Edited by
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EMPOWERING

SOCIAL WORK: RESEARCH & PRACTICE

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Publication has been produced as part of Empowerment of Families with Children project

©Authors of the articles

This book has been peer-reviewed.

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Empowering Social Work: Research and Practice

Edited by Maritta Törrönen,
Olga Borodkina,
Valentina Samoylova,
Eveliina Heino

PREFACE

This publication has been produced as part of the Empowerment of Families with Children project. The key aims of the project are to develop practice in the delivery of preventive family services and social services for families with children, to foster the wellbeing of families with children and to promote mutual awareness and understanding of Russian and Finnish public service provision and family culture. In the course of the project, Finnish participants have developed preventive family services for Russian immigrant families living in Finland, while in Russia the focus has been on preventive family services for vulnerable families and families facing challenging life situations. The project will run from 29 April 2011 to 28 April 2014 and is coordinated by Helsinki University's Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education Kotka unit.

This publication makes a contribution towards the project aims by highlighting empowering perspectives and practices in social work through research. It consists of a series of articles, each approaching the topic of empowerment from a different perspective. The research findings presented in the publication are the result of collaboration between a number of individuals, with the authors representing universities across Finland and Russia. We would like to thank the authors for their outstanding contributions and the reviewers for their constructive and insightful feedback, which has been invaluable to the authors during the revision process.

Thanks are also due to our project partners: the City of Imatra, Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences, University of St. Petersburg, Faculty of Sociology, The International Centre of Social Service Studies as well as social centres in Vyborg, Pikalevo, Svetogorsk and the Admiralteysky district of St. Petersburg. We would also like to extend a particularly warm thanks to University of Helsinki, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Social Research.

We sincerely hope that this publication will convey novel ideas and inspiration, benefiting students, researchers and practical social workers alike.

In Helsinki, August 1st 2013

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EMPOWERING SOCIAL WORK: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is a key concept in social work. Empowering practices give the silenced voices of our society a better chance of being heard. As people become empowered, they can gain control of their lives and find ways to act in society.

This book, **EMPOWERING SOCIAL WORK: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE** consists of articles by experts in the field of social work from Finnish and Russian universities. The writers explore empowerment and disempowerment in the light of theoretical constructs linked to social policy, immigration, well-being and reciprocal relationships between clients and workers. Case studies are used to illustrate empowering and preventive practice in a variety of situations: in child protection, multicultural work, family work, and in working with children and adolescents.

There is no single, clear definition of empowerment, mainly because empowerment is seen as a context related concept that needs to be defined more specifically in different usages. This book does not aim to create 'the one and only' definition of empowerment, but rather to explore new aspects of this phenomenon. However, some recurring elements can be found in the articles, centering on the idea of participation by the people themselves, at the micro-, meso- and macro levels of society.

Empowerment means not only empowering individuals, but also acting politically to promote equality and solidarity in society. First, this means that individuals have opportunities to act in society and to gain control of decisions that affect their lives. The role of the expert then becomes one of promoting reciprocal dialogue between the service system and the citizen, while keeping in mind the important role of family and close relationships as crucial sources of well-being and support. Secondly, empowerment is more closely related to the prevention of problems in everyday life. It lends support to political claims to act before problems get too serious on the societal level. Thirdly, participation, as a theoretical, methodological and empirical concept, can be used to empower people.

The book has three parts: the first part discusses empowerment theory and social work; the second part offers glimpses into real-life empowering social work with families and individuals; and the third part analyses empowering social work with children and young people.

In the first part, Maritta Törrönen, Olga Borodkina and Valentina Samoylova examine reciprocity and trust in relationships as elements of interaction that have an empowering effect. These elements are tightly linked to the well-being of individuals, families, communities and societies. Reciprocity, in the positive sense, is usually seen as an empowering element of interaction, giving people satisfaction and joy in life. Listening to people's experiences and opinions does not mean that they should be left to manage their problems alone when their everyday life becomes difficult. On the contrary, their difficulties reveal the needs of individual communities within a society.

In the second part of the article, the same authors discuss empowerment as a current trend of social work in Russia. They describe the current situation where the clients' personal resources have become one of the central issues. This stems from an increase in the individual's responsibilities and privatization of many risks - conditions that have created a need for increasing use of empowering methods. The authors argue that in this situation it is necessary for social workers to build competence in using empowering methods; competence imbued with critical understanding, knowledge, and skills within an appropriate context of values.

The third article by the same authors focuses on family policy and the challenge of establishing such policy in Russia. Firstly, the authors discuss the attitudes of the clients towards the state, and the influence the country's history has had on these attitudes. The authors examine how several factors - the paternal policy model of the Soviet era, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the reforms of the 1990's, followed by a rapid decline in the real income of families, along with increases in other social and individual problems - have affected the functions of the family. Secondly, the authors focus on the formation of Russian family policy from the 1990's to the present day, discussing the family institution and factors in the relationship between family and state that challenge policy implementation. The authors believe that modern family policy should aim at strengthening the adaptive capacity of families, both through external support and by developing the families' internal resources, thus increasing the social competence the families need to solve problems that affect their lives.

The second part of the book deals with empowerment in social work. Annika Lillrank discusses empowerment in connection with the salutogenic approach in a case study of one immigrant woman handling pregnancy and the birth of her child. Lillrank explores what kinds of resources and resilience facilitate young mothers' adjustment to new cultural practices surrounding childbearing. Secondly, the author focuses on the development of an empowering dialogue with Finnish maternity care professionals. Connecting individual and social aspects, this article provides profound insight into how the client's sense of meaningfulness and coherence are supported, and her empowerment is enhanced, by her individual resources and the reciprocal dialogue between her and the health care professionals.

Eveliina Heino and Nadezda Kärmeniemi approach empowerment from a practical point of view. In their article they examine factors that prevent or enhance the clients' empowerment. In the first part of their article, the authors discuss the main challenges in client-worker relationships between Finnish workers and immigrant families with Russian background. The second part of the article describes a novel type of social work practice, cultural interpretation, and its significance for the clients' empowerment.

Marja Katisko's research focuses on child protection, and she identifies different categories of empowerment based on individual and societal viewpoints. The aim of her research is to describe how parents, children and adolescents of immigrant background experience the child protection system and services provided to them by this

system. The experiences of the study participants are explored in the light of empowerment theory, aiming to show which factors in their family lives, or in the services they have received, have promoted or prevented their empowerment.

Olga Borodkina and Yulia Fionik examine key issues in social work with people suffering from HIV/AIDS in Russia. The authors describe the current situation with HIV infections and the main directions of social policy, social services and social work with HIV-infected clients. The authors argue that the ongoing transformation of the Russian society demands the formation and development of new institutional forms corresponding to the changed conditions. The spread of HIV infection and other diseases that pose a serious threat to society has created a sphere of professional practice where such adjustment is needed. In addition, the authors make recommendations for the future development of social services, social work and the skills required of social workers, highlighting the importance of an empowering approach.

Susanna Rautio discusses family professionals' experiences of their work from the perspective of empowerment, aiming to outline the challenges and highlighting the professionals' experience in their daily work with families. The main focus is on examining the kinds of parent-professional relationships and collaboration that support empowerment of the clients. Implications for practice are also considered.

The third part of the book focuses on empowering social work with children and young people. Minna Veistilä examines the construction of well-being of children with Russian background during their acculturation process. The author poses the question of how children and parents in families of Russian background construct the well-being of the children, what similarities and differences exist in such constructions, and what kinds of elements these constructions are composed of. The aim of the article is to create a deeper understanding of the construction of well-being.

Mervi Kaukko discusses the participation and empowerment of unaccompanied minors, especially girls, in two residential units for children run by a Finnish reception center. In her article, the author explores the special conditions for participation and empowerment for children and adolescents who seek asylum without their parents. Further, she demonstrates how participatory action research could be used to find suitable, culturally sensitive techniques to enhance participation in decision-making by unaccompanied asylum seeker children.

Antti Kivijärvi and Eveliina Heino examine municipal youth work and its anti-racist practices in Finland. These practices include the stances taken by youth workers and the ways they address the issue of racism. The authors build their theoretical framework around the phenomenon of everyday racism, approaching it through the notion of empowerment. The main focus of the article is on a discussion of favourable conditions in which the empowerment of ethnic minority youth can take place. The authors define empowerment as the ability to overcome oppressive and racialising practices, and they suggest practises that can help to overcome disempowering conditions.

PART I

Empowerment theory and social work

CONTENTS

- (1) Trust in reciprocal relationships - The construction of well-being
- (2) Empowerment as a current trend of social work in Russia
- (3) Family policy in Russia: problems in the establishment process and new challenges

Maritta Törrönen, Olga Borodkina, Valentina Samoylova

Trust in reciprocal relationships - The construction of well-being

Introduction

Though individualism and new liberalism claim to explain the isolated actions of human beings in the postmodern world, this article hypothesizes, on the basis of earlier research (for instance Haavio-Mannila, et al. 2010; Törrönen 2012), that the social bonds between people have not disappeared, but that there is more emphasis on individual choice today. People keep social contact with those people who they think will be important to them should they encounter fragile situations where they will need help (see Haavio-Mannila et al. 2010; Törrönen 2001; 2007; 2010; 2012a).

Reciprocity, in its positive meaning, is usually seen as an empowering element of interaction, which gives people joy in life and satisfaction. Today's society is usually described by terms such as relational, pluralistic, fragmented and coincidental, replacing terms such as universalism, wholeness, uniformity, stability or order (see Bauman 1996). This kind of discussion seems to describe people as egoistic and individualistic, leaving behind the elements that hold people together and create bonds between them (Törrönen 2012b, 182). This kind of discussion is not always supported by the research, as the social relationships between people, even in the knowledge society, are visible in people's lives in many ways (see for instance Keizer et al. 2008; Lindenberg et al. 2006; 2007; Fetchenhauer 2010).

Well-being is seen as a complicated issue to research, and the framing of the research topic plays an important role. The broad understanding of well-being is based on Bourdieu's (1984) definition, which sees human well-being as a combination of economic, cultural and social capital. Although economic resources create the basis for an individual's livelihood, working life, housing and health, there are also other resources. Cultural resources are tied to education and family background (Bourdieu, 1994). Here, the multidimensional concept of well-being is understood specifically in connection to reciprocity as part of social capital, including interaction with people close by, with communities and with the society as a whole.

Positive reciprocal relationships are here understood to be created through experiences of trust. The content and implications of reciprocity as a concept will be analysed and discussed in relation to the concept of trust and how it builds or erodes robust relations between people. Both construction and erosion of well-being are difficult to examine; there are plenty of descriptions of experiences or of the states of well-being,

whereas there is an obvious lack of studies identifying the experiences that create well-being and analysing how the state of well-being is created and maintained.

In order to understand how well-being can be created and supported from a citizen-oriented point of view, we need a thorough analysis of how reciprocity is generated in the beginning of the 21st century. Research into reciprocity may also provide further and deeper knowledge of a societal shift away from an individualistic interpretation of human behaviour and towards reconstructed communal experience. This research article theoretically analyses reciprocal relationships with regard to trust relations and their connection to human well-being. Some cultural differences in the interpretations are pointed out at the end of this article.

Reciprocal Relationships

Personal experience of social and societal reciprocity has profound ontological significance for an individual, and it is one of the most important factors in creating well-being. Research into reciprocity can be seen as a contribution to international social welfare research, where attention is focused on well-being and the communities that hold people together (see Becker 1986; Ostrom and Walker 2003). Because there are also experiences of non-empowering interaction between people, which can also be devastating, it is likewise necessary to explore the area of non-reciprocity.

Although studies into welfare and well-being are prevalent in sociological literature, there is still a growing need to investigate subjective experiences of well-being and the dynamics of reciprocity in creating and maintaining well-being. The significant changes that took place in the organisation and provision of social services and health care at the beginning of the 21st century have highlighted the need for understanding reciprocity. New liberal ideas stress individual choice and responsibility instead of solidarity and shared responsibilities. These developments have taken place in several countries – for example, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Finland (Koskiahio 2008), as well as Russia – with very little critical analysis of their consequences. As sociological research shows, Russian society is characterized by social disunity and weakness of both traditional and new interpersonal structures (Levada 2000, 168). The social atomisation process began in 1970 and was caused by human waste from the state; the atomisation of the post-Soviet man only worsened (Trapkova 2004).

Historically, reciprocity has existed across societies, and is of particular importance during times of rapid social transformation. In terms of a definition, reciprocity is closely associated with such concepts as 'sociability, social networks, social support, trust, community and civic engagement' (Morrow 1999, 744; see also Seligman 2002). It makes visible the underlying ideologies and motives of a society.

Reciprocity is linked to the strong research tradition of social capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Becker, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Putnam et al. 1994), wherein changes in communities are studied. Reciprocity contains both interpersonal and social dialectics in connection to social capital (Coleman 1990; Morrow 1999, 747). Experiences of well-being are understood to be one aspect of social capital, which can reflect dyadic, societal or

even global concerns (Coleman 1990, 2). In their definition of social capital, Putnam et al. (1994, 167) state that trust, norms and social networks can improve the functioning of the society, by strengthening the internal solidarity and prosperity of the entire society (Ibid., 169, 176; also Putnam 2000, 19). Although social capital has been widely studied, reciprocity still remains uncharted territory, at least in the context of Finnish society (see Törrönen 2012a).

Reciprocity, as understood in connection to social capital, is a concept that includes both an individual and a collective aspect (Putnam 2000, 20). From an individual perspective, social capital is connected to social networks and to the people we know. Networks contain mutual obligations: 'I'll do this for you now, in the expectation that you will return the favour'. From the collective aspect, social capital affects the wider community. It is not directly combined with the connections among persons. This means that a well-connected individual in a well-connected society is likely to be better connected to the society than, for instance, a well-connected individual in a poorly connected society (Ibid.).

Social capital helps to strengthen the interactions that individual members of society have with each other, including the acceptance of common rules, practices and institutions. People find mutual understanding among those who hold opinions similar to their own and are more likely to feel a commitment to them. If social capital is weak, group cohesiveness is lost and it is difficult for members of the society to reach common goals (Harisalo and Miettinen 2010, 18-20). Social capital is correlated with several factors such as individual wealth, work satisfaction, health and an individual's ability to participate in a smoothly functioning democratic system (Kouvo 2010, 166). Good social relationships strengthen and promote individuals' psychological and emotional well-being. For instance, according to previous research, young people who feel like strangers in a society tend to be unsatisfied with their state of health and emotional well-being, have a lower threshold of perception of stress effects, rarely experience positive emotions, and perceive themselves as less happy than those who feel included in society (Samoylova et al. 2012, 79).

Social relationships can be analysed according to their durability and connectivity. Commerce operates on the principles of mutual understanding and expectations. The relationship lasts as long as all partners uphold these principles with regard to their interactions with each other; the relationship will cease to be meaningful if there is no interaction among the individuals. In order for social relationships to last, they require some kind of mutually experienced meaning, such as shared expectations, and must be reciprocal. They involve several interactive processes that work together to connect people to one another. The things that bind people together include, for instance, mutually shared opinions, control of others, conciliations, negotiations, individual rights and respect for one another (Azarian 2010, 326-327; see also Seikkula 1994, 6; Ahokas 2010, 145-147; Widmer et al. 2008, 4). The degree to which an individual is committed to his/her own community is directly related to how social support is visible in his/her life, and how he or she experiences this support (Newcomp 1990). This kind of knowledge regarding how well-being is constructed is used in social

research to interpret the larger changes in the society, for instance concerning collectivism and individualism. Putnam et al. (1994) found that well-functioning social networks have a positive effect on the prosperity of the society as a whole. Putnam (2000) also found that people in the United States are forming new kinds of social traditions based on individual choice. The understanding of how the transformation of society in the US is taking place varies. The changes that take place in a society are difficult to verify empirically and there is no general consensus on the definition of social capital.

Recent decades have shown an increase in the development of non-reciprocal interactions in which people's economic, cultural and social resources are considered contextual. Economic resources create the basis for an individual's livelihood, working life, housing and health. Cultural resources are tied to education and family background (Bourdieu 1994), while education and family background make obvious that the current situation in a person's life is connected to the time before the person existed and also to the image of what his future looks like. Cultural resources make visible the power relations of a society and their possibilities to take care of themselves.

The concept of reciprocity can be understood as a positive and empowering concept, and non-reciprocity as a negative concept. Non-reciprocity leaves human beings outside of the social community and thus also contains elements of exclusion, for instance in its extreme forms as prolonged unemployment, difficulties with livelihood, drug abuse and poor mental health (Törrönen 2012b, 184). Reciprocity is closely linked to the power relationships between individuals, communities and societies. So, as a concept, it is broader than interactions between people; it is a societal concept. At the same time, the concept of reciprocity is linked to the concept of social support, which describes interaction in the form of actions and functioning. Therefore, aside from the resource function, social support has an emotional, evaluative and informative function. Of particular importance in terms of reciprocity, emotional function, as well as its effects on feelings for people with close connections, plays a big role.

Social support is part of people's everyday life when reconstructing their well-being. Reciprocity can thus be defined as being related to actions and creation (Törrönen 2012b, 183). Reciprocity also comes close to the ideas of helping and solidarity (see, for instance, Lindenberg et al. 2010). It is important to take into account the gender perspective when exploring differences or similarities in experiences of reciprocity. Also, the generational overlap needs to be understood with respect to reciprocity (see Sennett 2003).

Trust in Human Relationships

Reciprocity can be seen through actions based on trust in human relationships as well as in the society as a whole. Trust includes both social and moral elements which are combined with free will and norms of the society. This can be clarified by the proverb that you can choose your friends but not your relatives. Individuals take into account people important to them according to their own values and motives; they

give them reasons to act on their behalf or not. On the other hand, trust is the foundation for building a relationship based on reciprocity. It is the core support structure of reciprocity, like the skeleton in the human body. Scientists have paid attention to the significance of the phenomenon of trust between people in different areas and at different levels of society. Already, the leading role of trust in shaping public relations was noted by representatives of the German school as 'interpretive sociology'. Max Weber and Georg Simmel called it one of the most important synthesizing forces in society (Weber 1990; Simmel 1996; see also Seligman 2002). Seligman (2002) also notes the contextual element of trust. He is convinced that the human interaction is at the same time connected to the old, tribal, ethnic, and religious ties as well as to the contemporary ties.

Trust is directly 'entwined' into a mechanism to ensure the integration and stability of a society. According to Parsons (1998) trust is one of the preconditions for social stability. Trust is involved in the affiliation of group or community identities, and in various forms of civic associations, for instance political parties, interest clubs, ethnic associations, religious denomination and self-help groups. Group identity may be a professional, corporate, age, gender, ethnic, racial, religious or social identity. Although, civic activity can be built according to different organisational principles, membership is determined by the general concepts of making certain commitments along with mutual trust (see Zabolotnaya 2003). Socio-cultural and political identity create a community with a specific set of meanings that attracts people, and have become the foundation for the predictability of the behaviour of other people. Fukuyama (1995) considers that trust arises within the community while waiting for a permanent and honest focus on shared values of behaviour on the part of the other community members. According to Sztompka (1999), the prevalence of installation on confirmed and mutual trust leads to a "culture of trust" in society. Blind, naive trust may temporarily promote a "culture of trust", but it will be one-sided and will be destroyed with the appearance of new cases that do not justify the trust.

There is not always freedom to act on a voluntary basis, but many social commitments and roles also have to take into consideration. Trust is based on the freedom to act. In situations where there is no freedom to choose how to act, which are tightly controlled by other people's actions, the trust does not exist. Formation of individual capabilities and morality is based on the appearance of the ability to move from one role to another, and the possibility of these roles to transform are formed by the basis of trust (Seligman 2002).

