the key

According to the interviewees learning the Finnish language is the key and its importance as a strength follows just after the family. In the Picture 2 it is coloured with orange also as the Family theme. The language is the key for learning the new culture, habits, education and working life. Language is a gate for inclusion and integration. Knowing the language supported the feeling that the person will manage and cope. The importance of the language came up also in the research about Somalis and Vietnamese in Finland (Pentikäinen 2005, 161, 169, 201). Furthermore, education is seen an essential supportive matter in the life. All of the interviewees had diverse of experiences on internship and work.

The language is an important part of the culture. The immigrants should be supported to be bilingual. The mother tongue is connected with the self-esteem and identity and therefore it is essential to maintain. In order to manage with the new language in the daily life in a new country and to participate to a society, there is need for learning the new language. (Räty 2002, 154.)

I have gained expression that in Finland the integration is defined mainly through the work. If a person has work, he/she will not feel marginalized economically and he/she belongs to the work community. There are also other important features in order to feel included or integrated to the society. There is an importance for a person to be accepted despite of his/her diversity and also, one of the interviewees raised up the opportunities of participation in the society activities (Interviewee 1). In social work we should plan more creative solutions while developing the systems for the immigrants and refugees in Finland. How could we take this into account better?

According to the findings the income did not have big importance for the interviewees as such, but it was mentioned as a positive matter and therefore, it is included to the picture with light green colour. One of the interviewees commented that it is a shame if you need to ask for social benefits. She wanted to stand by her own feet. (Interviewee 2.) The remarkable and powering matter for them was to help and support other people. The good feedback they had gained gave them strength and supported their coping. For Vietnamese and Somalis the income had stronger meaning than for the Iraqi Kurdish women, because they wanted to support their relatives by sending money to their home countries (Pentikäinen 2005, 211).

#### 7.4 Green and grey communities

All the different shades of the green arrows are the themes which have the elements of the strengths (Picture 2). The darkest green follows the orange with its importance such as the Kurdish community which had an essential meaning for the interviewees as the supportive matter. Attendance to the Kurdish festivals and meetings were important possibilities to speak their own language and share the life happenings and cultural understanding. Also its meaning as a peer support group can be recognised: an existence of an opportunity to share the life challenges, experiences and lessons learned.

Furthermore, the Kurdish community and friends support each other in the times of sorrow. While one Kurdish man died suddenly during the period of the interviews, they took care of each other and without a special education they carried out some kind of debriefing in their Kurdish community. They looked after the widow and her children; they cried together and shared the feelings. A big difference with our culture was that they did not leave the widow alone. They visited her daily for 40 days, as it is normal way in the whole Middle-East also. In Finland the meaning of the debriefing and the support in shocking situations is well understood, but we organize these matters as professionals. Did our society and communities lose the touch with the people after urbanization? Or are

our communities and ties so weak that we mainly live as individuals in a life. It means that we face the challenges many times alone without the support of surrounding community. This feature is something, that if it could be possible, we should learn from other cultures. Or maybe we have gone too far in order to return to the roots of our background in that sense.

Räty described how the urbanization influenced the disintegration of traditional communities. There were not anymore possibilities to take care of the children, sick and elderly. This created the need for having the professionals. In the individualistic culture a person is seen as individual who has his/her own needs and opinions. In the collective culture the people are members of the group. All the time they think the best of the group or community. They take care of each other. (Räty 2002, 57 – 58.)

The background colour of the picture is grey as also the Finnish community. This topic I found very interesting, and it became more interesting after analysing the interviews and noticing that no-one said anything about the Finnish community. I like to ask now: does the Finnish community exist for the Iraqi Kurdish women in Finland at all? We all belong into the small communities such as the work community, study community and neighbourhood. Because we all live in the Finnish community, I coloured the whole picture grey. I wanted to have light in the picture and therefore, the background was first coloured with light yellow, but I changed it, because I got the expression from the interviews that grey colour describes better the issue. People living in the Finnish community without realizing it is a community. Does this describe the matter? Again I come back to the identity question and also inclusion and integration. The question is, is it possible, that one day an immigrant notices that he/she is a Finn and he/she is included as a respected member of the Finnish society and community.

While we discussed about the Finnish friends, only one of the interviewees shared that she had a Finnish friend. Also in research about Somalis and Vietnamese was shown the same fact that immigrants have lack of Finnish friends.

Vietnamese seemed to have more Finnish friends than Somalis. (Pentikäinen 2005, 180 - 181.) I have learned during the years among immigrants, that the meaning of a friend is different for them than for the Finns and also, we discussed about this topic in the interviews. The concept of the friendship is diverse. In the Middle-Eastern culture as among the Kurds a friend keeps in touch every day, by calling or visiting. For them it is not a friendship if a person calls after one month or later in order to make an appointment. In their culture, friends go and come and call daily. Some of the interviewees confessed that they had started to notice that they themselves have changed in this matter during the years.