Cultural Understanding of Reciprocity

The level of trust in a society can be measured and compared between different periods of time in the same country and between countries. The best known such measurements are the estimates of the World Value Survey (WVS), a project studying values in European countries, which began in 1981. Currently there are two simultaneous projects with the same methodology, making them comparable sources of data for a sample covering more than 60 countries on all continents, including Russia, Ukraine and other former Soviet republics. WVS/EVS conduct representa-

tive surveys of the population (a sample of more than 1,000 people in the country), consisting of a traditional question such as 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?' According to the WVS, within a list of countries in 1999, Finland placed 5th in trust relations (index of confidence -57.4), while Russia was in 29th place (23.9) (Belyanin & Zinchenko, 2010). What can we say of these results? At least it shows how people in these countries interpret their trust relationships. According to the data, informants in Finland seem to be more trusting of their peers than informants in Russia. According to Sztompka (1999), democracy favors a "culture of trust". Meanwhile self-confidence is a prerequisite for democracy, the success of which involves a number of things: communication between citizens; tolerance; compromise and consensus instead of conflict and struggle; a sufficient level of civility in the public debates; citizen participation in public life; high educational level of citizens. On all these points, the situation in Finland is more favorable than at the present time in Russia.

The phenomenon of trust captures the opacity of human social interaction. It is no accident that the modernisation processes of modern societies, along with social and political change in post-communist societies, intensified scientific interest in trust as a principle of constructing social relations. For instance, earlier in the 1990s there existed in Russian society a 'stable background distrust towards institutions and those in authority' (Levada 2000, 168). The only relative predictability that was taken for granted was trusting partners, colleagues, relatives and friends.

According to research, the level of trust among youth towards people outside the family and circle of friends is low, and is lowest towards authorities (Samoylova et al. 2012, 121). Recent literature also shows an increase in the development of non-reciprocal interactions wherein people's economic, cultural and social resources are not met. People's interaction cannot always be seen as unambiguously reciprocal or favourable (see Yesilova 2009; Veenstra et al. 2010). Therefore, it is also important to pay attention to hurtful, exclusive, painful and fraught non-reciprocal experiences (see McCormic 2009; Lindenberg et al. 2010).

As the concept of reciprocity contains both positive and negative aspects, the concept of trust is also twofold in this sense; the negative meaning can also have positive effects. When we think about trust, it should be noted that there are some positive aspects of mistrust. In a survival situation, the lack of support from the state has led many people from different social groups to seek their own ways and means of salvation. In such circumstances, there is often an awakening of personal power and an appeal to one's own personal resources (Zinchenko 1998). In addition, distrust of social institutions in a market economy makes some individuals and groups strongly motivated to make personal efforts in any field of activity. In this sense, we can speak about the mobilising function of mistrust and its constructive potential (Vershinin 2001). Also, trust is twofold in the sense that it on the other hand supports stability of social bonds or emotional and interpersonal attachment among people with a shared identity, common goals and values, and the mutual predictability of reactions; but on

the other hand, as a definite advantage, provides people support in new and unpredictable social situations.

Returning to the individualism and selfishness noted above as negative phenomena of modern society, we note that they are correlated with new liberal ideas, stressing the importance of individual choice and individual responsibility instead of solidarity and shared responsibility. However, the dissemination of these ideas in Russia has some advantages. They arise from the revitalization of individual resources and the increasing role of personal involvement in individual affairs, instead of the unlimited paternalism that characterised Soviet society. At present in Russia, there is tendency of development of neo-liberal policies. In the social sphere, it is associated with an increase in the role of the market, a reduction of public expenditure on social services, privatization, and increasing individual responsibility. Strengthening individual responsibility means that today, primarily citizens, then government, must take responsibility for the achievement of social integration (Borodkina 2012).

Now, young people are willing to rely on themselves more, making choices and taking responsibility to a greater extent than older generations.

As trust and reciprocity develop between free and independent people, based on their own choice – to trust or not to trust, to participate or not to participate – this qualitatively new basis for relations between the Russian people began to take shape, for example, with the development of the social support networks (Bezrukova 2011). Trust as a manifestation of free will does not only follow the leader or the majority opinion.

The changes in Finnish society concern relationships between the public and private sectors. Finland can be called a welfare society with mixed services from the public and private sectors including organisations, but there are threats that the situation will change dramatically (see Julkunen 2006). People are used to claiming their rights from society while having a certain freedom to act. Now the freedom of individuals to choose is stressed. How it impacts, for instance, the delivery of social and health services, or people and their communities, will be visible in the near future. The possibilities are also twofold: the decrease in public services will increase market-oriented services, which may strengthen the polarisation of people into two categories: those who are working and have enough resources to choose and get better services than others and those not working or who lack adequate resources. The decrease in public services may also shift the responsibility for taking care of those in need to families and relatives. Thus, these positive trust relations are activated and count on the reciprocal actions needed during critical periods of life, which may in turn tighten the relationships within communities. The family orientation of the society might increase, but it may also impair the situations of those who are already vulnerable, or do not have close relationships or families.

In the Finnish context, reciprocity becomes evident during critical periods that are understood as phases of life where the need for support and care grows considerably. These periods provide clear vantage points to view the interplay between public and

private sector behaviour, and how they function together in vulnerable life situations. These periods are often connected with social work interventions and support.

These critical periods of everyday life bring an individual's dependence upon, or independence from, other people or society to the forefront. An examination of the dynamics of the ever-shifting borders between the public and private sectors, as they relate to the care of an individual, can shed light on the concept of reciprocity. What is interesting is how people adjust when they arrive at these borders, and how they will relate to them. The question of reciprocity is not only a question of interaction between individuals and networks of individuals; it is also a question of responsibilities involving the delivery of services, and the functions of social institutions and authorities in different societies (Törrönen 2011).

Conclusions

Though individualism and new liberalism claim to explain the isolated actions of human beings in the postmodern world, this article posited that social bonds, together with material resources, are important among people in the different societies. However, in the public discussion, there is greater emphasis on individual choice and individualism today, which interestingly resonate differently in different societies, with Russia and Finland used as examples here.

Here the complex concept of well-being is understood in connection to reciprocity as part of social capital in connecting an individual and a collective aspect. Individually interpreted reciprocity is then connected to mutually obligatory social networks and to the people we know. Viewed widely, reciprocity concerns wider communities. In contradiction to the public discussion, people keep social contact with those who they think will be important to them if they should encounter fragile situations, or were in need of help (see Haavio-Mannila et al., 2010; Törrönen 2001; 2006; 2007; 2010; 2012). Individuals take into account these important people according to their own values and motives. The quality of the relationships to these people gives them reasons to act on their behalf or not; trust makes the positive reciprocal relationships possible.

This article promised to theoretically analyse reciprocal relationships in relation to trust relations and their connection to human well-being. Thus, the meaning of reciprocity has at least a twofold character, both as positively and negatively understood. There are elements of sensitive and fragile interactions with people and communities or different societies, possibly also known as intergovernmental actions, and elements of intra-action within people, communities and societies, which are translated into feelings and transactions. These "inter- and intra-" parts are in a continuous process of change and have an ambiguous impact on each other.

The relation between reciprocity and trust can be described clearly in the following figure:

The figure illustrates both reciprocity and positive interaction in human relationships. If there is non-reciprocity, there is no trust. Reciprocity is based on the trust relations and is visible in the action of human behaviour and in the creation of human relationships.

This article wants to shake up the increasingly critical and biased discussion of individualism and new liberalism. The critique by many researchers describes the development as inevitable and people are understood as powerless. First, by analysing the mechanism of human behaviour and actions, the article shows that despite individualistic features, there are still powers that make us as collective actors: we can more easily trust those people with whom we can identify ourselves. Also, the research strongly confirms that the welfare societies are doing well in manifold ways in the world. Welfare societies are based on the collective understanding of solidarity. That should be taken seriously in politics and in research and not be forgotten. However, there are discussions that there are many reasons for the decrease of well-being in welfare societies too.

Secondly, the researchers' critique of new liberalism is taken uncritically and it is overwhelmingly refereed. The critique is used as a striking weapon, as there would be no place for discussion. Also, in the development of new liberal ideas, there can also be positive side effects if it empowers people to act. It might also make us think about experts in a renewed way, so that people themselves and their own experiences as individuals and also as a collective are better taken into account in the decision making in different societies and in their services. That does not mean that people should be left alone during critical periods of their everyday life. On the contrary, it signifies the needs of individual communities within a society. The society and the communities should act reciprocally, creating trustful relations.

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Empowerment as a current trend of social work in Russia

Introduction

In Russia, the development of social work practice is determined by at least three major factors. First, the profession of social work is relatively new in Russia. Social work was only officially recognized as a profession in 1991. In the years that followed, social work sought its subject, sought its form as a science and a profession, and became established as an institution. These processes have not yet reached completion. Secondly, social work – in Russia, certainly – is strongly regulated by the state. There is a reciprocal connection between state regulation of social work and paternalistic patterns in social work practice. The third reason has to do with the historical development of social work. The theory of social work has a long history outside Russia, but within Russia social work has begun to develop fairly recently, and it appears that this development has been influenced by European and American theories.

Some of the main issues of social work in Russia – establishing social work as an institution, the relationship of social work with social policy, the philosophy and methodology of social work – have recently become the subjects of sociological analysis (E.R. Smirnova-Yarskaya, M.V. Firsov, O.I. Borodkina, E.I. Holostova, V.N. Kelasyev, I.A. Grigoryeva, V.A. Samoylova, L.G. Guslyakova, and others). Despite differences and distinct approaches, most researchers agree that social work develops in conjunction with the transformation of society, and that the directions in which social work practice is developing coincide with directions seen in Western countries. Social inclusion and prevention of social problems have been discussed as main directions and tasks of contemporary social work in Russia. In our opinion, one of the effective tools for realizing such policy is empowering practice in social work. Moreover, in a “risk society” the role of empowerment becomes more important than it has been in the past, since effective prevention of risk is possible by empowering clients and organizations. Thus, the main argument we wish to pursue in this article is this: In a risk society, the value of empowerment increases, and prevention – as a major trend of social work in a risk society – can mainly be implemented successfully through empowerment-oriented practice. These central theses have determined the structure of this article, consisting of sections that deal with empowerment discourse, empowerment and social prevention, empowerment in a risk society, and some crucial issues of empowering practice in Russian social work.

Empowerment in social work

In Russian social work, empowerment is a relatively new topic. In fact, empowerment started to appear in scientific discussions only after the book "Principle of empowerment in social work", edited by F. Parslow, was published in Russia in 1997. In other countries, empowerment was introduced into the theory and practice of social work within a period which extends from the late 1980's to the early 1990's. The tradition of empowerment, of course, has a long history in social work. R. Adams makes the following observations:

The antecedents to empowerment are a combination of traditions of mutual aid, self-help, and, more recently, movements of liberation, rights and social activism, strengthened by anti-racism, feminism, critiques of inequalities and oppressions arising from social class, age, disability, sexuality, religion and other differences. (Adams 1996, 2).

The main idea of empowerment is to overcome contradictions between independence and dependence, independence and guardianship, and civil rights and the government. Particularly, empowerment focuses on enabling representation for groups suffering from discrimination. This serves the purpose of developing the clients' life management skills and their capacity for independent living.

In social work practice, there are several key areas: empowering individuals, empowering groups, empowering communities, and empowering organizations. Literature on social work provides detailed analyses of all these types of activation (Adams 2003; Simon 1994). In this article, the main characteristics of different types of empowerment will be briefly described.

When the goal is empowering individuals, the work focuses on the key roles of social workers and clients. It is significant that empowerment potentially represents an added dimension in all of them. In social work practice, empowering individuals is often realized as self-empowerment. Self-empowerment is closely linked to the ideas of self-help, self-change and self-determination, which have always been present in the context of social work. Self-change of the client is one of the goals in counseling and various therapies (Dryden, Felthan 1994). Self-determination means that clients receiving social services have the freedom to choose how to act and to make decisions for themselves (Biestek, 1961). However, it is important to notice that social work practice also calls for self-empowering social workers. Before empowering other people, social workers need to empower themselves. Therefore, their empowerment as service providers and the empowerment of service users are closely related (Stanton 1990, 129).

When groups are the target of empowering social work, two types of groups are involved: self-help groups and worker-led groups.

Groups can provide support for the individuals, reduce the risk of isolation, offer a context in which personal skills can be developed and practiced and

a mean by which an individual, whose consciousness has been raised, can work towards fulfilling heightened personal expectations. (Adams, 2004, 77).

Community work involves empowering people to analyze and manage the sources of their problems and to develop their own strategies. Empowering an organization is a process which is implemented in all the major stages of an organization's development: origination, informal organization, the emergence of leadership, beginning of formal organization, and appointment of paid staff and professional workers (Adams 2007, 117-135)

Empowerment is the purpose of social work (Parsons 2008). The focus on strengths and empowerment has gained considerable prominence over the last couple of decades. It also represents a major paradigm shift from the problem-based approach that has been with social work for such a long time (Cowger 1994, 262). There is also a rapidly developing abundance of literature, inquiries and practice methods in a variety of fields that bear a striking similarity to the strengths perspective in social work – for instance, developmental resilience, healing and wellness, solution-focused therapy and asset-based community development (Saleebey 2001, 2). These elaborations are a reaction to our culture's continued obsession and fascination with psychopathology, abnormality, and moral and interpersonal aberrations (Saleebey 2001, 2)

Professional practice from a strengths perspective demands a different way of seeing clients, their environments, and their current situations (Saleebey 2001, 1). In this approach, the social worker is seen as a fellow human being who struggles with issues of everyday life, developing vision, raising consciousness, taking action, and engaging in praxis (action, reflection on the action, return to action and reflection) in order to develop critical perspective and to challenge the indirect (internalized) and external power blocks that keep us oppressed (Lee 2001). The strengths perspective is the basis for empowerment. Empowerment includes the idea of understanding the dynamics of difficult life situations and seeing the need for both personal support and structural changes. In the context of empowerment, people are perceived from the we-perspective instead of the other-perspective. Difficulties are a natural part of everyday life, and they can affect anyone.

According to Miley et al. (2004, 81), practitioners who use the strengths perspective need to reflect on their orientation to practice, their view on the client systems, and their interpretations of the issues the clients represent. They need to view problems as challenges, turning points, or opportunities for growth. Using words such as "challenge" instead of "problem", and talking about "strength" as opposed to "pathology", or "future" as opposed to "past", creates more positive frames of mind for client and social worker alike. According to Breton (2008), there are five components which are essential for the disempowered to become empowered. The components are: social action, political awareness, the right to say and to "have a say", recognizing oneself and being recognized as competent, and the use of power. Based on this discussion, the paper then addresses the requirements for empowerment-oriented practice, which, it is argued, falls under two major headings: the principle of collegiality, and group and community work.

According to Saleebey (2002, 23), strength-based approaches involve the following principles: (1) *Every individual, group, family and community has strengths*. The family in front of the social worker possesses assets, resources, wisdom and knowledge that, at outset, the social worker knows nothing about. (2) *Trauma and abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity*. Literature on the resilience of children and adults shows that most individuals – even children – when confronted with persistent or episodic crisis, disorganization, stress, trauma or abuse are able to somehow surmount the adversity (Saleebey 1996, 16). (3) *Assume that you do not know the upper limits of the capacity to grow and change and take individual, group and community aspirations seriously*. Saleebey (2001, 15) suggests that instead of regarding the assessment or diagnosis of the client as an indication of the client's limitations, the client will be better served when we make a pact with his/her promise and possibility. (4) *Social workers serve clients best by collaborating with them*. Saleebey (2001, 16) suggests that ultimately a collaborative stance may make us less vulnerable to the more political elements of helping: paternalism, victim blaming or victim-creating, and preemption of client views. (5) *Every environment is full of resources*. In every environment there are individuals, associations, groups and institutions that have something to give, something others may desperately need: knowledge, succor, an actual resource or talent, or simply time and place. (6) *Caring, caretaking and context*. According to Saleebey (2001), all families must be permitted and assisted in caring for their members. Also, all paid caregivers need to be able to give support and quality that is commensurate with highest ideals of care without subverting their own well-being. The right to care boils down to the fact that all people needing care receive it.

By analyzing different types of social work practice, it is possible to identify the following essential elements of empowering practice:

Collaborative partnerships with clients, clients groups, and constituents; a central practice emphasis on the expansion of clients' capacities, strengths, and resources; a dual working focus on individuals and their social and physical environments; the operating assumption that clients are active subjects and claimants; the selective channeling of one's professional energies toward historically disempowered groups and individuals. (Simon 1994, 24).

As we have noted, Russian discourse on empowerment issues has started only recently, partly under the influence of co-operative projects in the social sector between Russia and EU member states (Borodkina O., Samoylova V. 2013). As an example, we would like to mention the South-East Finland-Russia cross-border cooperation programme. Discussion of empowerment issues within the Russian-Finnish project "Empowerment of Families with Children" (2011-2013) demonstrated the relationship of prevention and empowerment in social work practice.

Empowerment and social prevention

The empowering approach is connected to social prevention, which focuses on

actors. Strengthening the client as an active actors and supporting them to develop new skills are necessary conditions for successful prevention.

It is possible to identify several main models of empowerment-based practice. The first model, put forth by Cox and Parsons (1994) and Gutierrez et al. (1998), suggests overcoming barriers at three levels:

(1) personal (feeling, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs regarding the ability to influence and manage one's social problem situation), (2) interpersonal (experience with others that facilitate or hinder problem management or resolution) (3) sociopolitical participation (behavior in relation to societal institutions/organizations that facilitate or hinder individual and group efforts toward meeting need and social change) (Cox, Parsons 2000, 119)

The second empowerment-based practice model was developed on the basis of Lee's conceptualization and multidimensional model that addresses intervention in four dimensions. The first dimension encompasses interventions with individuals (assessing personal and environmental needs and resources, finding resources, understanding problems, etc). The second dimension encompasses interventions that target identified problems (education, self-help, mutual support, networking, etc.)

The third dimension focuses on changes in the environment (social service system, health care, social policy), and the final dimension on interventions that involve clients in the broader political aspects of their problems, including social actions and other collective efforts. As Cox and Parsons note:

The dimensions are nonlinear and are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they are often simultaneous and cyclic. The social worker serves as a catalyst through that process by raising questions about the relationship between various private troubles and related public issues, resource access, and rights and by providing information and resources that assist client groups to act on their own behalf. (Cox, Parsons 2000, 120)

Lee's conception is very close to both models. On the one hand, her model focuses on oppression on three levels: personal, interpersonal and societal. On the other hand, she adds five perspectives to her practical framework:

a) historical view of oppression, including the history of social policy related to oppressed groups:

b) an ecological view, encompassing knowledge of individual adaptive potentialities and ways people cope and/or power structures and their inequities;

c) an ethclass perspective focusing on realities of class structure, racism, ethnocentrism, and classism as well as heterosexism;

d) a feminist perspective focusing on the oppression of women, the different voice, the personal as political (and nature of power-e.g., power me be infinite); and

e) a critical perspective, the critique and conscious awareness of the above four perspectives (Lee 1994, 22)

The comprehensive model by Sadan was developed using the problem-solving framework. The goal of the empowerment process is to create positive outcomes for both the individual and the community. At the individual level, positive outcomes include new coping skills, developing self-awareness, feeling part of a group, mastering socio-political skills, learning self-evaluation, etc. Positive outcomes at the community level include support and networking, creating independent or alternative solutions, finding communality, etc. (Sadan 1997).

We propose that the social prevention framework should be used to facilitate empowering processes in Russian social work. To support this claim, a brief analysis of the concepts of social prevention is necessary.

In modern Russia, the needs of a changing society stimulate the formation and development of new institutional forms. These institutional forms correspond to the changing needs of the client in this society. In a time of social, economic and political transformation, the development of institutionalized forms of social prevention is of major importance to the stability of society (Borodkina 2012). Consequently, the main trends of modern social work are primarily involved with developing preventive social work. In modern society, the ideology of social work does not revolve solely or primarily around the idea of intervening in difficult crisis situations, but rather focuses on ways to prevent such situations. Prevention-oriented social work practice has actively taken root in recent years, in Western countries as well as Russia. Including preventive components in social work is especially important when dealing with social problems such as drug addiction, alcoholism, homelessness, and social orphanhood.

In recent years, the concept of social prevention has been extensively used in both scientific literature and in political activity. As a result, defining social prevention can be difficult. Coordination of the interests of the state and the individual is connected with questions concerning the preservation of society and the stability of social systems. In sociology, the emphasis is on social policy, with the aim of preventing social problems such as inequality, poverty and unemployment, among others (J. Clark, T. Marshal, G. Espin-Andersen). The development of the preventive strategy has proceeded alongside the development of a new model of the welfare state.

An analysis of the modern concepts of social prevention enables us to distinguish between preventive concepts of social work focused on the individual and those founded in socio-political ideas. For the client, prevention requires professional intervention at the earliest possible stage of crisis development. Intervening in risk situations calls for knowledge of the social context and living conditions of the client. Such knowledge allows for routine planning and/or strategic intervention in socially difficult situa-

tions or legal infractions. However, interventions of this type are limited to individual clients. In addition to social prevention focused on the individual, there is also socio-political prevention. At the core of many such socio-political concepts lies the notion of social competence. On the one hand, this notion of social competence requires the expansion of social networks. On the other hand, it requires consideration of all the factors shaping the clients' living conditions when planning preventive practices (Flosser, Otto 1992, 4-16). Thus, individual preventive strategies focus on correction. They regulate the life goals and actions of the client in accordance with the prevailing system of social norms, values and standards. Socio-political prevention is focused on the formation of structures which support the individual's constructive interaction with and within the environment.

The preventive model of empowerment oriented practice addresses intervention at four levels. These levels are: individual, family, group or community, and sociopolitical level. This model focuses on the goal of strengthening individuals, families, social groups, communities, and social welfare and educational programs. A further area of focus is interaction between individuals, families, and larger systems.

The preventive model of empowerment oriented practice improves the client's situation by decreasing social risks (for example, unemployment, abuse, poverty, poor education, crime, ill health, domestic violence). As people are facing the challenges of the risk society, the role of the preventive model of empowerment oriented practice is becoming increasingly important.

Empowering social work in a risk society

In a risk society, empowerment-oriented practice is the best way of carrying out preventive social work. The following comments on the discourse on risk management should be considered in relation to this argument.

Contemporary trends in social work are, in many respects, defined by neoliberalization. In practice, this has the consequence of shifting the focus of social work from meeting needs to dealing with risks. Stephen A. Webb offers the following periodization of transformations in social work:

Between 1850 and 1935, the period referred to as classical modernity, the main types of social activity were charity and philanthropic work, and the main focus of social work was on improvement. The next period, modernity, (1945-1979), was characterized by universal state sponsored social work with a focus on need. Since 1979, there has been a period of late modernity, with neoliberal social work focusing mainly on risk. (Webb 2006, 32).

Neoliberalism, within the social context, is concerned with increasing the role of the market, competition and privatization, and reducing public expenditure on social services, thus strengthening individual responsibility. Neoliberalism has also increased the flexibility of social policy in terms of cost-effectiveness and efficiency criteria. E. Giddens declares that neoliberalism is the political program that can provide societies with solutions to the problem of risk.

The welfare state is a system which is designed to protect you against risk and contingency in life: the risk of illness, the risk of disablement, the risk of becoming unemployed, the risk of becoming divorced. (Giddens 1999, 2).

The strengthening of individual responsibility also means that today it is the citizen, rather than the state, that has to take the responsibility for achieving social integration. In this situation, the question of the clients' personal resources becomes one of the central issues that create a need for the increased use of empowering methods. As Webb has pointed out: "Neo-liberal conception of self-governance dovetails nicely into notions of empowerment in the caring professions" (Webb 2006, 57).

Empowerment can refer to user participation in services and to the self-help movement generally, in which groups take action on their own behalf, either in cooperation with, or independently of, statutory services. (Thomas and Pierson 1995, 134-5)

Though need and risk are certainly connected, in modern social work practice there is a growing tendency towards assessment of privatized risk, i.e. risk connected with individual factors, instead of risk within the community as a whole. Privatization of risk means that the clients are increasingly expected to take responsibility for dealing with risk independently (Webb 2006; Bauman 2001). This means that there is increasing responsibility on the client's part for individual decision-making involving risk. At the same time, social work, when dealing with this risk, should take into account both individual and group risk factors. Strategies for the regulation of risk have to encompass various social groups, including marginal groups. Risk assessment is an essential part of this process. It identifies loss or potential harm on the basis of a rational analysis of events. It balances the risk of harm with the ability to manage that risk. Risk assessment includes identifying, measuring, and prioritizing risks. Webb remarks:

In social work the assessment of risk often lacks scientific rigour and may or may not be modeled in a satisfactory way. Some uncertainties can be reduced by further research while others remain irreducible. (Webb 2004, 19).

Therefore, the role of the social worker as a risk assessor is extremely important, and skill in empowering social work is needed in this role. On the basis of the results of a risk assessment, the social worker may define risk factors. However, it is important to understand that evaluation of risk does not take place in a social vacuum. There may be other factors inherent in the social context, such as politics and group dynamics, which have relevance within a risk assessment. In other words, the level of potential risk is not the only basis on which social workers define their priorities when planning interventions. D. Howe, for instance, claims that social work does not exist independent of organizational and political context. What the social worker thinks and does can only be understood when one considers the intellectual, ideological and material environment in which he/she works (Howe 1991, 204). Thus, a more preferable basis for risk management is provided by combining risk analysis with political, bureaucratic and organizational factors.

Concerning risk management, Parton argues that social workers and social agencies should concentrate more on the everyday political decisions and practices which deal with situations of risk.

Risk assessment, management of risk, the monitoring of risk and risk-taking itself have become common activities for both practitioners and managers. Similarly, estimations about risks have become key in identifying priorities and making judgments about the quality of performance and what should be the central focus of professional activities. (Parton 1996, 98).

Webb has identified three main preventive strategies for social governance of risk that predominate in social work.

Firstly, there are preventive strategies aiming to reduce the probability of a risky occurrence. These strategies are introduced before a risky occurrence happens and include practices such as providing visual aids for blind service users... Secondly, there are mitigation strategies that also come in before the risky occurrence happens but whereas prevention strategies aim to reduce the probability of it happening, mitigation strategies aim to reduce the potential impact if it were to happen....Finally there is a coping strategy at relieving the impact of a risky occurrence once it has happened (Webb 2004, 66)

At present, preventive work in Russia is largely carried out according to the final strategy mentioned above. This preventive strategy is also connected with empowerment. "Social work's commitment to helping marginalized and impoverished people empower themselves is as old as the occupation itself." (Simon 1994, XIII). However, risk regulation does not always have to be characterized as reactive, as is the case with the coping strategy. It can also be preventive, as in the first and second risk strategies identified above (Webb 2004, 67). This does pose a rather difficult task. Rose notes:

The problem is to deploy actuarial classification of risk to identify and control risky individuals to ascertain who can, and who cannot, be managed within the open circuits of community control. (Rose 1991, 261)

In the current situation, empowering people by allowing them to assume the responsibility for improving their lives through local decision-making may be a successful strategy for the social governance of risk, and it may thus increase the efficiency of social work. Webb stresses the other side of the connection between empowerment and neo-liberalism:

Empowerment in social care is effectively the activation of the consumer service user under the thin veneer of leftist rights language. Ultimately empowerment is caught between neo-liberal strategies of individual autonomy and choice and an ethical socialism that emphasizes the need for responsibility in being able to make choices. (Webb, 57)

The process of empowerment is involved in the regulation and management of risk. Social work can only be effective in a situation where the resources of the client and the social service providers are being strengthened, which is the essence of empowerment. In Russia, as well as in other countries, risk management increasingly becomes a key technology. But this technology could not be effective without empowering individuals, groups, communities and organizations. The empowering approach engages social workers in social change with the clients in their social environment, which becomes a way to reduce risk and minimize harm.

Empowering practice in Russian social work

If we return to our discussion on social work in Russia, it might be pointed out that there is currently a lot of discussion about the need to implement empowering practices in social work. However, in reality, the use of such methods is still extremely limited in Russia, and at present they have mainly been adopted by non-governmental organizations. As for government organizations, there are four types of social service organizations that provide mandatory social services in Russia. These are: (1) social services centers for elderly people, (2) social services centers for people with disabilities, (3) social services centers for families and children and (4) organizations of social support for homeless people.

Empowering methods can be applied to all groups of clients, but they can provide a particularly effective approach in social work helping disabled and vulnerable groups to realize their rights as full members of society. And, in recent years in Russia, empowering methods have been developing mainly in the social services for people with disabilities and people with HIV (Borodkina 2008). But this is not enough. It is necessary to develop empowering methods for families with children, as well. Governmental centers for social support to families and children are being created to assist families, children and individuals who find themselves in difficult situations. The purpose of these centers is to help such clients by protecting their legal rights and interests, and by assisting them to improve their social and economic status and psychological well-being. The tasks of social centers include monitoring the social and demographic situation and the level of socio-economic well-being of families and children. The centers identify families and children in difficult situations and in need of social support, and they provide either short term or long term socio-economic, socio-medical, socio-psychological and educational services, as well as other social services. The goal is to support families and individuals in solving their problems. Also, since social centers should help the families to realize their own capacity to overcome difficult situations, an empowering approach to working with families is relevant to their work and should be applied. In Russian practice, empowerment approach connected with families resources is in high demand.

All factors, both tangible and intangible, that have actual or potential positive impact on a family's well-being in the present or in the future, should be considered as the family's resources (Samoylova 2013, 30). A structured approach to the assessment of family resources, based on a system-ecological paradigm, is implemented in R. Parker's method, currently used in the practice of social work (Framework for the Assessment 2000).

The assessment framework covers three groups of factors that characterize: (1) the needs of the developing child, (2) the educational potential of parents and family, and (3) environmental factors. The principles of prioritizing the child's needs and considering the child's best interest are used as a basis for the assessment. The estimated factors include the conditions and indicators of child well-being. Positive ratings on these factors lead to the conclusion that they are an actual resource, positively affecting the child's well-being. There is currently active discussion on the effectiveness of social services and the social security system as a whole. On the one hand, this stems from increasing government focus on sensible use of budget funds and cost optimization, and on the other hand, from the need for more observable positive change in the lives of the people who have received various forms of public services and support. Direct economic support is insufficient and does not lead to a qualitative change in the families' situations. Therefore, there is a great demand for empowering methods that can build up a family's resources, improving the family's capacity to adapt and strengthening the family members' self-motivation.

In practice, this means measures such as, for example, promoting employment, training, organizing family affairs, legal education, and improving parental competence. These types of support from the state help families to become more self-reliant and independent, and to live without assistance from social services organizations in the future.

The expansion of empowering social work practice requires specific professional competence of social workers. To illustrate this point we would like to present some of the results of a survey, designed to evaluate whether social service professionals were familiar with means to activate their clients. This was one of the research objectives in the 2011 project "Empowerment of Families with Children", carried out in the St. Petersburg and Leningrad regions¹. The survey involved 80 social work professionals from governmental and municipal organizations that provide social services. One of the questions was: *"Are you aware of the appropriate methods of social work aimed at enhancing and strengthening the client so as to improve his/her ability to independently handle difficult situations?"* Only 10% of respondents answered "Yes, I am aware". 75% of respondents said *"I am aware, but I feel I need additional knowledge and skills"*, and 15% of respondents answered *"No, I am not aware"*.

¹ Project "Empowerment of Families with Children" SE141.f South-East Finland –Russia ENPI CBC Program. The main areas of activity are as follows: counseling, including issues of child placement in foster families (adoption, guardianship, foster care); preparing families who wish to adopt a child; providing legal and psychological support to families who are experiencing difficulties in raising children; improving the relationship between children and their adoptive or foster parents; assisting with the preparation of documents required for adoption; assisting in finding employment; organizing leisure-time activities for families with children; assisting in obtaining financial aid.

The majority of respondents expressed a feeling of lack of knowledge and skills. On the question of whether they were aware of the concept of empowerment, only 36% of respondents answered “yes”, and, of that, only 19% reported that they had learned of empowerment from their professional training. 64% of respondents did not know what empowerment meant. However, all the participants in this survey expressed the need for further specialist training.

As mentioned above, within the Russian social security system, centers of social support for families and children are one of the main types of social service organizations. Currently, the social workers in these centers deal with families with low income, single-parent families, families with multiple children, orphans and children without parental care, and young adults who have come out of institutions for orphans. As well as preventing child abandonment and placing children in orphanages, social support for families in difficult situations is aimed at the prevention of child neglect and physical or psychological abuse in the family.

However, despite the variety of services, in practice it is not common for social workers to strengthen the parents' ability to care for their children by using methods that enhance the resources of the family and its immediate environment. Empowerment theory should become a ubiquitous, underlying current for social work with families.

Using empowering methods means that the client has to be supported both at the personal and the structural level. Also, social workers should help strengthen the client's own resources. At the personal level, the clients need to see themselves independent of the attitudes of the people around them, so that they may raise their sense of self-esteem. At the structural level, there is concern for the creation of various self help groups and non-governmental organizations. Also, social service agencies should be involved with the process of supporting citizens and creating recursive (self supporting) networking systems.

Conclusion

Empowerment theory is changing the perspectives of contemporary social work in Russia, and, undoubtedly, it will increase the efficiency of Russian social work. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize once again that modern, systematic social work has to help clients, as much as possible, to use their own resources to create solutions to their problems. The social worker should encourage the clients towards preventive behavior which is consistent with their increasing personal responsibility for risk as citizens. On the other hand, social work needs to promote the creation of new networks between clients and resource systems. Social work needs to increase efficiency between citizens and the resource systems, and, finally, it is necessary to develop new resource systems that promote the prevention of social risks. Practitioners face continual difficulty with both empowering their clients and empowering themselves as workers. It is necessary to increase the competence of social workers in using empowering methods, a competence imbued with critical understanding, knowledge, and skills within an appropriate context of values.

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Family policy in Russia: problems in the establishment process and new challenges

Introduction

Processes of change and reconfiguration in social systems occur in all countries as an adaptive response to new challenges. In Russia, the total crisis of the system in the early 1990's provided such a challenge and, in consequence, over the course of two decades, a complex dynamic of restructuring in all areas vital to the family has been observed, along with a process of elaboration of family policy.

What specific tasks and mechanisms become a priority in family policy naturally depends on the availability of resources. However, first and foremost, such priorities depend on how the desired results are perceived, on systems of mutual expectations and on the nature of the relationship between state and family (social partnership, protectionism / paternalism, government intervention in the family's performance of its functions).

The overall objective of family policy in Russia is to create an enabling political, social, cultural and economic environment for the everyday life and well-being of the family and the realization of its basic social functions. In turn, the family is seen as the basis of the stability of the society's political system (Klimantova 2004, 21). The goal of family policy, according to this definition, is the achievement of a balance between the needs and capabilities of all the parties involved. The difficulties in establishing modern family policy in Russia are due to the fact that recent changes have affected a wide range of factors that are different in nature: the level of economic development and the character of economic relations, the political system, the legal framework for the functioning of the family, ideology, socio-cultural systems, structures and levels of individual needs, etc. Clearly, the process of "matching" and mutual adaptation, the overall harmonization of social systems cannot be easy in this situation.

This article seeks to highlight the key factors that have influenced – and in many ways still continue to influence – family policies in post-Soviet Russia, to trace the dynamics of modern family policy in Russia over the past two decades, and to analyse existing approaches to social protection and social services for families. In order to characterize the current social situation and the effectiveness of measures taken by the state, statistics and empirical research are provided. In the Conclusions part of the article, promising areas of development for family policy which correspond to modern challenges are identified.

Citizens' attitudes towards the state

During the years of Soviet government, certain attitudes typical of the era were formed, and these attitudes became so entrenched and widespread in the population that they came to be seen as attributes of national character. One of the characteristic attitudes of the Soviet citizen was the expectation of care from the state, essentially an attitude towards paternalism (Ermolenko 2000; Sitnova 2011; Samoylova 1996 et al.).

From the beginning, the Soviet state declared itself responsible for the well-being of every family in the country. For seventy years, state policy in relation to the family bore a markedly "protective" character. During the 1920s and early 1930s, state policy focused on helping urban female workers combine maternal duties with employment in public production. From the second half of the 1930s and up to the 1970s, particular attention was paid to the promotion of a high birthrate and large families, goals connected with the demographic losses in the war years. In the 1970s and 1980s, the state focused its powers on overcoming a lack of resources in families with children, on stimulating the birth rate, and on supporting parents in the raising of their children (Darmodekhin 2008). The majority of legislative measures were directed at the protection of maternity and childhood, the development of a system of domestic provision, and the construction of nurseries and kindergartens. According to the law, Soviet citizens could rely on free healthcare and education, and on being provided with housing.

The welfare of the Soviet family was supported by the state through a package of social benefits, albeit at a modest level. Such benefits were limited by a universal deficit (of resources, goods and services), by the nature of economic relations under socialism, and by the modest demands of citizens who did not have the opportunity to compare their lives with the lives of people in other countries. Within the country, conditions were more or less consistent across communities of one type (urban or rural). In reality families experienced significant difficulties because policy was governed by a residual principle of allocation of resources for social needs. By 1990, this had led to families having fifteen types of benefit and concession connected with maternity, the sum total of which did not represent a significant portion of family income.

The Soviet family relied almost entirely on the state to solve its problems and did not possess the resources to take proactive measures to improve its welfare. To a significant extent, policy was built on proscriptive and restrictive measures. The reproductive interests of women had to conform to those of society, while the interests of the father were never even considered, to the extent that in state policy fathers were practically unrecognized as participants in family relations (Khasbulatova & Smirnova 2008). The predetermined nature of life prospects in the Soviet state did not require the demonstration of initiative, and therefore the overwhelming majority of people had a definite tendency to reproduce a similar way of life. Moreover, the Soviet history of persecuting nonconformists had instilled in people a fear of demonstrating ambition or expressing their opinion. Even those who possessed critical judgment were unwilling to voice it or assert their rights, and on the whole this led to the predominance

of passivity in the population. In this way, a complex of symptoms – including such attitudes and personality traits as reliance on the guardianship of the state, dependence, passivity, fear of punishment, the desire of the overwhelming majority to “fit in”, and consequent conformity – was a significant part of the personality of the Soviet citizen. These characteristics negatively influenced the ability of people to adapt to the new socio-economic conditions of life after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The persistence of the Russian people's self-perception that they need the guardianship of the state can be seen to this day. According to data from research conducted throughout Russia in 2011 (1,600 respondents from 130 population centres in 45 regions of the country), 75% of respondents agreed that “the majority of people cannot survive without the constant care and guardianship of the state”. Only 19% held the opposite opinion. In 1990, when the first sampling was conducted, the figures were 62% and 21%, respectively. The distribution of responses has fluctuated between the samplings, totalling seven, but it has not changed dramatically. Meanwhile, responses pertaining to attitudes towards recipients of state care showed that 47% of the respondents expected universal care (“the state should ensure a reasonable level of welfare for all citizens”), while 29% thought that “the state's duty is to provide help to those who find themselves in difficult circumstances”, and 20% expected “help to those who cannot take care of themselves” (Public Opinion 2011, 41, 64). Thus, about half of all respondents were convinced that the main responsibility for the wellbeing of citizens rests with the state.

The weakening of the regulatory role of the state in the conditions of a market economy does not mean that the state has shed its liability for the social security of citizens. Legally, this liability is enshrined in the Constitution. However, the new liberal policies are reflected in the fact that the basic operating principle of the actual social security system is to provide minimum social guarantees to ensure a minimum standard of living as defined by the limitations of the economy. Those who are not able to take care of themselves because of age, illness or other such factors receive this at limits imposed by the financial capabilities of the state. For the main part of the population – the working population – the social security system should provide guarantees of employment, wages and health care. As far as the guarantee of payment of labour is observed within the limits of the fixed minimum wage – which on January 1, 2013 was 76 per cent of the subsistence minimum (the equivalent of the poverty level) – it is hardly possible to count on the attainment of well-being by relying on these guarantees.

The processes of production and employment relations in a market economy are based on inherent mechanisms and influences, including factors of business activity and preparation for stressful work in a competitive environment. These factors are particularly important in the unpredictable and inconsistent conditions during the formation of the market economy. Currently, there are difficulties with another basic social guarantee – the protection of health, enabled via the right to free health care. These difficulties are linked with the poor organization and quality of medical services, but high levels of morbidity and mortality, particularly among men, are partly due to the citizens' dismissive attitudes towards their own health. Thus, at present

the implementation of social rights in Russia requires active personal participation, and perceiving the state as a caring parent that will ensure the well-being of all its children is non-adaptive. Such beliefs are not supported by reality in the changed socio-economic conditions.