For those who had had Finnish friends in the beginning when they came to Finland, it had been a remarkable and strength giving matter and supported their coping, learning the language and culture. As it was brought up in the theory part, the lack of the Finnish friends and Finnish community participation creates and supports the feeling of the outsider. Again we come to the point of the minority status. As an ethnic group without strong relationship with the community, a person gains strong feeling of being in a minority, especially if it already exists in the roots of a person. In a long run this might lead to misunderstandings for example starting to see racism everywhere although if the happenings are the normal practices. Besides, it might increase the emotions that as minorities we need to fight for our rights.

While asking if there were other important topics which the interviewees wanted to point out as strength, most of them shared about the connections to their home country. They might be talking every day to their siblings and families in Kurdistan. Many of them travelled to Kurdistan every year. After the trip they felt empowered and had strength to continue their life in Finland. This matter was seen also among Somalis and Vietnamese in the research. (Pentikäinen 2005, 235 – 236). There is a clear need to have connection with the relatives and the home country.



### 7.5 Hobbies and health

The research about Somalis and Vietnamese described that they were not used to have hobbies in their home countries. (Pentikäinen 2005, 231). According to the interviews the same fact occurred. Despite of this mental and physical health including the hobbies as a theme is coloured dark green according its importance in the findings. Although they were not used to that concept it was surprising how many hobbies the Iraqi Kurdish women had found in Finland. They expressed that their hobbies were giving them strength and helping in coping. All of them used to walk outside with their friends especially in summer time. One of the interviewees did actively sports and also winter swimming. She was proud to tell about it. There were also such hobbies as reading the books, painting, writing stories, going out with friends, cleaning the home, sewing and watching TV. These all were the significant source of strength according to the theory also. In the hobbies can be seen also the talents and the capacity of the person.

The feeling of the healthiness has a great importance in the life of the interviewees. Many of them had faced some health problems which had reduced their strength. Therefore, in the Picture 2 there is one blue arrow which means a reducing factor. The feeling of the healthiness is empowering, but a physical sickness may cause also distress mentally which is a natural feeling with an experience of tiredness.

### 7.6 Strength from the religion, services and environment

These features are coloured in the picture with lighter green, because they did not have the same level of importance than those themes with the dark green. This interpretation came up from the interviews while the occurrence of a topic was counted. Moreover, the interviewees shared about these features shortly and then moved to the next theme. This does not delete it that some of these topics might have an essential meaning for many Kurdish women.

All the interviewees were Muslims but most of them did not practise the rituals. Anyhow all of them except one expressed that God gave them strength and helped in difficult situations. Religion can be seen also as a cultural matter, in a relation to the Kurdish community and moreover, it can be seen part of the identity and the self. I have understood that generally the Kurds are not very religious, but they mainly confess that they are Muslims.

The public services were praised especially the health care. When the health care had worked well and taken care in times of sickness, it can be considered a strong point in a person's life. One of the interviewees explained how the social worker had been a culture teacher for her more than her Finnish friend. She found that fact very much empowering.

In the themes of interviews there were the environment including the nature and neighbours. According to the interviews I concluded the nature to be as strength. Many of the interviewees enjoyed of the beautiful Finnish nature especially in the summer. They loved to walk by the lakes and spending time out with their friends. But concerning the neighbours, they did not actually know their neighbours. Only for one interviewee the neighbourhood created some kind of community, but it seemed weak. According to the interviews the neighbours can be a strength giving feature or a strength reducing fact. It depends on the neighbours. There were good experiences where the neighbours greeted and invited to their homes. But also there were bad experiences where the neighbours looked angry and complained about the noise of the children easily. Also the racism had occurred. This is why the neighbour arrow is two-way arrow, because it may increase or decrease strength. I gained expression from the interviews that the Iraqi Kurdish women would like to know their neighbours. They are used to have lot of connections with their neighbourhood; drinking tea together and talking. Also the Somalis did not have connections with their neighbours. Furthermore, they had faced lot of racism. Their neighbours said bad words to them and accused that they are noisy and smell bad. Their children were bullied in the yard and snowballs were thrown to their windows. (Tiilikainen 2003, 163 - 165.).

## 8 CONCLUSION OF THE FINDINGS

Conceptual Frame of the Study with its themes served well in the interviews. The ideas I gained from previous researches and materials were helpful and supported in creating the themes. Main resources of strength were found through these themes.