Experience of life in the post-Soviet period could not but have an effect on citizens' attitudes. Faith in the care provided by the state gave way to a sharp drop in people's confidence in the administration. As a result, recent surveys show a considerable difference in the respondents' expectations concerning help from the state and their assessment of their personal reality. In difficult life situations, 39% of people rely on themselves alone, 56 % on relatives and friends, while only 2% rely on help from the state, and a further 3% on organizations and enterprises (Public Opinion 2011, 66). However, the majority see self-reliance, reliance on their own energies and resources, as a necessity and not as a natural strategy presupposing the capability of organizing one's own life, making decisions independently and taking responsibility for them, which in turn positively affects resilience and endurance of difficult life circumstances (Kobasa & Maddi & Kahn 1982). It is telling that according to a 2012 survey, among the factors preventing families from becoming more active and independent were the passivity of families, consumer attitudes to life, and social fears, while among the family resources that required strengthening were ambition, self-belief, recognition of problems and desire to change situations. The survey targeted social service professionals (n=61), and was carried out in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Oblast within the project "Empowerment of Families with Children". Over 80% of the respondents identified each of the factors mentioned above.

According to a study in the Chelyabinsk region, conducted in 2007-2008 (n = 1800), in addition to the dichotomy of attitudes "support from the state" versus "focus on ourselves, our own resources" a third, very important position has taken shape. In a number of communities, 24.6 -31.1% of the respondents agreed with the option "The state should help families to learn how to live independently, without support (by promoting employment, training, family businesses, legal education, and so on)" (Mustaeva 2009, 113). These kinds of expectations of government assistance are much more constructive than the paternalistic attitudes that are still widespread in Russian society. The state's task is to develop the economic, legal, organizational and informational mechanisms to encourage citizens to be active, and to support their aspirations towards the self-sufficiency and economic independence of families.

Family dysfunction as a result of the socioeconomic reforms of the 1990s

The beginning of reforms in the early 1990s led to a drop in the living standards of most families, and downward professional mobility became a mass phenomenon (Darmodekhin 2008). The rapid fall in real income for families created mass poverty, and families with underage children typically found themselves in particularly difficult situations. Up until the end of the 1990s, the living standards of Russian families remained exceptionally low. In 2000, 42.3% of all Russians were officially living in poverty, while among families with three children, the figure was 85%, and among families with four children, it was 90%. Serious problems were caused by delays in the

payment of wages in the public sector and industry, and also by decreases in the real value of social guarantees provided by the state. While in 1991 the child allowance for children from 1.5 to 6 years of age was equal to 25% of the subsistence wage, in 1995 it amounted to only 13%, and by 1999 only 5.6% of the subsistence wage (Klimantova 2001).

The spread of chronic poverty had an adverse effect on people's health, and the life expectancy of Russian citizens dropped significantly, especially for men, who had an average life span of only 58 years. The birth rate also fell sharply, and instability of marriage increased. The general divorce rate (the number of divorces per 100 marriages) grew from 42.1 in 1989 to 69.9 in 2000. Uncertainty about the future gave rise to psychological instability, contributing to a rise in alcoholism, domestic violence, and social orphanhood. The number of children in state care (in children's homes) also rose accordingly, from 203.8 to 334.1 per 100 000 children in the 0-3 y age group (P'yanov 2003). The parents' focus on issues of survival led to a reduction in the educational potential of the family. Child neglect and homelessness became widespread, and this led to a rise in delinquent behaviour among children and adolescents.

On the whole, extreme dysfunction was characteristic of the family institution during this period. This affected the specific functions of the family, connected with the birth, maintenance and upbringing of children, its non-specific functions – the family's economic, emotional, recreational and mental health enhancing functions – and also the function of primary social control (Matskovskiy 1989). The state of these functions defines the quality of the family environment from the point of view of child welfare, but the same functions (plus the sexual-erotic function) also correspond to the needs of parents: the educational function corresponding to motherhood and fatherhood, the emotional function corresponding to the parents' need for love and support, etc.

The acute problem of insufficient resources attracted the attention of the authorities, and this concern was to some extent confirmed in the President's annual messages. In 2000, among the issues mentioned in the annual messages were the lack of targeting of social benefits and concessions, the low level of child benefits, the practical lack of free education and healthcare, and the limited access to these services for people with low income. In 2002-2004, there was talk of the slow progress in eradicating poverty: "Poverty has only receded slightly and continues to torment 40 million" (2002), "poverty is receding exceedingly slowly, around 30 million still have incomes lower than the subsistence wage. The majority of the impoverished in the country are able-bodied people" (2003), "for the majority of people, the risk of falling into the poverty zone is extremely high" (2004).

According to experts at the Independent Institute of Social Policy, per capita income in Russia had reached the pre-reform levels of 1991 by 2005, and it has continued to rise ever since. This is seen as a positive result. However, unlike in Europe, where poverty is measured using a relative indicator – 60% of the average or median income – the subsistence wage in the Russian Federation is established statutorily, based on bureaucrats' perception of the level of consumption that actually corresponds to the level required for physical survival (Fedyukin & Shevyakov 2007, 27).

The material support provided to families by the state is not sufficient to significantly affect their situation. Poor families receiving child benefits reach the level of the subsistence wage and officially stop being poor, although in reality they continue to live in poverty. According to a sample survey of household budgets from the years 2006-2011, the proportion of households with children under the age of 16 has increased from 48.8 to 59.7% of all poor households (RF State programme 2012). The highest levels of risk and the most severe poverty are typically seen in families with multiple children and in single-parent families. In 2010, the monthly child benefit for one child varied from 70 rubles (1,8 euros) in Perm Krai to 1,000 rubles (25 euros) in Moscow Oblast and Khabarovsk Krai. On average, the child benefit was 400 rubles (10 euros), or 7% of the subsistence wage (On the conditions for children in the Russian Federation 2010).

Despite the fact that standards of living have risen in recent years – by 2012, the number of Russians living below the poverty line had decreased to 12.5% – subsistence and family finances remain issues of great concern for the majority of Russian families with children. According to research data from Leningrad Oblast¹, 66.2% of respondents who chose the option “money is generally sufficient”, when assessing their family income, also stated that “a constrained financial situation” was a problem that concerned their family. Furthermore, the family’s financial situation is – perhaps unsurprisingly – considered the most pressing problem in families with lower income, where “money is only sufficient for day-to-day needs” or “money is not always sufficient for food and clothing”. These make up 40% of the total number of families (Preventive work ... 2008, 29). Comparable data was obtained from research carried out in the town of Pikalevo in Leningrad Oblast in 2012 (n=86), within the project “Empowerment of Families with Children”. According to a survey of 1,200 people conducted by the St. Petersburg Information and Analytical Centre in 2011, the level of family income was a matter of concern, to some extent or other, to 86% of parents surveyed. The proportion of people experiencing concern was higher than in 2008 (82%). For 33% of the respondents this problem was acute (Analytical report 2011).

The level of family income does not appear to be sufficient to relieve worries and create confidence in financial security. When people are successfully coping with the essential items of expenditure (food, clothing and utilities), they consider themselves well-off. However, drawing a parallel to the current conception of “shallow poverty”, their prosperity can be defined as shallow, not allowing them to pay for comparatively less essential services (extra education and leisure pursuits) or to afford more accessible and better quality medical services. Financial problems for families become worse when housing conditions are poor (reality for a third of families surveyed in this study). Families with children in Russia have a lower standard of living than most other Russians, especially when families have a higher number of dependents: the higher the number of children, the worse the financial situation of the family. The family’s low resources affect its life as a whole. In lower income families, a broad range of problems is evident, and their level is quite severe. The burden of domestic

¹ The study was conducted within the project “preventive work with families and children in the Russian-Finnish-border region” (TACIS project 2006/132-630). The number of participants was 357.

work is higher, children frequently have behavioural issues, leading to frequent disagreements between adults concerning their upbringing, and family relations in general are more strained.

Because of their high workload, parents of low income families often relegate the upbringing of children, as a function of the family, to the periphery of their attention. Another prominent feature is specific socio-cultural perceptions of the roles of parents, according to which a good parent is one who ensures a child is "well fed, clothed and shod no worse than others, and well educated". Material prosperity does not guarantee the welfare of children. Neglect and abusive treatment of children is not found only in the poorest families or where parents abuse alcohol. Parents communicate little with their children, and communication generally accompanies the performance of daily duties, rather than emerging as something with inherent value. Negative methods of control prevail over positive (Preventive work... 2008, 39).

When failings in family upbringing lead to problem behaviour in children and adolescents, it is the representatives of state institutions (schools, social services, and the police) that react in the overwhelming majority of cases. Educational interventions on the part of the state are aimed at groups such as "children in risk groups", "neglected children", "maladjusted children", "educationally or socially neglected children", "delinquents". The parents of these children are another target group.

Thus, family policy is conducted in a situation combining unfavourable circumstances with defects of the family institution (with regard to specific functions of the family). The low birth rate (as one of the causes of depopulation), poverty, neglect, and the deviant behaviour of children and adolescents are examples of the challenges faced in this situation. Rising incomes do not create immediate solutions to all the aforementioned problems, as these problems are experienced in well-off families as well as in poor ones. Respondents for whom "money is generally sufficient" complain, albeit less often, of "maladjustment of their child" (26.5%), of "disagreement between adults concerning the raising of children" (41.2%), and that there is "nowhere to go to spend time as a family" (39.7%) (Preventive work... 2008, 33). The complexity and multi-faceted nature of family problems determine the need to develop integrated programmes of family support that adequately reflect the families' needs and go beyond the framework of strictly economic measures.

Policy for supporting families with children in the 1990s

State policy concerning families and children in the Russian Federation in the 1990s was directed, first and foremost, at maintaining basic guarantees of provision for their livelihoods, at developing various forms of financial support and protection of the family from poverty (child support, tax breaks, and other concessions), and at fighting child neglect and homelessness (Antropova 2007). In the period from 1993 to 2000, the issue of social protection of families and children was reflected in more than 140 legislative and regulatory documents of the Russian Federation (Frolkin & Mautaliev 2012). Terms of reference have been established through the legislative process for the formation of family policy as an independent strand of social policy.

The *Conception of State Family Policy* was passed in 1993, and the new *Family Law Code* (№273-F3 of 29.12.95) in 1995. Orders of the President of the Russian Federation were accepted "Concerning the main directions of state social policy to improve the conditions of children in the Russian Federation up until 2000" (National plan of action in the interests of children) (№942 of 14.09.95) and "Concerning the main directions of state family policy" (№712 of 14.05.96). The latter document lent family policy national status.

Structures were created at a national level to support family policy and the family institution. In 1991, two organizations were founded to provide a resource base for family policy: The Scientific Research Institute of the Family and the Republican Fund for Support of the Family. From 1991 onwards higher education institutions have been offering training on family policy to professionals, with the number of such institutions reaching 248 by the year 2012. Work with families is one of the main sectors of activity in social services. From 1995, when the current law on social services was passed, the social service system became the subject of intensive development. Thus, in 1993 there were 107 establishments for children in difficult life situations and families with children, while by the beginning of the 2000s such establishments numbered 2444 (Social work in the III millennium 2001, 8).

Under the difficult conditions at the acute phase of the crisis, family policy was mostly aimed at social protection, equated with financial help for families with children – benefits, allowances and concessions. However, this policy did not deliver the expected results in overcoming the lack of resources in families with children. Funds were allocated on the categorical principle (for all families), i.e. they were, in effect, spread equally and very thinly, and payments were symbolic in character. In 1998, the principle of payment on the basis of need was introduced, and benefits for children from 1.5 to 18 years of age were no longer paid to families with income higher than the subsistence wage. However, informational, organizational and psychological barriers in "targeting" led to a situation where for example in 2003, according to data from the Institute of Social Policy, the poorest 20% of the population received only 10% of the total sum of social outlay, and in 2005 only 35% of the recipients of child benefits and housing subsidies were poor (Fedyukin & Shevyakov 2007, 27).

In the previous section we have already mentioned the negative phenomena in the lives of Russian families in the 1990s. These resulted from a sharp decline in living standards. It seemed plausible that the situation could be corrected by providing families with economic support, but the potential of economic support to motivate families to improve their life situations proved low. On the contrary, economic assistance contributed to the preservation of a welfare mentality in certain families (the so-called "families at social risk").

Intensive development of the infrastructure of social work was the appropriate response to the need for external assistance that was evident among children and families with children. The families in question are the ones where the problematic situations (neglect, parents' alcohol abuse, deviant behaviour of children and adolescents, etc.) have already arisen and become ingrained. Concepts such as "families in difficult life

situations", "children in socially dangerous situations" were fixed in the legislation. At the same time, families that were experiencing difficulties but were well-off by the standards of the law could not rely on help from the state, or on receiving attention from the social services. In conclusion, among the causes that led to crisis in the vital functions of the family in the period 1999-2000, the inefficacy of social policy adopted by the government stands out. Economic support for families was needed, but the low level and the faulty mechanisms for delivering that support did not allow the state to meet the goal of providing an acceptable standard of living and social protection for the families. The development of proactive, differentiated forms of social support for families was weak. Such forms of support should mobilize the internal potential of the families, and they should be based on assessments of the families' varied needs, seen in relation to all of their expected functions.

Scientific and public discussion on issues of family policy

Works devoted to the analysis of family policy as a section of social policy began to appear in Russia in the 1980s. The most significant contributions were made by writers such as A. I. Antonov, A. G. Vishnevskiy, S. I. Golod, T. A. Gurko, S. V. Darmodekhin, V. V. Elizarov, G. I. Klimantova, V. M. Medkov, M. S. Matskovskiy. The efforts of scientists have focused on the development of methodological foundations for family policy. Among the experts, there are radical differences in the interpretations of the changes that took place in the life of the Russian family at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. So far, two main approaches have arisen – the "crisis approach" and the "modernization approach" – and these define the basic methodological foundations of family policy. Adherents to the crisis approach see the deterioration of the socio-cultural norms of large families and family life as a negative development. Family policy, according to this approach, should be aimed at strengthening the family as a social institution, at the resurrection of family life, and at the restitution to the family of its inherent social functions (Antonov& Sorokin 2000).

In contrast, the demographer Vishnevskiy believes that the transformation of the family occurs within the framework of a process of modernization. He claims that the traditional family model is being replaced by a contemporary family model, and that in general, this has a positive effect. Adherents to the concept of modernization note positive changes in family relations such as the move from the patriarchal family, with the dominant position of the man and the dependence of the women and children, to an egalitarian family. In the latter, men and women have equal rights and opportunities, and build their relationships on the principles of partnership. Another change considered positive is the move from traditional unregulated reproduction, and giving birth to multiple children, to conscious parenthood and choice regarding the number of children (Vishnevskiy 2007; Mitrokhin 2003). According to Darmodekhin (2001), the historic processes of transformation in the family are interwoven with problems caused by social and economic reforms in Russian society, reflected in the lives of families.

In the opinion of Klimantova (2004), the concept of modernization provides a more objective assessment of the currently occurring changes than the crisis approach.

However, the process of modernization is experienced as extremely painful, and it creates a need to increase the role of the state in supporting the family. In the conceptual framework of modernization of the family, the emphasis is placed on the demands of personal self-realization of the family members, and the rights and freedoms of individuals. These ideas follow the European model of the social state, in which the socialized and socially responsible individual is seen as the basic unit. However, the increased importance of individual rights and freedoms leads to the strengthening of individualism as a principle of social behaviour and actions, also within the framework of the family. In the opinion of Buttaeva (2010), these principles stimulate the development of a consumerist lifestyle and distort the foundation of people's assessments of the social value and significance of the family, processes which will unavoidably be reflected negatively in the rates of marriage, birth, and divorce, and in human relationships in general.

At present, the scope of opinion concerning the condition of the family institution and its prospects runs from the traditional to the neoliberal. The Russian Orthodox Church is an extreme proponent of traditional views, insisting most forcefully on the priority of the family over the rights and interests of the individual. The proponents of neoliberalism insist on individual freedom but sometimes employ barely appropriate economic constructs such as the investment of personal time and emotion in parenthood. They tend to ignore the socio-cultural characteristics of the Russian society.

During the process of societal transformation in Russia, values such as personal autonomy, the realization of personal resources, and the democratization of the interaction between individuals and society have gained particular significance. Nonetheless, the value of family and family life remains very high for Russian citizens. Numerous surveys conducted among Russian citizens of different ages, including the younger age groups, bear witness to how highly family life is rated (e.g. Bashkirova 2010; Semenov 2012). One explanation cites Russian mentality, which is characterized by traditional values and attitudes with regard to children and parenthood; this mentality is seen as the reason why the strengthening of individualist values has not led to a devaluation of other values (P'yanov 2003). Despite the novelty and variety of contemporary lifestyle alternatives, which extend to the sphere of the family as well as other areas of life, the normative family cycle is one of the most unchanging constants that support the stability of a society. As Solodnikov remarks (2007, 349), the durability and regularity of the functioning of this mechanism within society, and its predictable cycle, are seen as self-evident and provide the society with a sense of social continuity.

We believe that the needs for love, for union with a loved one, for caring for another, and for parenthood are natural to a person, just like the need for creative and professional self-realization. Combinations of these factors conform to perceptions of personal development, an observation that has been extensively studied and discussed in psychological research. The wide variety of ways people can balance these elements does include examples of extreme individualism, but these are exceptions rather than the rule. We can agree with Buttaeva (2010) that the development of Russian society today would be impossible without the maintenance of the adaptive

resources of the family. At the basis of this effort lies the balance between the traditionalist foundations and the modernist striving to realize individuality and autonomy of personal behaviour within the family and beyond its limits.

Our position in relation to the "family discussion" is that family policy, like social policy as a whole, should facilitate the conciliation of the interests of different social groups. Also, family policy should facilitate the development of a balanced approach that takes into account the differences of worldview positions that appear in ordinary and scientific consciousness. However, for this kind of family policy to be fully effective, it must reflect the main tendencies in the palette of opinions and the real needs of families – adults and children – as well as the strategic interests of the state.

A different perspective on family policy comes from viewing the rights of the individual and the family as subjects and objects. The overwhelming majority of state support measures target individuals, while the interests of the family as a whole and the potential of the family system are not sufficiently considered. In this respect, there is a contradiction between the declarations of support for the family institution and family values, the autonomy and self-reliance of families, and the lack of real social status and rights that would enable the family to function independently. We can agree with Darmodehin (2001) that, at the moment, the potential of the family system is not fully realized and the role of the family as both object and subject of family policy should be enhanced.

The creation of a model of family policy that is optimal for Russia is an extremely difficult challenge, and drawing upon experiences from other countries will help to solve the problems. However, the attempts to adapt existing models encounter hurdles along the way. Using the well-known classification of western models of family policy by Esping-Andersen (1990) and Gauthier (1996), we consider the possibility of applying each type in Russia.

Currently, the primary interest of the state is increasing the birth rate. This is a theme that runs like a vital thread through government announcements and has manifested in the adoption of the strategy of demographic development. Artyukhov (2002,110) has expressed the opinion that each family has the right to freedom of choice in deciding the desired number of children, just as the Russian state has the right to take protectionist measures in relation to a particular type of family if the worsening demographic situation require this. As the country faces the threat of depopulation, the state's interests lie primarily in increasing the birth rate, and consequently extra social and economic support forms for families are focused on stimulating population growth (one-time benefits for the birth of a child, "Maternity Capital", etc.), while state-of-the-art medical support for pregnant women and new-born babies is being developed. However, with the birth of a child, the family falls into an unfavourable financial situation, and the level of support the families receive to raise the children and to provide for them in the long term is insufficient, making family policy one-sided and far removed from the pro-natalist model.

According to the "pro-traditional" model of family policy, the main task is to maintain a family consisting of a male breadwinner and a female housewife, the latter provided with lengthy maternity leave while preserving the option of returning to the workplace. This model is actually focused on the reproduction of traditional gender roles, and could find enthusiastic support among a significant number of Russians. According to the Russian part of the research programme "European values"² carried out in 2008 (n=2,500), paid employment is considered to be a forced necessity for women rather than a true vocation. According to 80% of respondents, the vocation for women is home and children. At the same time, only a working woman (according to 71% in 2008 and 63% in 1999) is considered truly independent. About 80% of respondents believe that both husband and wife should contribute to the family budget, and about the same 80% believe that fathers are no worse than mothers in providing care for their children (Bashkirova 2010, 143-144). In other words, the majority of respondents do not tend to think that men and women should be allocated fixed roles. Overall, in our view, this shows the openness of Russian citizens to a wide variety of options in the development of their life scenarios.

According to a survey of 587 adolescents (14-17 years of age) in St. Petersburg in 2008, the patriarchal model of family life is considered preferable by 15.7 %, while 54.3 % prefer a child-centered model, with parents sharing rights and responsibilities equally, and 13.1 % prefer a marital or egalitarian model (Bezrukova 2008, 277). Thus, it appears quite probable that the "pro-traditional" model does not agree with the general trends in the preferences of Russian citizens for models of family life, nor with the demands of the economic development of a society based on the utilization of the labour resources of both sexes.

The "pro-egalitarian" model of family policy emphasizes the rights of the individual, and involves the creation of structural conditions that allow women and men equal opportunities to combine family and professional roles, as well as the provision of a system of high standard non-parental care for children.

The strengthening of the institution of fatherhood should be counted as one of the positive changes at the legislative level and in the daily lives of families, although it is still the woman that mainly bears the responsibility for household and children. The pro-egalitarian approach is an integral part of the policy of equality of all citizens, the typical "social-democratic model" (according to Espin-Andersen). The purpose of this policy, implemented in Scandinavian countries, is the reduction of social risks and the promotion of a high standard of living for the population as a whole. These goals are pursued through equality of social security and a high level of pensions and social benefits.

²"European values" is a large-scale wave study concerning the basic value orientation of Europeans, including attitudes towards family, work, politics, and society in general. This study has been conducted in Europe once every 9 years since 1981. In its fourth and most recent wave, which took place in 2008, 46 countries took part. A standardized questionnaire is used for the survey, adapted to the realities of each country. Russia joined "European values" in 1990.

It can be assumed that the social-democratic model would be attractive for most Russian citizens as a concept of welfare and equality. In reality, its inbuilt mechanisms of redistribution and its "expensiveness" virtually eliminate any chance of it being employed in Russia in the near future.

The characteristic features evident in the social policy of Russia most clearly resemble the "liberal model" (according to Espin-Andersen's classification) and the model of family policy based on the principle of non-interference by the state in family life (Gauthier's classification). The responsibility for the family's welfare lies completely with the parents, and measures of state support are only applied to families in significant financial difficulties. Regional family benefits are paid after an assessment of need, and moreover, the level of such benefits is not high. However, unlike in some countries where the principle of self-sufficiency is accompanied by highly developed mechanisms such as support for family businesses, support for family housing construction and development of long-term credit facilities, in Russia these mechanisms are only beginning to appear, as is the population's psychological readiness to live in a market economy. It is obvious that the responsibility for social risks and their consequences cannot be laid on the family without the provision of levers and mechanisms that allow the family to fulfil that responsibility. Above all, such mechanism should include the opportunity to obtain good quality services for the care of children, flexible employment for mothers, and childcare benefits.

A review of the existing models shows that even though none of them are entirely suitable for the conditions of modern Russia, each model has features that are significant in terms of the goals of Russian family policy: stimulation of the birth rate through comprehensive support of families with children, supporting the perception of family, parenting, and children as important in the value structures of young people, creating conditions for the implementation of equal social rights for women and men, reconciling parental and professional roles, and encouraging responsible, pro-active attitudes towards life management among citizens.

D evelopment of family policy in the 21st century

The main legislative initiatives since the year 2000 have been made in connection with the adoption of the "Concept of demographic policy in the period until 2035" (Decree № 1351 of 09.10.2007) and the Federal Law "On additional measures of state support for families with children" (№ 256-F3 of 29.12.2006). The latter is the so-called "Law on Maternity (family) Capital", the aim of which is also to stimulate the birth rate. A further important innovation is being introduced from the beginning of 2013 in 53 regions where the value of the cumulative birth rate is lower than the overall rate in Russia. New measures of social support will be initiated that will supplement the existing system of payments to mothers at the birth of each child. Families will receive additional benefits for the third child born to the family, an arrangement applying to children born after January 1st 2013. Making families with three children the norm in Russia was, in fact, one of the aims stated in the President's Yearly Address to the Federal Assembly in 2013.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the government declared its social policy strategy as a transition from the paternalist model of the Soviet period to a “subsidiary state” model. Basic social services – education and health care – were declared free and social support for families became more focused on a basis of needs assessment. State support measures for the family can be provisionally divided into three categories: direct financial assistance in connection with the birth and raising of children (presented in the form of state cash benefits, compensatory payments, funds for the maintenance of children in foster families, and social pensions³); in-kind aid (in-kind payments in the form of free food and free medicine); and concessions and subsidies (Antropova 2007).

There have also been changes in the goals of family policy. Since 2007, the regulatory norms of the 1995 Family Law code have taken real effect, and as a result the recipients of social support are now not only mothers but fathers as well. Both parents now bear equal responsibility for their children.

There are more opportunities than before for regional administration to choose the forms and means of family support, taking into consideration the particular demographic and ethnic characteristics of each territory. Regional policy has begun to develop, which has entailed the development of legal, financial, organizational, information and professional mechanisms for its delivery (Klimantova & Rostovskaya 2008). In practically all regions of Russia, programmes have been adopted that aim to improve the security of maternity, to develop leisure activities for families and children and to promote integration of handicapped children, among other things. These aims are directly linked to the interests of the family.

Although the interventions in these programmes are generally aimed at supporting socially vulnerable families in acute need, there is also a noticeable tendency towards expanding the range of family problems to be covered. Consequently, there is a need for a more differentiated approach to the difficult life situations of families with children, and for the development of new forms of social services.

³ Social pension - this is a fundamentally new institution in the Russian pension legislation. The main purpose of the introduction of the joint venture - providing a guaranteed national minimum cash assistance to persons who have not acquired the right to a retirement pension due to their lack of a history of paid employment. Social pensions are granted without conditions with regard to employment history and paid in full, deducting only current earnings. Social pensions are meant for citizens who do not have the right to receive a pension on any other (employment related) basis, or granted instead of the retirement pension. The categories of persons who can be granted this type of pension: People with disabilities, including congenital and childhood-onset disabilities; children with disabilities; children under the age of 18 who have lost one or both parents; citizens belonging to certain small ethnic groups in the North of Russia, under the age of 55 and 50 years (men and women, respectively); persons over the age of 65 and 60 years (men and women, respectively) who are not eligible for a retirement pension as defined by the Federal Law “On labor pensions in the Russian Federation”, dated 17.12.2001.

A positive aspect of this process is the search for alternatives to paternalism. Since 2010, experiments have been conducted in 17 regions of the Russian Federation involving the provision of state social assistance to low-income families and low-income citizens living alone. In exchange for increased financial assistance - 20,000 rubles (500 euro) and more - and services, recipients have reciprocated by undertaking certain responsibilities. They have committed themselves to working towards realizing their employment potential more fully, strengthening their social responsibility, and reducing their psychological dependence on welfare. More than five thousand families have participated in this experiment, and the majority of them were able to increase their earned income. From 1 January 2013, the contract on obligations of the parties - «social contract» - is mandatory under the law on social assistance.

In the last 10 years, the infrastructure of social services for families has expanded even further through the establishment of centres of social support and centres of psychological and pedagogical support for families and children, centres of social services for the population, rehabilitation centres for the handicapped, crisis centres, and other similar service providers. In 2010, the overall number of such organizations was 3,188 (On the condition of children... 2010). Social services now provide support in solving a wide range of situations, including social, psychological, pedagogical, legal, medical, and other family-related problems.

At the same time, the work of social services as implementers of family policy involves many legal, organizational and psychological hurdles. These include the lack of professionally trained specialists and the predominance of linear administrative structures over networks. These lead to a lack of integration between specialists, strict boundaries between organizations, unfounded norms for the provision of services, and an orientation on quantitative indicators for the efficacy of social support to the family (Gerasimova & Chernyaeva 2011). The ambivalence of the professional consciousness of social workers should also be mentioned. Being client-oriented does not necessarily entail acceptance of the client as a partner with equal rights, and this discrepancy is exacerbated by traditional directorial working methods (Zolotareva & Miningalieva 2001). According to our research in the social services in St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast (2012), alternative methods such as motivational techniques, group work and networks are rarely used. Despite the great efforts made by employees of the social services, the situation is not changing radically, and similarly pessimistic evaluations were voiced in the course of our work: "Unfortunately, the number of families in difficult life situations is not decreasing" (Preventive work ...2008:10). As a rule, work with families begins when unfortunate situations have already arisen, become established, and at times, become ingrained.

New challenges for family policy

The State Programme of the Russian Federation "Social support for citizens until 2020" (Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation № 2553-r of 27.12.2012) identified the following major objectives: Reducing poverty among families with children; reducing family problems, homelessness and neglect, and child

abandonment (expected outcome: by 2020, children left without parental care are predominantly placed in family-based care); boosting the birth rate; raising the level of social services for children with disabilities; providing for the recreation and health of children, including children in difficult situations. While the last two goals may be uncontroversial and fully meet specific demands expressed by families, there is no such certainty regarding the other goals. As these objectives are not new, it is not only important to consider what concrete results can be expected, but what the means of achieving results might be, as well.

The strategic approach of the state in overcoming poverty is manifested in the fact that family policy is largely identified with methods of direct economic support. However, the levels of state benefits and the criteria for receiving them still prompt more criticism than expressions of satisfaction from citizens. The intensification of demographic policy by the state is a consequence of the problem of depopulation, and in many ways it is considered to be a manifestation of concern for the family. However, short-term measures of predominantly financial assistance do not affect the well-being of families in the long term. The aim of economic support should be to cover the expenses caused by the birth of a child and the further care of the child; in other words, economic support should create conditions that prevent situations where child maintenance becomes too great a financial burden for the family, putting the family on the brink of disaster. "Poverty reduction" means that there will be fewer families with income below the poverty level, but that does not mean that the welfare of families will be greatly improved. Poverty reduction can be expected to land an even greater number of families in the category of low-income families with on-going acute financial problems. The comparatively high level of poverty among families with children demonstrates that the implementation of this strategy requires adjustment both in terms of the level of support and in terms of concrete interventions.

The state's rejection of paternalism in relation to the family has not been accompanied by the creation of real opportunities for families to be self-sufficient in an environment dictated by market forces. To this day, many problems encountered in the transition period (involving privatization, taxation, family businesses, provision of credit, etc.) have not been resolved with regard to families (Darmodehin 2008). For the state, the most urgent task at hand is to develop conditions that allow the self-sufficiency of families based on labour. This can be achieved by measures such as promoting the development of small family businesses and self-employment, developing programmes for vocational training, and providing retraining and skills development for women who are planning to return to work after caring for children under three at home.

In our view, it would be better to focus on improving welfare and quality of life for all families rather than on reducing poverty. As discussed above, concerns about financial problems are caused not only by insufficient income, but also by the need to pay for services (including those that by law should be free). Therefore, assistance to families is directly linked to the development of the infrastructure and the quality of services. In response to the question "What kind of support do you think is the most important and useful for your family?", 49.5% of St. Petersburg parents indicated improvement of their financial situation, and 42.0% mentioned assistance in the care,

supervision and development of their children (health care, quality education, cultural activities, better care in kindergartens, etc.) (Analytical report 2011). The actual social well-being of families depends on the state of all spheres of life relevant to the family – health care, education, employment, leisure, etc. – as do their reproductive plans. If the right conditions exist for families with children, there is no need to implement special demographic policy – as Finnish experience proves.

It is only natural that one of the objectives of the support programme for families until 2020 is to reduce family problems, homelessness, neglect, and child abandonment. The subject of abandonment was recently actively discussed in connection with international adoptions of Russian children, so the expected result by 2020 is a predominance of family-based care for children left without parental care. At the same time, developing the practice of family care for orphans is unlikely to improve the well-being of families. In fact, the stated goal suggests implicit recognition that serious problems in families are expected to remain an acute issue for some time.

As we have already noted, family policy has generally been reduced to protecting families that are economically deprived or close to deprivation from further hardship. In other words, it is directed at fighting the consequences and not the causes of troubles that can affect all families, for example in a time of any ordinary family crisis. Strategically, it would be better to prevent problems rather than work on reducing their effects. In social work this would mean placing more emphasis on early detection, and shifting focus from the effects of family problems to the prevention of their causes and the promotion of the health of the family (see Törrönen & Hurtig 2008; Robinson & Parker 2008; Samoylova 2008; Borodkina & Samoylova 2011 *et al.*).

The social competence of each person, and the family as a whole, is of prime importance in contemporary conditions. Therefore, it is essential to have a system that supports the development of social competence at different stages of life (Samoylova 2010; 2012). Improving the pedagogical and psychological competence of parents is one of the key elements in preventive measures targeting family problems and inadequate childrearing, problems that typically lead to consequences which the social services have to deal with. One means of achieving results could be the involvement of young families in preventive programmes with the aim of shaping conscious parenthood, of raising the level of social competence, and of developing the skills to build successful family relationships. These forms of working with families are attractive not only as preventive measures against family misfortune, but also as a means of creating a positive model of the family (Bezrukova 2012).

Currently, the family is placed in a position where it is expected to be responsible for the financial, social and psychological condition of its members. The declared principle of the autonomy of the family also assumes increased independence, self-sufficiency, and initiative of the family in solving their problems, but this will not happen automatically. The task of the state is to help the family become an active and fully competent subject. For this to happen, family policy should include mechanisms for citizen's participation in the preparation of management decisions in the field of family policy, in the development of projects and social infrastructure at all levels, in

the implementation of social control, and in direct civil participation. At the administrative level closest to people's daily lives, the municipal level, this potential is still underutilized. The value of municipalities in supporting the self-organization of families coincides with the objective of activating citizens, as the family can most actively and genuinely be a subject in the area where it lives.

Not only the goals of family policy but also the logistics of implementing it need updating. There is a lack of systematic approach to solving the problems of families with children, a lack reflected in, among other things, the poor inter-organizational collaboration in developing and implementing family policy, the incomplete allocation of responsibility for family policy between town, district and municipal levels, and the fragmentary nature of corporate and municipal family policy (Bezrukova & Samoylova & Ivashkina & Kurganova 2012). Regular monitoring of the situations of families is not carried out, nor is there a system in place to evaluate the efficacy of policy outcome by using indicators that reflect positive changes in the everyday lives and social well-being of families.

The strategic guidelines of social policy for families are produced at the federal level, but in the last decade there has been a trend towards decentralization of family policy and increasing involvement by regional administration. This concerns not only the implementation of specific programmes, but also the development of family policy concepts based on scientific analysis of the situation of families in the region, and the identification of key principles, directions and performance indicators. This permits a more active "promotion" of approaches suggested by representatives of universities, NGOs, and expert practitioners. Thus, the concept of family policy adopted by the city government in St. Petersburg for the years 2012-2022 (Concept 2012) contains principles that were not present in the previous concept of 2007: state support for the family as a whole, based on a complex assessment of resources which encompasses all aspects of the family's activity; prioritization of the interests of children in the family, including their right to safety, full development, and education; prioritization of the right of the child to live and be raised in a family, including the preservation or restitution of families through the provision of specific, targeted support; equal rights for men and women, and structured support for the accommodation of parental and professional roles based on the principle of equal participation; finding the maximum "fit" between implemented policy and people's everyday lives, including geographic access and development of a social infrastructure that takes into consideration the needs of local residents and the promotion of family work at the municipal level, integrating the family into local society; preventive implementation of family policy with a multi-level system of preventive measures and an emphasis on primary prevention, developing areas of work that anticipate the types of problems experienced by most families and increase the probability of maintaining family welfare without resorting to external intervention.

There are plans to introduce into the current system new services for families with reduced resources that are coping with their difficulties independently but at risk of landing in a crisis. Also, there are plans to develop services to build parental competence and to prevent problems in times of crisis in the family cycle, to develop a

system of comprehensive early support for families with young children, to create a network of child and family counselling and conflict-resolution services, to develop programmes to support paternity (father-school, clubs for single fathers, etc.), and to strengthen cooperation between the family, kindergarten, school, and other organizations.

The strategic aim of family policy in St. Petersburg is to achieve family well-being as a precondition to the well-being of every person and the society as a whole. The basis of the strategy lies in supporting family values and family lifestyle, reinforcing the internal and external resources of the family and its ability to perform its main functions, reinforcing the role of the family as an equally participant of social relations, and assisting all types of families in the process of social integration (Concept... 2012). The well-being of the family (financial, social, psychological), as a desired characteristic of its situation and as a precondition to its ability to maintain itself, permits each individual and the family as a whole to fulfil their maximum potential in all stages of family life. It is obvious that coordinating the interests of the family and the state is possible, and can be achieved through expansion of family policy to include support forms that accommodate the varied needs of families more fully than before.

The primary directions for family policy in St. Petersburg are overcoming poverty and improving the level of well-being for families with children, assisting in the improvement of housing conditions, improving the promotion of healthy living and disease prevention, increasing the parental and social competence of families with children, increasing the availability and quality of social services, developing new services that meet the demands and strengthen the resources of different types of families, developing networks of social support for families with children in the local community, activating the family as a social subject.

Family policy has to be aimed at creating qualitative change in the situation of the family. This requires both the improvement of traditional forms of support for the family and the development of innovative approaches. One of the key approaches being currently introduced is empowerment of families. This is reflected in the "Concept of family policy for St. Petersburg" for the years 2012-2022. Social services, as agents of a family policy that meets today's challenges, have a leading role in strengthening the process of engendering initiative at the individual and group levels. The goal of empowerment-based practice with families is to help them to strengthen their resources, thus opening new opportunities to achieve their goals and to improve well-being in the family. Promoting empowerment-based practice in social work has been the aim of the Finnish-Russian project "Empowerment of families with children", carried out in St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast, corresponding excellently to the demands of the current situation.

Summary and conclusions

The material presented in this article reflects the difficulties in the process of forming family policy in post-Soviet Russia. There are multiple conditional factors in the relationship between family and state – psychological, economic, socio-cultural and

political factors, to name a few – and these factors interact in complex ways. Paternalism, as the approach adopted by the state – combining care, responsibility and total control in relation to citizens – has become a thing of the past. Despite the conviction which many still hold that the state is obliged to provide a reasonable standard of living, current reality forces people to assume responsibility for themselves and their loved ones independently. In this situation, the alternative to paternalistic care should be in creating conditions that allow families to support themselves by working. It is the state's task to develop these conditions. Family policy should include measures that can improve the adaptive potential of the family, based both on external support and on the activation and/or development of the family's own internal resources. Also, interventions should be provided to raise social competence in resolving various problems, including the achievement of financial well-being, health care, childrearing, and so forth.

State family policy in contemporary Russia is not free of inadequacies and contradictions. It is hampered by poorly conceived organizational mechanisms, bureaucracy, and lack of expertise among administrators. Family policy is the subject of well-founded criticism which points out its declarative nature, the incompleteness of the legislative foundations, the lack of resources, and the debate over priorities, as well as other issues. At the same time, there is a definite tendency on the part of the state to increase its attention towards families and children. The key question is whether or not the priorities of families and the state coincide. It is important to not only improve whatever general indicators are available (including, for example, birth rates), but to consider the real needs of the people with great care, to give thought to the interests of specific types of families, to appreciate the significance of attitudes towards children, and to make more effective efforts to improve the physical and psychological health of children. The social well-being of families should mean that adults experience fewer difficulties in fulfilling their family duties and are able to enjoy married life and parenthood more. The coincidence of interests is also important in the mechanisms of family policy, which should not only provide the more advanced measures of direct support for the family in certain situations, but also help to create the social conditions in which families are able to successfully plan and achieve their life goals. Ideally, their success would be based on choice, responsibility, initiative, self-confidence and the possibility to be supported by the state in their self-motivated action. The actual social well-being of the family, and the successful family planning, depend on the state of all the fields that are relevant to it – health care, education, employment, social security and leisure, to name a few. In all the fields that family policy touches upon, it should be designed to promote the coordination of the work of social institutions with the best interests of the family in mind.