In the whole process I have respected the Iraqi Kurdish women and was willing to view matters from their viewpoint. My thesis can be seen as an enquiry where the strengths were discovered and appreciated. Moreover, I wanted to assist the Iraqi Kurdish women living in Finland to determine and notice their resources and strengths which they already have. The exploration served as one method in empowering Kurdish women to have more trust on themselves as a woman in a Finnish society. It was great to realize happy faces during the interviews. The atmosphere was free, the interviewees laughed sometimes while talking and we laughed together. I encouraged and praised their skills and strengths and how well they have coped and found their place in our society. Some of them inspired more to tell their life stories during the interview.

Iraqi Kurdish women are great survivors whose strengths are built in their background, in their identity starting from the childhood and by father's encouraging influence. The family structure is strong and especially children are the strength giving factor for mothers. As for their children the mothers manage to do anything.

In order to cope and survive in a new culture according to the theory and interviews, the most significant point was to learn the language. I heard many times during the interviews that language is the key. Language is the key for learning a new culture, to have more skills and education in a new country and finally to have a job. An essential strength is to help and support others which were even more important for them than income.

As strength the own cultural community seemed to become significant supporter while at the same time there was a lack of relationships with the Finnish community and friends. I have noticed the same matter while working among immigrants in Finland. If I asked from immigrant students, how many of them had Finnish friends or have visited a Finnish home, maybe only one of the twenty raised his/her hand.

Good health and hobbies are serving as strength giving factors. Very important strength providers are connections to the near relatives in the home country and also yearly trips to the home country. These were described humoristic way as charging a battery.

Religion and God had an importance for most of the interviewees although they did not give same emphasis for it than for example for their Kurdish community. Services in Finland were praised and environment in Finland is beautiful and have more meaning for some of the interviewees. Mostly they did not have connection with their neighbours although they seemed to miss it.

Strength reducing factors were concern about the future of their children and the life situations where they faced sicknesses. Neighbours could be a positive or a negative matter. If racism occurred in the neighbourhood, it reduced the feeling of welfare and happiness.

## 9 IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH RESULTS TO EMPOWERING SOCIAL WORK

While reading the Finnish books and research materials related to the immigrants, I noticed that the focus is mainly on weaknesses and challenges. Therefore, the question arises, are our social work practices among refugees and immigrants based on problems and problem solving. There is the need for knowledge of immigrants' challenges but do we discover the strengths which a refugee or immigrant has. Maybe it has been forgotten, partly. In order to prove this, there is no more need than open a content of a book or a research talking about immigrants. This kind of words can be found: suffering, traumas, sick and tired mothers, special challenges of immigrants and vanishing native language. The approach angle is easily problem based especially when we talk about refugees and asylum seekers. Therefore the topic about strengths and coping is even more inspirational to open up and to encourage us all to support positive possibilities and capacities which already exist or can be building up among immigrants.

An essential professional feature as social workers and services providers is to have a right attitude. In practice this means openness, sensitiveness and trust on people. We should start by recognizing the strengths of the immigrant service user. There is need to respect their culture and meet them as equals, to show the acceptance of diversity of people. Also, the importance of the whole family should be taken better into consideration and not to reason as individually as we are used to. Sometimes we may forget the gender aspect. While creating supportive systems for the immigrant women, we should not forget the immigrant men who have their own specific strengths and challenges. If the similar research could be done about the immigrant men, the findings might be partly different.

The question is, is it possible in social work that the immigrant service user is full worth of his/her own lives ruler and our role is only to support him/her. The

old Finnish proverb says that the carried water does not stay in the well. It has important message that as a social workers we should not provide answers for problems but we should ask from a service user: "What would you like to do for it? What kind of solution you have in your mind?" There is need to trust on person's capacity, and facilitate and support him/her to find solutions for his/her life. Use of participatory and anti-oppressive methods, and giving dignity and autonomy for an immigrant client are essential to be in practice.

In Finland our welfare systems have been great but at the same time they have created dependence. Maybe it has also disassembled down natural capacities we had before such as taking care of each other, comfort in sorrows and supporting in difficult times. All kind of services are provided by educated professionals. We talk about participation, but do the immigrants have opportunities to participate and bring their capacities, skills and cultures with them so that Finland could truly be a multicultural country, not only in nice speeches but in practices. While conducting the interviews, I noticed that in our society we have lost features that we could learn from other cultures such as from the Kurdish culture. The importance of the family and community and how to take care of each other are significant and beautiful features in the Kurdish culture. Also the time; there is always time for friendship. I sometimes wonder where we are hurrying all the time. We are so effective that we forget humanity.