From a policy oriented mainly on families in difficult life situations, in the social risk zone, and in need of intervention from the state, it is necessary to move to a policy of family well-being, developing those services and forms of support that are essential for all families (in the fields of employment, education, leisure, etc.). In social work, it is high time to reinforce approaches that focus on early recognition of problems in families, implementing preventive measures to deal with the underlying causes. This should replace the earlier emphasis on the consequences of family misfortune.

A number of current trends reflect emerging qualitative features in family policy. These include the decentralization of family policy and the resulting improvements in considering local circumstances and the needs of local populations in the development of social services, the strengthening of the legal framework of equal parenting, and the implementation of «the social contract» in connection with supporting low-income families. The tendency to decentralization in family policy formation facilitates a more complete consideration of regional specifics and better targeting of adopted measures. The municipal level is the closest to people's everyday lives, and its potential has not yet been fully realized. Because the family can be the most active and genuine subject in the locality where it lives, the significance of municipalities in the support and self-organization of families coincides with the aim of empowering citizens.

The move of family policy from the 1990s to the 21st Century in Russia has changed the roles of the family and its members which have been strengthened by the reformation. The greatest changes concern the new holistic view of the family, the preventive and empowering approaches to family work, and the new strategic delineation of supporting the potential of citizens to act for their own good. The holistic view refers to the importance of the roles of both parents, and to seeing children as important members of the family. While earlier family policy was more concerned with the mother, the father is now seen as having a valuable role alongside the mother, not just in the economic sense but emotionally and socially as well. Preventive measures involve an understanding of family policy as a means to create the right circumstances for families to thrive in the long term. Such circumstances would support parenting and the social contacts of family members, as well as members of the extended family, whose support makes the everyday life of families easier (see Törrönen 2012). The concept of empowerment helps to show how important it is for individuals to feel that they are seen and heard. In the case of children, they need a sense of positive support for their normal development. If the interpretation of people's life circumstances does not revolve around the negative aspects only, it can help people to find some positive – or at least bearable – elements in their lives. Of course, the interpretation of life circumstances does not remove the difficulties or the burdens on the individual. However, it can shed light on qualities that might strengthen the individual's self-esteem and make life feel easier, at least for a moment. If people are encouraged, they feel freer to act for their own good. This kind of energy supports the well-being of society as a whole (Putnam 1994).

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PART II

Empowering social work with families and individuals

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Annika Lillrank

Empowerment and resistance resources for immigrant women - A case study of implementing salutogenic theory in practice

Introduction

Compared to other Nordic and Western countries, Finland has a rather small immigrant population. Finland was a culturally homogeneous country until 1990, when refugees and other immigrants from Russia, Somalia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Congo began to arrive (Degni et al. 2012, 332). In 2008 about 4.1 percent of the Finnish population consisted of foreign-born first generation migrants. During the years 1987-2005 about 22 percent of the immigrants were between 0 and 14 years of age, while 68 percent were between 15 and 44 and only 9 percent were over 45 years of age. Thus far, the immigrants have mainly settled in the Helsinki metropolitan area (Martikainen & Haikkola 2010, 22-30). The Finnish authorities have not systematically registered reasons for immigration. The Ministry of Labor has approximated that the majority of the migrants (60-65 percent) who arrived in the 1990s and early 2000, arrived because of family reunion. Approximately 15 percent of the migrants arrived as refugees, while around 10 percent were homecoming Finns. Roughly 5-10 percent arrived as labor migrants, and about 5-10 percent came for other reasons, for example, as students. (Työministeriö 2005, 5, quoted in Martikainen, Saari & Korkiasaari 2013, 39). This chapter focuses specially on refugee women.

Migrant women participate substantially in prenatal care in Finland. From 1999 to 2001 the birth rate for immigrant women slightly increased. The Russian migrant population had the highest number of births (27.1%), followed by Somalis (12.5%) and East Europeans (9.1%). The type of treatment given to them or needed by them varied widely. Women of African and Somali origin had the most health problems, which resulted in the highest perinatal mortality rates. The infants born to Somali women had a significant risk of low birth weight and for being small for gestational age; in addition, Somali first time mothers had the most cesarean sections (Malin & Gissler, 2009).

A great number of refugee women arrive as young adults, often at a child-bearing age. They come from poverty, restless areas involved in war, and /or persecution for their religion or minority status. This means that they often have to leave their family members, friends, culture, and language behind in order to develop a new life in a

peaceful country. The concept of acculturation describes the process in which cultural beliefs and values are confronted and changed and which affects former interaction, parenthood, and child-raising practices (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2010, 45). Over and above being familiarized to external differences, a considerable part of an individual identity and a sense of belonging may need a life-long adjustment process, which causes stress and demands multiple coping strategies and resistance resources. At the group level, acculturation means that the family has to separate from their social networks and social institutions in their country of origin and must cope with a new culture and traditions in a new country. At an individual level migration means confronting a new culture that demands problems to be solved in new ways. Acculturation can also be understood as a reciprocal process, where even the new country and the local setting are affected. Recent research on acculturation shows that even though coping strategies vary among individuals, the problems related to an adjustment to a new culture seem to be the same independent of the recipient country (Berry 2006, 15).

Many refugees suffer from poor health or from various undetected chronic diseases. Migration-related stress may have damaged their health (Tiilikainen 2003, 198-203; Kristal-Anderson 2001). According to Sam (2006, 403), immigration and acculturation may be inherently risky and might make people vulnerable to a number of problems; however, risks are in themselves not destiny. Refugees may not necessarily adopt poorly over the long term, depending on how acculturative stress is managed. How do young refugee mothers manage acculturative stress when giving birth? What kinds of resistance resources do they have at their disposal that facilitates adjustment to a new culture of giving birth? These questions lead to consideration of salutary factors, such as a sense of coherence and generalized resistance resources (Antonovsky, 1979; 1987) and interactive empowering experiences (Freire, 1970).

This chapter discusses the idea that young refugee women bring with them the resources to take responsibility for their lives, to cope with stress, and to find creative solutions in the experiences of pregnancy and birth in a foreign country. This approach is based on the salutogenic theory that defines human beings as capable, resourceful, and able to create a sense of coherence as an attitude toward life (Antonovsky 1979, 1987; Eriksson and Lindström 2011, 67). This emphasis on a positive approach about human beings as resourceful agents is further supported by the concept of empowerment. For example, according to Moula (2009, 102), “empowerment is a special form of changing one’s mind when an individual discovers one’s own resources to solve problems in order to gradually become self-reliable.”

The aim of this chapter is to explore what kinds of resistance resources one Somali woman had at her disposal to handle pregnancy and birth and how an empowering dialogue with Finnish maternity care professionals developed.

The concept of empowerment

The concept of empowerment has raised considerable interest in virtually all scientific disciplines and has been applied in practice in fields from human sciences

to political programs (Hokkanen 2009, 315; Hur 2006). The origin of the concept of empowerment was developed by Freire (1970) as a way of learning to mobilize the resources of oppressed people through education. In general, the concept is about giving people control and mastery over their lives. Its aim is to develop people's abilities and coping skills to endow them with the ability to actively work towards critical conscious-raising. Mann Hyan Hur (2006), who has developed a theoretical synthesis of a variety of cross-disciplinary studies on empowerment, concluded that thus far no comprehensive framework on the process of empowerment exists (Hur 2006, 524). However, Hur (2006) identified five progressive stages in an empowerment process: "an existing social disturbance, conscientizing, mobilizing, maximizing, and creating a new order" (Hur 2006, 535). According to Hur, the process of empowerment starts from dissatisfaction in individual, administrative, social, or political circumstances. It could also be understood as a sense of powerlessness, alienation, or inequality. When empowerment is understood as a process of both thought and action, it is an endlessly evolving dynamic development (Hokkanen 2009, 320-322; Hur 2006, 535).

However, the concept has also been criticized for being too abstract, for being rather idealistic about equality between professionals and lay people, and for ignoring complexities in power relations (Kuronen 2004, 288-289).

As the concept is closely related to the idea of power-related inequalities and expected changes in power relationships, Starring (2007, 70-72) introduces an empowerment-oriented framework that departs from efforts to achieve equality in interaction. He suggests a respectful interaction that features a connecting use of language balancing between emotional neutrality and emotional engagement, which creates a sense of belonging that strengthens self-confidence. For example, this type of interaction would be characterized by an encouraging way of talking, using phrases such as "how interesting, would you like to tell me more about it... I am glad you like it." The connecting use of language creates a sense of mutual satisfaction that reinforces one's self-confidence in stressful situations.

In an attempt to connect individual empowerment-based aspects of salutogenic thinking, Koelen and Lindström (2005, 12) define it "as a process by which people gain mastery (control) over their lives, by which they learn to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve these goals, and by which people learn to see a relationship between their efforts and the outcomes thereof." The focus is here on resources, both internal and external, in a learning process that leads to creating a sense of coherence. According to Antonovsky, life experiences (consistency, load balance, participation in shaping outcomes, emotional closeness) shape the sense of coherence while generalized resistance resources provide the individual with sets of meaningful and coherent life experiences (Antonovsky, 1987).

The salutogenic theory

The medical sociologist Aaron Antonovsky introduced the salutogenic theory to the research community (Antonovsky 1979, 1987). Salutogenesis, stemming from the Greek *salus* (= health) and *genesis* (= origin), means the origin of health. Anto-

novsky claimed that the way people view their life has a positive influence on their health. He asked the question of why some people stay healthy and others do not under the same conditions. His original idea was that it is more important to focus on peoples' resources and capacity to manage stress and their ability to maintain health in life-threatening situations and stressful life events than to put an emphasis on the risks for diseases. The core of the salutogenic theory is an orientation towards problem solving and the capacity to use available resources. He started from the assumption of human nature as chaotic and full of constant changes, the challenge being how we are able to cope with these difficulties. Two concepts are essential for the coping process, a sense of coherence (SOC) and generalized resistance resources (GRR). The ability to comprehend the whole situation and the capacity to use the resources available is called the sense of coherence. This capacity was a combination of people's ability to assess and understand the situation they were in, and to find a reason to move in a health-promoting direction, while having the capacity to do so. According to Antonovsky, the SOC consist of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. The sense of coherence is a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring, and dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli from one's internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable, and explicable; (2) the resources are available to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement (Antonovsky 1987, 19). The SOC is a coping resource that enables people to manage tension e.g., in connection to migration, with reflect on their external and internal resources, to identify and mobilize them, to promote effective coping by finding solutions, and to resolve tension in a health-promoting manner. The key to developing a SOC lies in the ability to identify resources, and to use and reuse them in a health-promoting manner, e.g., to find reliable social support. However, what is more important than the resources themselves is the ability to use them (Eriksson 2007, 98).

Generalized resistance resources (GRR) can be found within people as resources bound to their person and capacities but also to their immediate and distant environment (Lindström and Eriksson 2005, 440). GRRs have both a genetic and constitutional and a psychosocial character, and include knowledge/intelligence, ego identity, self-confidence, coping strategies, money (rational, flexible, and farsighted strategies), social support, ties, commitment (continuance, cohesion, control), cultural stability, magic, religion/philosophy/art (a stable set of answers), and a preventive health orientation. GRRs provide a person with sets of meaningful and coherent life experiences stemming from the resources at the person's disposal. In the following section, the research project "Resources for pregnancy and motherhood among refugee women in Finland" is presented.

The research project

About the data collection

The data collection was carried out in close collaboration with local authorities in a city within the Helsinki metropolitan area. This city has had a dramatic increase in

migration and has a large number of welfare professionals involved in facilitating immigrants' integration. The city was granted government funding for a pilot project to develop its integration policy and practices with migrant women outside of the labor market who care for their infants at home. This pilot project is connected to the implementation of the new Act of Integration.

We invited about 10-16 refugee mothers through the local migrant authorities to participate in individual, semi-structured "cross-language" interviews, that is, together with an interpreter. My criteria for selecting informants were that they are 1) refugee women who have been granted a residence permit in Finland, 2) who have lived at least two years in Finland, and 3) who currently take care of their child(ren) at home. Some of the women refused to participate, and some could not be reached by phone. Through a local key migrant secretary I was able to invite five Somali, three Russian, one Iranian, and one Afghan mother who were willing to participate in an individual interview. Since I did not have direct access to the potential participants, I do not know why some refused to participate. I conducted 11 interviews with 10 different women. One mother was interviewed twice. In addition, I interviewed one Somali interpreter about her birth experience in Finland. The targeted group is rather small since as refugee mothers, because of language problems and their work caring for small children at home, they are very difficult to contact, even for the local immigrant authorities.

The interviews took place during May- August and in November 2012. All of the interviews took place in the interviewees' private homes, except for the Somali interpreter, who was interviewed in a cafe. In all of the interviews one or several children were at home. In two of the families the husbands were at home and participated actively in the interviews. Before the interview began I explained the purpose of the study and gave the interviewee(s) the opportunity to ask additional questions about the study. Since the interviewees were not necessarily able to understand what it means to participate in a research study, I was especially careful to emphasize the confidentiality of our interaction and to underline that their anonymity is protected. All of the study procedures were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Research Review Board of the Vantaa Migrant Authorities.

All informants except for one agreed to allow the interview to be tape-recorded. One informant did not agree to this, so we started the interview without a tape recorder. However, after a while she felt confident enough to let us record it. The interviews usually lasted from an hour to an hour and a half. The interviews were a mixture of semi-structured thematic and narrative interview practices. During or after the interview we were served refreshments in a friendly and hospitable atmosphere.

Five of the interviewees had given birth to their first child in Finland. Six women had two or more children and had delivered both in their native country and in Finland. The age of the children born in Finland ranged from three months to about two years of age. The mothers were between 20 and 34 years of age, and all lived with their husbands. Two mothers were illiterate, while the others' education ranged from two years of school to university studies.

Six women had good experiences of pregnancy and delivery, while three had dramatic or unexpected experiences, and two had poor experiences. Those with good or mixed experiences were happy about the way Finnish maternity care was organized, while the women with poor and/or dramatic experiences felt traumatized and that they were poorly treated by the hospital staff.

In this chapter one Somali woman is presented to illustrate what kinds of resources she had available and how a trusting dialogue developed with her Finnish maternal care professionals. For this purpose I have chosen an interview with a Somali mother, here named Nadina, for several reasons. Firstly, her interview is rich in details and thick descriptions of her pregnancy and birth experience. Secondly, her story represents the first time mothers in the data who had unexpected problems during the pregnancy and a dramatic birth experience. Third, her story is unusual in the self-confident way that she was able to develop trust and rely on Finnish health care professionals and in how vividly she remembered the professional encounters. This interview highlights from a refugee woman's point of view what an empowering and encouraging dialogue with a maternity professional can be like (Jacobson & Meeuwisse 2008, 50-51). My interview interaction with Nadina was also greatly appealing because her "quality of mind transmitted to me through her characterization, motivation and description, and commentary" during the interview (Mishler 1986, 81) with an impression of a both vulnerable and a self-confident woman explaining and evaluating her pregnancy and birth experience. This presentation and interpretation of the interview are filtered and jointly constructed through my interaction with Nadina and Shukri, the interpreter.

The challenges of interviewing through an interpreter

In the study five interpreters fluent in Somali, Russian, Farsi, or Sorani were hired to function as interpreters in the cross-language interviews. Four translated into Finnish, while one Farsi-speaking interpreter translated into English. A fundamental prerequisite for gathering data was the use of interpreters, since none of the participants were fluent enough in Finnish, Swedish, or English. Besides engaging in reflexive elaboration on the thematic and dynamic aspects with each interviewee, the interviewer has to develop an equally good interaction with the interpreter, since language and communication always transfer verbal, nonverbal, and emotional information (Lillrank 2012, 281; Lillrank 2002). Thus, good interactional relationships are essential since professional interpreters participate in situations where they are able to understand everything said and thus can exercise a certain control over the situation (Wadensjö 1998, 105). Similar to my experience, Wadensjö (1998, 8) suggested a "dialogue model" because "the meaning conveyed in and by talks is partly a joint product." This means that an interpreter is part of the communication and interaction between an informant and a researcher (Wadensjö 1998). Here, the interpreters also contribute to the communication based on their cultural and social background, as Temple suggests:

The use of translators and interpreters is not merely a technical matter that has little bearing on the outcome. It is of epistemological consequence as it influences what is "found". Translators are active in the process of constructing accounts and an

examination of their intellectual autobiographies, that is, an analytic engagement with how they come to know what to do, is an important component in understanding the nature and status of the findings. When the translator and the researcher are different people the process of knowledge construction involves another layer. (Temple 1997, 614)

Qualitative analysis requires the systematic transcription of the interviews and responsiveness to the role of interviewer, interpreter, and reader in the construction of meaning (Riessman 2000, 130). Shukri, the Somali interpreter who participated in this interview, was fluent in the native language of the Somali interviewees as well as in Finnish. She belongs to the Somali culture and has a social understanding through being a mother herself. Shukri related her own experiences of giving birth in a Finnish maternal care hospital. She was able to explain and clarify differences between these two cultures, which constituted a valuable addition to the development of my understanding of the interviews. Consequently, the ethnicity and the social background of the interpreter is an important resource (Temple & Young 2004, 171).

The analytical framework

The researcher examines the way a story is told – how it is expressed and how its presentation convinces the interviewer of its authenticity. Since the telling and narratives about experiences follow a particular cultural style of expression and storytelling, the translated and transcribed interviews require multiple readings. Working with translated interviews – because of the uncertainties of language and meaning – raises interpretive problems that all qualitative analysts face, regardless of being a native speaker or not (Riessman 2000, 130). “Meanings are problematic and ambiguous, most obviously because of translation” (Riessman 2000, 133-134). For example, in translating this interview, the interpreter took the role of the interviewee without giving precise translations of verb tenses which made it sometimes difficult to determine the course of events. Also, this style of interpretation did not consequently specify who said what, which prevented a structural analysis of the interview text.

Another dilemma of particular relevance for this study is the second translation and meaning-making from Finnish into English for English-speaking readers (see Riessman 2000, 133- 144). In this chapter the presented interview and the quotations are translated into English by the author. Further, qualitative methods are always partial, incomplete, and placed in a certain historical context. Thus my analysis should be seen as a *possible interpretation* of the case study, since no one can claim to really comprehend another human being (Kristensson-Uggla 2007).

My analysis began with a broad thematic content analysis on “what” Nadina said about her pregnancy and the delivery. Next, I focused on “how” Nadina experienced and evaluated these life events (Jacobson & Meeuwisse 2008; Riessman 2008; Gubrium & Holstein 2009) in an attempt to explain and understand her behavior (Ricoeur 1976). In my analysis I have reconstructed the told from the telling, as recommended by Misher (1995). In other words, I have reconstructed a core narrative (“the told”) on the basis of my interview (“the telling”). My analytic approach departs from the idea that “events perceived by the speaker as important are selected, organized, con-

nected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience” (Riessman 2008, 3). I have interpreted Nadina’s narrative as her way of finding and using the resistance resources available to her to cope with the challenges of pregnancy and giving birth demands, to make sense of them, and to create a sense of coherence out of the lived experience.

A narrative is usually organized according to a protagonist’s cultural understanding of a situation, or a cultural script. A cultural script describes ordinary knowledge of how to understand and behave in a certain situation, such as giving birth. Cultural scripts could also be defined as a world view that is taken for granted for members of a certain society (Andrews 2007, 53; Katisko 2011, 48-51). In my interview with Nadina she gave rather short answers to my questions but explained and evaluated the unexpected turning points during her pregnancy and the delivery, with short narratives that were dense in meaning and “tell-ability” (Andrews 2007, 33; Gubrium & Holstein 2009). This triggered the “why tell” that imposed something significant about Nadina’s pregnancy and birth experience. In other words, when a cultural script is either breaking down or demands creative ways of coping, it calls for a story (Katisko 2011).

How did the Finnish cultural script confront the Somali cultural script? In Somali culture women marry young, and the purpose of marriage is to give birth to as many children as God gives them. Becoming a mother and motherhood is considered a natural cornerstone of a Somali woman’s identity. However, life in Finland changes the traditional gender roles since extended families seldom live together. This force Somali husbands to participate in childbirth, care for children, and carry out household tasks. Consequently, living in Finland may blur familiar gender structures, which may cause stress and new situations (Tiilikainen 2003, 174-175). Next, I present Nadina and my joint interview with her and Shukri, the interpreter.

Presentation of Nadina

Nadina is a 28-year-old Somali woman who arrived in Finland in 2008. She has completed about two years of primary school in her native country. Nadine married a native Somali man that she met in Finland. She knew that he did not have a residence permit in Finland, but she hoped that he would receive one, and they were in the middle of the application process. Shortly after, Nadina’s husband had to leave for the country where he had a residence permit, and she found out that she was pregnant. When Nadina’s pregnancy came to term, she gave birth by cesarean section to a healthy daughter, who was at the time of the interview one and a half years old. Immediately after the delivery Nadina was rushed to another hospital for emergency heart surgery. She was then diagnosed with a chronic heart condition. The day after the delivery, Nadina’s husband arrived in Finland. The hospital staff taught him how to care for the baby. Based on a doctor’s statement, he received a residence permit in Finland. Nadina does not have any close relatives living in Finland.

The interview took place in Nadina’s home, where she and her daughter waited for me and Shukri. Nadina was beautifully dressed in a traditional Somali woman’s outfit with a hijab. We sat at her kitchen table, and explained the purpose of the interview.

Nadina immediately agreed to allow the interview to be tape-recorded, and she signed a letter of consent. Her daughter placed herself in her mother's lap and sat there quietly during the entire interview, which lasted about an hour. She played with some colorful advertising flyers, and seemed very happy, safe, and relaxed in her mother's lap. Only when the little girl became tired did she become somewhat restless, but Nadina gently comforted her, and after a while she fell asleep in her mother's lap. Nadina and her daughter gave the impression of having a good and loving mother-child relationship. Nadina was relaxed and easy to interview. I intuitively felt that it was all right to ask her follow-up questions during our interaction, an intuition I did not have with all of the interviewees.

Reflecting back on the interview situation, I was rather bound by my semi-structured questions and did not realize that Somalis are known for a rich oral tradition and for being skilled storytellers (Degni et al. 2012, 332). When I later asked Shukri to listen to the recorded interview and to review the transcribed interview, she evaluated it as a good interview because of the clearly formulated questions that helped her to do a good job as an interpreter, which is an important level of knowledge production. However, regardless of how correctly narratives are transcribed, they leave, by definition, loose ends and gaps in the storyline, so that researchers always work with fragments (Riessman 2000, 145). Furthermore, I had not understood that 98 percent of women from Somalia have experienced female genital mutilation or circumcision. These procedures involve the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons, which can have consequences for giving birth (Amereseke-re et al. 2011). Because of my lack of knowledge and uncertainty, I was not prepared to ask about this and, neither Nadina nor any of the other interviewees raised the issue. However, during my analysis I have gradually gained insight in its importance in better understanding Nadina's pregnancy and birth experience.

Nadina's resistance resources and empowering experiences

In the Somali tradition, women experience and view pregnancy as a natural part of life, and it is regarded as a health experience. Neither prenatal nor preventive medical care is practiced in Somalia, since the extended family teach each other and provide social support during pregnancy. Often women rely on each other to act as midwives during home births. Somali women have traditionally placed their faith in God rather than in medical science. Consequently, Somali women who have immigrated to Western countries and enter a new and unfamiliar maternal care system are especially vulnerable during pregnancy and childbirth because of the lack of traditional family support (Hill et al. 2012, 72-75). In addition, Somali women are vulnerable to social challenges since many have gone through highly stressful war-related experiences (Degni 2012, Tiilikainen 2003).

Nadina's pregnancy-related challenges – and her resources for coping with them

Shortly after Nadina's husband had to leave for another country, she discovered that she was pregnant. To be alone was her first unexpected challenge. When I asked

how she felt about and coped with this unexpected situation, Nadina shortly mentioned that it was a difficult situation, but she did not elaborate on it any further.

The Somali culture is characterized by a strong sense of community. For example, the way that individuals are brought up in extended families means that they have practically no experience of being alone (Shukri, personal communication). Nadina coped by participating in a Finnish language class organized by immigrant authorities until she was about five months pregnant. By participating in a language course, Nadine helped herself to lessen her loneliness by being with other course participants that also were newly arrived immigrants. Participating in a group gave her the opportunity to make friends and discuss common experiences and to familiarize herself with the new culture, language, and country. Her resolute behavior gives an impression of agency and the ability to connect with others (Lalietou 2007, 60).

Later in the interview, Nadine presented herself in a following way; "I am an open-minded person, and I enjoy meeting with new people because it is always possible to learn something new from others. And being with others has helped me a lot... it makes me happy to be in others' company." Shukri further clarified Nadina's presentation of herself as being an independent individual who wants to get to know new people in order to learn new things.

In my interpretation, her independence reveals her self-confidence, an internal resource that meant that she felt in control of the situation and knew what to do and how to help herself. Her goal-oriented behavior demonstrated her ability to take control of her situation. Among Nadina's external resistance resources were her ability to find and socialize with others around her, which helped her gain strength in a challenging situation.

Her second unexpected challenge arose when she was seven months pregnant. Nadina shortly mentioned that a doctor discovered that she had a heart problem, but she did not elaborate further on how it was discovered or what it was about. She only mentioned that it prevented her from familiarizing herself with the hospital before the delivery. Nadina coped with her illness by taking it for granted, and when she later evaluated it, she made it meaningful by believing the illness to be predestinated by God. The Somali cultural script may help understand her way of thinking. Namely, in the Somali anatomical understanding, the heart and the stomach are of central importance. The heart is the core of life, and the stomach regulates the bodily functions (Tiilikainen 2003, 210). Somali migrants often comprehend illness as an expression of homesickness and as a result of an imbalance and excessive emotions. Further, health and illness are connected with Islamic beliefs, which may also include medical explanations (Mölsä et. al. 2010). In the Somali way of thinking, natural and supernatural illness explanations together with family members' interpretations of symptoms combine to explain a particular illness (Serkkola 1998, 70-71; Degni et al. 2012, 331). This cultural script and her belief that her illness was predestinated by God functioned as Nadina's resistance resource, which gave her the self-confidence to go on with her pregnancy and later on with her life.

Her third unexpected challenge appeared when she was eight months pregnant. During a scheduled appointment at the maternity clinic, a nurse discovered that the fetus had not moved into the birth position. The nurse unsuccessfully tried to turn the fetus into the right position. She then suggested an appointment with an obstetrician and scheduled it for her, explaining that if the fetus is still in the same position, the doctor may suggest a cesarean section. When Nadina visited the specialist, this doctor confirmed that the fetus had not changed position because of the shape of her hips. During this appointment the doctor decided to deliver by cesarean section. Since the majority of migrant Somali women are circumcised, it is possible that this was an additional reason for the doctor's decision to deliver by section (Ameresekere et al. 2011).

A: What did you think about this?

N: It was very scary, I was afraid.

A: Did the doctor explain how the section would be done?

N: Yes, it was very good that an interpreter was present when this was said. And then the doctor also said that we are going to help you. I was extremely afraid, but the doctor said that we are going to care for you as long you need help and we will help you until you are able to take care of your own child. [The doctor also said] that I can stay in the hospital until I have recovered. And they promised to take care of me. And then there was also an interpreter.

Nadina's short narrative of this appointment begins and ends with the statement that an interpreter was present. When a protagonist repeats something twice in more or less identical words, it features something of core importance for the entire narrative (Katisko 2011, 71). It was of vital importance for Nadina that an interpreter was present to ensure that she received comprehensive explanations about this subject. The interpreter allowed Nadina to feel supported in a frightening situation and to understand what the doctor said about delivering by section. In this segment of the interview, Nadina's second main focus was on her understanding of the doctor's supportive assurance of medical help. These two core experiences probably helped to strengthen her self-confidence and to allow herself to trust the professional and supportive care of health professionals.

After she had emphasized the presence of an interpreter and the doctor's assurance of help, Nadina revealed her primary emotional state of mind; her great fear of the cesarean section. Her sense of great fear dominated her state of mind through her telling of her birth experience – which she repeatedly contrasted with the supportive and empowering interactions with the doctors. Because she was supported to feel somewhat secure, she felt safe enough to reveal her major emotional experience (Lillrank 2002). While she was sharing this fear, she showed her struggle to make sense of the cesarean section, which probably kept her on the verge of a sense of chaos even though she clearly understood the doctor's assurance of medical care and the doctor's emotional ability and willingness to support her through the delivery and the postnatal period in the hospital. This supportive and empowering dialogue was based on medical knowledge and authority that included emotional and social

support, characteristics of Börjeson's concept of the professional fellow-being (Börjeson 2010, 168).

Nadina emphasized how this doctor, as a professional fellow-being, developed through the help of an interpreter a dialogue with her. The dialogue elevated her self-confidence to better understand the situation and decide to continue trusting and complying with the doctors and the health care system.

When discussing how to understand Nadina's ability to trust the doctors and nurses with Shukri, she emphasized that the doctor's comforting way of taking responsibility and his or her assurance that everything would work out constituted the cornerstone for Nadina's ability to trust the doctors and nurses. This essentially strengthened her belief that everything would work out. In other words, she gained self-confidence and hope, important resistance resources, in an extremely stressful situation. Even when the delivery had an unexpected outcome that no one could have predicted at this point, Shukri pointed out that Nadina was realistic in that she did not expect any miracles. In spite of the unexpected outcome of her delivery, she continued to trust the doctors because she understood their sincere willingness to help her and care for her. Last, but not least, Nadina had good self-confidence to begin with, which enabled her to feel confident in the individuals around her, an interpretation that Shukri also agreed with. In the following part of the interview, the above interpretation was underlined.

A: Did you feel that you were treated well, even when you were very afraid, that they took care of your fears and they tried to comfort you?

N: Yes, it was a relief when I was told that everything is going to work out and the interpreter was present, but after the section another story happened to me. It was very difficult, the newborn baby girl stayed in the hospital and I became seriously ill.

A: Would you like to tell me how the delivery went and why you were hospitalized?

Before Nadina continued her narrative about her birth experience, she once more wanted to emphasize and elaborate on how the doctor comforted her, which gave her the courage to go through with the cesarean section.

N: The doctors comforted me and scheduled a certain day and time when I should come to the hospital [to give birth]. But the doctor said that it might be - I think that the doctor understood that I was extremely afraid - and then they said to me that perhaps the section is not going to be necessary, perhaps the baby turns around and everything works out normally and we may not need to do the surgery. That is what the doctor said to me.

In the two sequences where Nadina explained and evaluated what the doctors said to her, by repeating her narrative twice about the doctor's ability to comfort her and interact with her as a professional fellow-being, Nadina returned to the main idea and a core experience in her narrative (Katisko 2011). From this short sequence, as it is

here translated from Somali into Finnish, it is apparent that Nadina did not verbally explain to the doctor about her fear of a delivery by section. However, from the way the doctor interacted with her, Nadina concluded that the doctor had nonverbally recognized her fear and wanted to comfort and encourage her. Nadina responded with a remarkable ability to trust and gain confidence from the doctor's assurance to help and support her through the delivery. This dialogue gave Nadina courage and empowered her in this new and demanding situation. It helped her to compose herself and to increase a sense of predictability and meaningfulness. From the translation of the interview, we do not know if the doctors were female or male.

According to the empowerment model developed by Moula (2009), human beings have a stock of opinions of an actual situation that are articulated in a dialogue. A dialogue enables an individual to organize her thoughts and emotions. Language and communication are the most important way of developing relations with others. A language is seldom neutral, and immigrants usually need an interpreter to clarify and make sense of interactions since language and culture are intertwined. A characteristic of human beings is the ability to express emotions, since it is not possible to separate behavior and thoughts from emotions. Further, individuals express wishes about something that they want to do. Human beings behave through actions – focusing on actions enables us to acknowledge individuals as they develop. The capacity to develop relations is inherent in human nature – we become individuals in interactions with others, and we need human relations in our lives. Human beings are capable of solving problems and learning the consequences of their own behavior. Thus, individuals are able to change their circumstances (Moula 2009, 109-111). Antonovsky also emphasized that comprehension, manageability, and meaningfulness develop in interaction with others. Nadina's internal resource, here a capability to trust, was greatly supported in an encouraging dialogue with the responsible doctor.

Nadina's birth experience

Giving birth in a foreign country is considered a particularly demanding and stressful situation. It is a real challenge for Somali women, since experiencing such a life event with little or no access to well-known traditions or familiar social support can be assumed to test one's available resources and coping strategies (Hill et al. 2012; Wiklund et al. 2000). Since female circumcision in various forms is generally practiced in Somalia, it may impact or complicate giving birth. This cultural tradition, a female rite of passage, ensures a girl's status as "a good wife-to-be" and a respected adulthood. In Somalia it is performed by special practitioners passed on from mother to daughter to secure the daughter's marriage and social acceptance in local communities (Matsuke 2011, 8-12). Women who have experienced female circumcision are more likely to have cesarean deliveries, compared with women who have not experienced it, especially in countries where health providers have less knowledge of this tradition (Ameresekere et al. 2011, 227-229; Essen et al. 2011; Essen et al. 2000). In addition, Somali women have fatalistic attitudes and a real reason to be afraid of giving birth. The statistics of the World Health Organization (2010) concludes that the maternal mortality rate in Somalia is approximated to be 1,200 per 100,000 live births, which means that Somali women are one of the highest risk groups in the world (Hill et al. 2012, 72; Essen et al. 2011).

Anthropologists have discussed the wide variety of conceptions about pregnancy and birth among different cultures. This belief system, conceptualized as *the birth culture* by Hahn and Muecke (1987), “informs members of a society about the nature of conception, the proper conditions of procreation and childbearing, the workings of pregnancy and labor, and the rules and rationales of pre- and postnatal behavior” (quoted in Helman 2007, 169). Western birth culture is based on medical science and technology that separates the mother from the infant. The medical view of pregnancy and delivery abstract it from the mother’s life experience and handle it as a remote medical event. The mother and the obstetrician may have different opinions on how to assess quality, measure successful outcomes and decide the pace of the birth itself. For the woman, giving birth is integrated into other aspects of her life. With a first delivery in particular, she gains a new social role as a mother, which changes her marital status, housing situation, and personal relationships (Hellman 2007, 170-172). In other words, trying to comprehend giving birth as a medical process instead of a natural process (Helman 2007, 171) stretches one’s ability to predict its course, manage one’s behavior, and make sense of it.

N: I came to the maternal hospital [on the scheduled day when the pregnancy was at term]. They took a blood sample, checked the child, and the doctor said that it has not changed position. Yes, we are going to do the section.

A: So the final decision was made at that time?

N: Yes, even though the doctors had already told me about the section, but then they perhaps wanted to comfort me, so the final decision was made at that point. I actually knew it already, but yes, at that point the doctors made the final decision.

Nadina had some time to prepare herself for the delivery by section. This final decision may also have been due to the doctors’ uncertainty of how to handle a woman who has been circumcised during delivery. In her narrative Nadina again emphasized how she was comforted by the doctors’ way of handling her situation and by their sensitivity and respect for her fear. Even though the doctors did not change their mind about performing the cesarean section, Nadina trusted the doctors’ actions and sensed their effort to emotionally understand and support her. This balance between fear and comfort dominated Nadina’s preparation for her birth experience.

A: How did you feel being hospitalized, did you feel secure or insecure?

N: Yes, I was extremely afraid, I would have liked to escape from the hospital, I was not at all in my usual state of mind.

Nadina was probably afraid for several reasons. Firstly, it must have been difficult to understand and predict the medical course of the delivery by section. Nadina had seen a televised documentary about a section that had increased, not lessened her fears. Shukri emphasized that the cultural knowledge needed to predict how the birth process will develop in a hospital is very important, although difficult to explain. Secondly, Somali women in general fear having a cesarean delivery because they believe that it limits the number of future babies and can result in maternal death

(Ameresekere et al. 2011; Essen et al. 2011). All Somali women are afraid of giving birth because it is by definition a risky event in Somalia due to the high risk of maternal mortality rates compounded by high pregnancy rates. In addition, Somali women belong to a culture with a strong oral tradition, where narratives of natural birth experiences circulate among women, and almost everyone knows someone with a poor birth experience. "To give birth may open one's tomb" (Zahra Abdulla, a Somali midwife, personal communication). Over the centuries, oral narratives have educated and transmitted practical knowledge among women who lack a formal education.

A: How did you cope with this fear?

N: Yes, I had somebody with me - a girl was with me... I had a supporting person with me.

A: You could hold her hand?

N: Yes, earlier [before the delivery] the doctor had asked if I had a [significant] friend to whom I want them to tell about my situation. Then I mentioned this girl, a particular friend of mine, and the doctor then phoned her and asked her to come to the hospital at the time of the section. And my girl-friend came and sat beside my bed, she held my hand and supported me.

A: So this helped you?

N: Yes she always supported me and stayed close so that I did not need to be alone in the hospital.

Nadina had one female friend that her doctor called and asked to come and be with her. This caring and interactive behavior shows that this Finnish doctor did care and that he or she deliberately took a role as a professional fellow-being with Nadina. Her only close friend in Finland was a native Somali woman who spoke Finnish and was familiar with Finnish culture. Such a friend is called "a senior, or an adviser" within the Somali women's networks in Finland. They often function as mediators between Somali women and health care professionals (Degni 2004, 75). She provided valuable social support that prevented Nadina from being lonely. Nadina gave birth to a healthy daughter and named her baby after her supporting friend.

A: How did the birth giving experience ... proceed?

N: After the section delivery [the doctors] discovered that I stopped breathing that I could not breathe normally, it was very difficult, and the doctors' realized that something is wrong with my lungs or the heart. The doctors said that they cannot treat me in this (maternity care) hospital, that I have to be sent to another hospital. And then I was taken in the ambulance to another hospital. They said that they will take care of the baby until I recover and then the baby was cared for there [in the maternity care unit]...

A: How long did you stay in the other hospital?

N: A week.

A: Such a long time?

N: The day after I was taken to the hospital, the father came, the father of my baby. He went to the maternity care hospital ... and the staff showed him how to take care of the baby. He was taught how to care of the baby, and then...

A: Did you return to the maternity care hospital?

N: After three days I was just crying and crying, I did not know why. And then the doctors said that they would try to get a small bed for the baby so that we could be together. After three days the baby came and we could be together.

Nadina's birth experience is dense with unexpected turns. She cannot remember much from the birth of her daughter because her memory was blurred by heavy medication. The birth itself unexpectedly resulted in heart surgery in another hospital. Third, her husband arrived and was taught to care for the baby. After the surgery Nadina's thoughts were probably with her newborn baby and her husband. In this overwhelming and heartbreaking situation, which was probably very difficult to comprehend, she responded by crying. The doctors interpreted her crying as caused by her separation from her baby and took action to bring them together. Nadina remembered that the baby came after three days –and that she was reassured that the baby was now close to her and that her husband was taking care of the baby. Her ability to remember these events marked their meaningfulness for Nadina. She ends her tale with an evaluative comment: "and we could be together." This seemed to make Nadina happy and indicated that the doctors' interpretation of her crying and attempt to comfort her were well directed – she had become a mother and wanted to be close to her newborn daughter.

Next Nadina explained how her birth experience resulted in a chronic illness that impacted her future in many unexpected ways:

N: [The doctors said] that I have a serious heart condition and that I cannot give birth to more babies because it is a risk to my life. And I cannot do many sport activities or run anymore... that I have two blocks in the blood vessels of my heart. That it does not function well.

A: Was it a relief that your husband arrived?

N: Yes, he has taken care of the baby and helped a lot.

A: What is his situation then, did he receive a residence permit?

N: The doctor said that I cannot care for the baby alone, because I am ill. And then my husband just told [the doctor] that he has not received a residence permit for Finland, that he is in the middle of the application process and cannot stay in Finland. Then the doctor addressed a statement to the immigrant authorities and asked us to take it to the Immigration Service. We did so, and after a while my husband received a residence permit for Finland.