Many helpful mechanisms have been created in order to support in the integration processes of the immigrants. Despite of it, not all of them integrate well nor feel themselves included. Knowledge about the cultures among the service providers and public is still needed. The network between service providers should be developed further, and also partnering with the NGOs working among the immigrants should be strengthening. The needs of immigrants should be asked and taken better into account. Empowering methods are needed in order to support the immigrants to discover their strengths and encourage their inclusion into our society. In addition, there is need for the Finnish friends especially in the beginning while an immigrant arrives to Finland. The Red Cross has been active in organizing friends for the refugees. Of course there is a need for prob-

er language courses of all kind of levels. It is good to remember that some of the refugees are illiterate and need a special language teaching and support. I want to remind that despite a person is illiterate, he/she has capacities and skills which can be strength and support his/her coping and integration process. As Butera & Levine (2009, 104) shared that people have four central needs: self-esteem, belonging, meaningful presence and control in order not to feel marginalized. The social work practices should support individual's self-esteem and find ways to guide a person to be and to exist as an equal participant and influential person, and to have control of his/her own life.

The viewpoint of my thesis was the perspective of a Kurdish woman herself. My concentration, while I made the interviews and analysed them was to hear the voice of a Kurdish woman. Through this approach the roles appearance was that the Iraqi Kurdish woman was an expert and as a researcher I was a learner. As a researcher I found myself in the situation and the process very natural. It was easy to build interaction with the interviewees and to dive in depths of the themes and concepts of strengths and coping.

Although I have been 20 years working and socialising among immigrants, I learned a lot during my thesis process. Many features were not new for me, but I found them from newer perspective and with deeper meaning. Therefore, in the future I wish to be a change maker and developer in social work practices in those matters which still need it.

At the end as conclusion I want to quote thoughts of one interviewee:

I say as conclusion of everything that it supports the integration/inclusion of a person, when he/she tries, tries to go inside to the culture and over all, learn the language... When I studied the Finnish language and went to work, step by step I started to accept this culture, all of this what is in Finland. Although, I sometimes have feeling that I want to go to another country, to a big country, where they have more life... I do not know how to express what I mean, but I mean lot of people, who go out in the evenings, there are a lot of relationships, such social life. I would like to it. But although now, even I have opportunities, I do not believe I could go

away from here, because, I have fully adapted here and accepted this life. I am used to this... Here the life is peaceful and safe and ok. I think this is better here for my children. (Interviewee 2)



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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: TOTAL NUMBER OF THE KURDS IN FINLAND 2011

<b>Language according to age and gender</b>	
	<b>Age groups total</b>
	<b>Gender total</b>
	<b>2011</b>
<b>Finland total</b>	
Kurd	8 623

Tilastokeskus. Accessed 19.2.2013.

<http://193.166.171.75/Dialog/Saveshow.asp>

## APPENDIX 2: KURDISH SPEAKING MEN AND WOMEN IN PIRKANMAA 2011 AND OTHER STATISTICS

**Language according to age and gender**

	<b>Age groups total</b>	
	<b>2011</b>	
	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
<b>Pirkanmaa</b>		
Kurds	380	216

Language according to age and gender																		
	2011																	
	35 - 39			40 - 44			45 - 49			50 - 54			55 - 59			60 - 64		
	To- tal	Me- n	Wom- en	To- tal	Me- n	Wom- en	To- tal	Me- n	Wom- en	To- tal	Me- n	Wom- en	To- tal	Me- n	Wom- en	To- tal	Me- n	Wom- en
<b>Pir- kanma a</b>																		
Kurd	56	37	19	43	21	22	46	32	14	24	16	8	8	5	3	8	3	5

State of birth according to age and gender							
	Women						
	2011						
	35 - 39	40 - 44	45 - 49	50 - 54	55 - 59	60 - 64	
<b>Pirkanmaa</b>							
Iraq	45	28	29	20	16	7	

## APPENDIX 3: ACTIVITY STATUS 31.12.2008

**Activity status according to nationalities in December 31st, 2008.**

Nationality	Info						
	Total	Employed	Unemployed	Age of 0 to 14 & students	Others, outside work force	Employment degree	Unemployment degree
Total	5 326314	2 377 181	233 487	1 297125	1418521	70,7	8,9
Finnish	5 183058	2 318 319	219 536	1 262269	1 382 934	71,3	8,7
Iraq	3 238	455	710	1 172	901	19,7	60,9
Afghanistan							61,0
Myanmar							74,7
Kenya							4,0

Tilastokeskus. Accessed 29.4.2013.

[http://www.stat.fi/til/tyokay/2008/01/tyokay\\_2008\\_01\\_2010-04-20\\_tie\\_002\\_fi.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/tyokay/2008/01/tyokay_2008_01_2010-04-20_tie_002_fi.html)

<b>Population according to activities. Language, main activity, gender and year as variables.</b>	
	<b>2011</b>
<b>Kurd</b>	
Employed	
Men	1 522
Women	624
Unemployed	
Men	1 068
Women	509

Tilastokeskus. Accessed 19.2.2013.

<http://193.166.171.75/Dialog/Saveshow.asp>