Nadina's heart disease enabled the immigration authorities to make a quick decision about reuniting the family. Another change included the recommendation that she should have no further pregnancies, which challenges her cultural script of marriage and her social identity as a Somali mother of many children. The reunited family changed her husband's traditional gender role by involving him closely in child care and household tasks (Tiilikainen 2003).

Finally I asked her how she was coping and what made these new changes comprehensible and meaningful:

N: Yes, I believe in God, and God has always supported me and helped me a lot. That is how I have survived.

A: That your trust in God, that God helps you?

N: Yes, I also believe that everything is predestined, also that the illness is meant for me...

An important coping strategy and internal resistance resources for Nadina were her belief and trust in God. The Islamic belief makes suffering meaningful while also explaining how to mitigate it (Tiilikainen 2003, 171). An ill individual needs to be patient, since human beings undergo trials if they remain true believers of Islam. Thus suffering from an illness may have positive consequences if a sufferer stays patient and loyal in her belief. However, the ill person needs to seek a cure for herself. Since God has created the illness, God has also created a cure (Perho 1995, 145-146; quoted in Tiilikainen 2003, 39). In general, Somalis in Finland consider the Finnish health care system to be reliable in the treatment of physical diseases (Tiilikainen 2003, 219-220).

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was first to explore what kinds of resistance resources Nadina had at her disposal to handle her pregnancy and birth experience in a foreign country. This interview revealed that Nadina's self-confidence and her capability to connect with others, such as language class participants, her doctors, and other health care providers and her friend that she trusted and relied on for help and support were her internal resistance resources. In addition, she emphasized her belief and trust in God. She comprehended her heart disease as manageable and meaningful by believing it to be predestined by God. She had the ability to use and reuse her available resources.

According to Antonovsky (1991), the sense of coherence has three key components, comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. When Nadina confronted her pregnancy and birth challenges, her resistance resources enabled her to manage her situation by trusting others, giving her a sense of belonging to a language class and the ability to entrust herself to the care of the health care providers. Her fear of delivering by cesarean section was probably due to several reasons, such as fearing of death and not being able to predict or comprehend the medical course of action. At this critical point, Nadina was able to develop and rely on an empowering and caring dialogue with her doctor, who made conscious efforts to strengthen her sense of manageability and her ability to entrust herself to the care of medical professionals. This reciprocal dialogue strengthened her ability to achieve a sense of meaningfulness. According to Antonovsky, an individual develops these three key components in close interaction with her social surroundings. A strong sense of coherence is always a result of the interplay between an individual and her surroundings (Lindstein 2001, 212).

However, the salutogenic theory, a macro sociological theory, has not specified how a sense of coherence actually develops in human beings. It has more or less taken for granted a “basic personality structure that involves a strong sense of coherence” (Antonovsky 1979, 151). In a similar way, Koelen and Lindström (2005), in their attempt to connect individual empowerment with the salutogenic approach, departed from an abstract description of a solely individual ability of people to “gain mastery of their lives.” Neither of these theoretical approaches specifies how human interaction, the vital role of a reciprocal relationship as a dynamic process, facilitates a sense of coherence, or how the process of empowerment develops. In agreement with Volanen (2011, 64), who emphasizes that the sense of coherence is psycho-emotional and that the most significant resistance resources are related to close human relationships, I propose that a strong sense of coherence is essentially social since it develops in a trusting and respectful dialogue with an(other) human being. As this chapter indicates, a supportive and reciprocal relationship is essential in order to develop understanding, to cope, and to make sense of challenging life events.

The salutogenic dialogue

Based on Nadina’s experiences, I will outline a model of what a reciprocal dialogue that includes elements from salutogenic theory and the concept of empowerment could be like, the second aim of this chapter.

The purpose of the salutogenic dialogue is to use the resources that refugee women have to cope with the Western birth culture in a process leading toward meaningfulness and empowerment. By using a connecting language that gives a sense of belonging (Starring 2007), the dialogue enables comprehension by making giving birth a relatively predictable and manageable event. The salutogenic dialogue is facilitated by a professional fellow-being, a concept developed by Börjeson (2010, 168-169) within social work practice. A professional fellow-being is characterized by a mastery of professional knowledge based on science and its practical utility, and an ability to involve the personal self to emphatically understand and offer emotional and social support. Trained to communicate trust and understanding in professional encounters, doctors, nurses, and social workers enable the creation of an encouraging dialogue that supports refugee mothers to better comprehend and cope with distressing events. The dialogue includes efforts to understand and respect each other to develop mutual interaction in the acculturation process.

The interpreter plays a fundamentally important role in facilitating a trusting dialogue to develop. Achieving a reciprocal and empowering dialogue often needs several meetings. When the salutogenic dialogue strengthens comprehension and identifies resistance resources to empower a sense of manageability and a sense of trusting the maternal care system it increases a sense of meaningfulness. By integrating the salutogenic theory and the concept of empowerment in the dialogue between a professional fellow-being, a refugee mother, and an interpreter in a dynamic interaction, it increases a sense of meaningfulness in birth experiences. Thus, it facilitates the promotion of health and well-being for mothers and newborn babies in refugee families.

Case study is a useful research method when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin et al. 1991). This case study is drawn from a small sample size representing refugee women who are difficult to locate and contact. The knowledge developed from a single interview cannot be generalized to include all migrant Somali women in Finland or to all maternal health care providers. However, this case study illuminates some important practical and contextually related aspects from a refugee woman's perspective: the vital importance for health care providers to take time to develop a salutogenic dialogue through an interpreter that identifies refugee women's resources and culturally inherited (death) fears in order to empower them to better cope with the Western birth culture (see Jacobson & Meeuwisse 2008). Further research could provide deeper insights into how providers can develop trust in Somali women and Somali women's perception of Finnish birth practices.

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Eveliina Heino, Nadezda Kärmeniemi

Cultural interpretation as an empowering method in social work with immigrant families

Introduction

This article discusses the use of cultural interpreter as an approach aiming to support Russian immigrant families that have become clients of child protection services. The study is conducted within the framework of the project “Empowerment of Families with Children”, under the administration of the University of Helsinki Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education, Kotka Unit. The overall objective of the project is to develop preventive family work practices, and its time span is from 2011 to 2014.

Trial of cultural interpretation, which formed a crucial part of the project, was carried out in two municipalities in South-East Finland. The person acting as cultural interpreter was a native Russian speaker who had moved to Finland from Russia, and who was trained in psychology. Her work involved child protection workers and Russian families that are in touch with child protection services. The actions of the cultural interpreter were guided by the individual needs of each family, and her tasks have included conveying information needed by the family members in their own language, and supporting the family and the child protection workers to cooperate with each other.

We will discuss cultural interpretation in the context of empowerment theory. The term refers to subjective empowerment, which means that individuals gain control of their lives as well as becoming able to act in society. Thus, it can be defined as a multi-dimensional social process connected to increases in well-being, sense of control and quality of life. In terms of professional practice, empowerment can also be construed as providing information and offering opportunities to make choices, which can be seen as leading to individual and societal empowerment. In our study, we understand empowerment as being connected to both individual experiences and to an increase in available courses of action in society.

Our focus of interest is on factors that prevent or enhance the clients’ empowerment. In this study we ask: 1) what are the main challenges to client-worker relationships, 2) what kind of role does the cultural interpreter take when assisting the clients and workers in meeting these challenges, and 3) how significant are these challenges and cultural interpretation in terms of the clients’ empowerment?

The topic of our study is socially highly relevant. First, as immigration becomes increasingly common, questions regarding immigrants have surfaced in the fields of child protection and social work (Lehto et al. 2003, 85; Anis 2008, 14). In this situation, those working with immigrant clients are seen as needing new approaches and competencies in their encounters with people coming from a variety of linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds (see Pitkänen & Kouki 1999, 114-118; Järvinen 2004, 139-151; Hannerz 2003, 217). According to previous research (Katisko 2012; Anis 2008; Heikkilä-Daskalopoulos 2008; Statistics Finland 2007; Vuorio 2001), Finns and immigrants do not differ significantly from each other in terms of the causes that lead to them becoming clients of child protection services, but there are certain specific features in an immigrant clientele that can create challenges, such as poor language skills, different cultural perceptions, and problems related to integration, such as unemployment, loneliness etc. Cultural interpretation is an attempt to meet these challenges, and research evidence serving further development of the method will be of immediate practical use.

Secondly, very few studies have been carried out regarding Russian-speaking immigrants in the context of child protection, even though it is the largest immigrant group in the entire country, as well as in South-East Finland. At the end of the year 2010 there were 224 388 people living in Finland who spoke a language other than one of the official languages (Finnish, Swedish or Sami) as their mother tongue. Russian was spoken as native language by 54 559 people, which is 1,1 % of the entire population in Finland (5 375 276) (Statistics Finland, 2012). It is noteworthy that immigrants from Russia, Estonia and former Soviet territories comprise approximately 40 % of all immigrants living in Finland. (Reuter & Jaakkola 2005, 24.)

Thirdly, in the years 2011-2013 families with Russian background as clients of child protection services have become an object of public discussion, in Finland and especially in Russia. This has become a burning issue in the press, which lends this study current relevance. Fourthly, earlier studies related to the themes of child protection and immigration primarily focused on discussing the views of the workers, who were members of the native population, while in the current study we observe the phenomenon from three separate viewpoints simultaneously (clients, cultural interpreter, workers) allowing the immigrants' own voice to be heard.

Empowering approach in the context of child protection and social work with immigrants

In previous research, empowerment has been studied from both individual and structural points of view. On the individual level the goal of empowerment generally is to increase knowledge, skills, individual life management, self-esteem and understanding regarding self and the factors that function as obstacles to personal fulfillment and life management. It includes participatory behavior and feelings. It is also possible to examine empowerment as a personal process, in the course of which many positive changes take place in an individual's life. The structural level, on the other hand, encompasses the balance of power affecting the courses of action available to societies and individuals, as well as influencing the individual's life management

(Askheim 2003, 230-231). The structural and individual levels of empowerment do not function as polar opposites to each other; instead, the most fruitful approach is to observe them simultaneously. Empowerment starts with the individual and it is a personal process, but it is influenced by other people, prevailing conditions and social structures, so empowerment should always be seen as context dependent (Rappaport 1987, 122; Siitonen 1999, 118, 189).

Regardless of the huge amount of interest towards empowerment in research, no concrete definitions exist for the characteristics of an empowered individual or the stages of empowerment. It is fundamental to the concept of empowerment that it is context related, varies in its intensity, and is not a static condition. In addition, empowerment can be expressed in different ways in each individual, as feelings, beliefs, skills and behavior. In empowerment research it is therefore important to examine how individuals discern their own experiences. (Siitonen 1999, 16, 161-170, 187; Zimmerman 1995, 587, 596; Zimmerman 1990, 170; Zimmerman 1984; Rappaport 1984, 2).

Although there are no concrete standards for empowerment, there are general descriptions of factors that facilitate empowerment processes in individuals, such as participation in decision making, learning skills and gaining information, increasing sense of control, understanding what choices can be made in different situations, freedom, responsibility, trust and positivity. (Zimmerman 1990, 172, 174; Siitonen 1999, 61, 117-156).

In our study, we see empowerment simultaneously as a process and as a goal, connected to individual experiences and to an increase in available courses of action. Empowerment on the individual level is expressed in a growing internal sense of power, while on the structural level it is reflected in increasing opportunities for making choices and acting in society. Our goal is to analyze how different professional work practices i.e. work with Finnish child protection workers and with a cultural interpreter, are influencing individual clients' experiences related to empowerment or disempowerment. Although we are analyzing the experiences of individuals, we are also interested in this phenomenon in a broader sense. Therefore, to provide different perspectives, we interviewed three different parties (clients, workers and cultural interpreter) participating in a cultural interpretation trial.

According to Adams (2003, 4), empowerment is the most central concept describing the nature of social work. However, the relationship between social work and empowerment is not simple, especially if observed with regard to power. In the helping professions, the professional may encounter situations where conflicts arise between empowerment and the need for social control, for example in the case of involuntary procedures in child protection. Payne (2005, 302) suggests that the power used in social work does not need to be perceived as something negative, since only a person who has power is able to pass it on. According to this view, through use of their own power workers can support their clients towards achieving enduring strength for managing their own lives.

Although empowerment is a process that starts with the person, it is affected by the community and interaction with other individuals, as well as the worker's belief or lack of belief in the client's potential (Mönkkönen 2007, 143-144). In Siitonen's view (1999, 189, 206), it is possible to support another person's empowerment through subtle means such as an atmosphere of openness, freedom of action and encouragement, as well as by aspiring towards a sense of security, trust, and equality. Kananoja et al. (2007, 108-113) suggest that a good relationship with a client can function as a catalyst for working towards change and as a support mechanism for empowerment, as long as the cooperation conveys a sense of caring, a feeling of human dignity and individuality being respected, belief in the client's own abilities, and hope for the possibility of change. In addition, a well-functioning client relationship requires transparency in the working process (Myllärniemi 2007, 124).

Empowerment can also be defined from the angle of disempowerment. For example, a person who has experienced discrimination or marginalization cannot be in an empowered state (e.g. Björling 2005, 182-183). Immigrants are not automatically powerless, but several factors can be seen as constituting threats to their well-being. These include lowered socio-economic status, lack of language skills, separation from family members, lack of friendly reception, and being isolated from people with similar cultural background (Liebkind 1994, 32-33). In addition, feelings associated with immigration can include homesickness, rootlessness and loneliness. Taking care of oneself can become more difficult in the new country, for example because of the foreign language, which can result in feelings of powerlessness and helplessness.

Our premise is that immigrants are not powerless, but rather in a disempowering situation, because they have to face great challenges. They have to learn the rules of a new society, obtain new social networks, and rebuild their cultural identity after landing in a new cultural and linguistic environment, as well as being an ethnic minority. In addition, the mothers participating in this study, being clients of child protection services, are in a disempowered situation because they are all experiencing some kind of crisis in their family life. To protect the anonymity of the clients, we do not specify the causes that lead to them becoming involved with child protection services.

Cultural interpretation as novel working practice

The cultural interpretation service started in September 2011. Client relationships with the cultural interpreter were preceded by a worker from the social services contacting the interpreter and arranging a joint meeting with the social services worker, the cultural interpreter and the family present. The cultural interpreter met client families in network meetings, in the presence of officials, and while making house visits on her own. In some cases, if the clients' language skills were poor, the cultural interpreter also acted as a foreign language interpreter between the workers and the clients. Client relationships with the cultural interpreter lasted from a few meetings to 2-3 months, and some of them continue up to this date.

In child protection services, cultural interpretation mainly took place with the mothers, and became extensively mother-centered, which in our view stemmed from

four factors. First, family work has become mother-centered among Finnish clients as well, so the workers may have followed previously adopted working practices (e.g. Berg 2008). Secondly, in some families the parents were about to separate, with the intention of children continuing to live with the mother. In such cases, child protection issues were seen as concerning the mothers more than the fathers. Thirdly, one third of the families were in a situation where the mother was considered to need cultural interpretation more than the father, because the father had better language skills and better knowledge of the functioning of the Finnish social services. This situation could arise either because the father was of Finnish descent or because, in a few cases, the father had lived in Finland considerably longer than the mother. Finally, the mothers were the ones who primarily maintained contact with workers and actively used the cultural interpreter's services of their own initiative. The factors described above may explain this, but the cultural interpreter's gender may also have had an effect, as well as the role of motherhood in Russian culture. It has been perceived as a very powerful role, both historically and in contemporary culture, and mothers are still seen as being primarily responsible for the raising of children and the management of the family's daily life. (Rotkirch 2007, 17-21.)

Since the cultural interpreter service was a development project, the interpreter's job description was not defined in detail at the beginning, but instead it was allowed to take shape in the course of the project. As professional practice the service is unique, especially in the context of child protection, and it differs from the work of a foreign language interpreter in that the latter is limited by a strict code of interpreters' professional ethics. This prevents the foreign language interpreter from taking a stand in a discussion or asking clarifying questions, even if he or she notices misunderstandings in the interaction between the worker and the client. In research regarding foreign language interpretation (e.g. Annika Forsander 1996), it has also been found that problems with interpretation include, for example, availability of interpreters especially in urgent situations, insufficient time for the discussions carried out with the interpreter's help, and variation between languages in the meanings attached to the vocabulary used in child protection. The cultural interpreter, on the other hand, is not bound by interpreters' professional ethics, which means that the service can be flexible and client centered. Therefore, the cultural interpreter can ask both workers and clients clarifying questions, improving mutual understanding of the issues at hand. Thus, cultural interpretation combines foreign language interpretation, peer support and service guidance. It is also noteworthy that receiving the services of the cultural interpreter is voluntary for the clients, all of whom were offered a chance to refuse this service. In developing this service, the goal was to create culturally sensitive approaches that will facilitate family workers' efforts to help families of Russian origin, and that will become part of established working practice.

Data and methods

The data used in this research was collected from February to March 2012, and it consists of three parts:

- (1) The first part consists of an e-mail survey of workers who were involved in family

work and used the cultural interpreter service. The questionnaire was sent to 11 persons, 9 of whom answered. All those responding to the family worker survey were women, and their age range was 25-61 y.

(2) In the second part the mothers of the families that participated in the cultural interpreter trial were interviewed by phone. Of the seven mothers involved, six were interviewed, as one could not be reached. The cultural interpreter mainly worked with the mothers, so we concluded it was best to interview mothers only. The age range of the interviewees was 27-42, they had lived in Finland for 1-15 years, and at the time the cultural interpreter service started they had been in touch with child protection services for 1-18 months.

(3) The third part of the study, carried out face to face, consisted of interviewing the person who acted as cultural interpreter. The cultural interpreter was a 30-year-old woman who had moved to Finland from Russia five years earlier. She had training in psychology as well as experience in working with clients in both Russia and Finland, and she was familiar with the Finnish social services.

All interviewees were presented nearly identical questions, in identical order, covering two main themes: The challenges in cooperation between family workers and Russian families in touch with child protection services, and experiences of cultural interpreter service. The concrete questions this study aimed to answer were:

- What challenges exist in cooperation between family workers and Russian immigrant families, as seen from the perspectives of the clients, the family workers and the cultural interpreter?
- What is the role of the cultural interpreter in assisting the clients and the workers to meet these challenges?
- How significant were these challenges and cultural interpretation in terms of the clients' empowerment?

Throughout this study, analysis and interpretation of the research data were primarily guided by empowerment theory. In addition, we applied content analysis, which aims to condense data in such a way that the phenomena under scrutiny can be described briefly in generalized form and relationships between different phenomena can be shown clearly (Latvala & Vanhanen-Nuutinen 2001, 21-23).

The steps of the analysis fall into four main stages. In the first stage, the boundaries of the data were defined. This stage took place while the survey and interview questionnaires were drafted. The questions in the interviews and survey questionnaire formed the framework of the analysis, providing structure to the data even as it was collected. In the second stage, tables to describe the interviews and surveys were created, condensing the participants' responses under each question and highlighting the issues that came up most frequently. In this way, it was possible to observe a number of different viewpoints simultaneously. In the third stage, condensed data

was analyzed in the light of empowerment theory, through themes relevant to our research questions. Finally, summary was written (e.g. Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 92). Although the ultimate aim of qualitative research is not to draw general conclusions from the data, it is possible to find out, by studying a small data set, what factors are significant in the phenomenon and what may be repeated when the same phenomenon is observed on a larger scale (Hirsijärvi et al. 2009, 182). The purpose of our qualitative study was to provide a meaningful description of the cooperation between clients and family workers, as well as the experiences gained from the cultural interpreter service trial. In the Analysis section of this article, in order to distinguish the viewpoints of different respondents, the text samples have been tagged to identify the writer of each response. The following letters are used to denote the categories of respondents: C = Clients, W = Workers, CI= Cultural interpreter.

Challenges to cooperation between family workers and clients

1) The language barrier and problems in comprehension

In a number of studies, the language barrier and difficulties in comprehension have been found to constitute some of the greatest challenges to cooperation between Finnish workers and immigrant clients (e.g. Heikkilä-Daskalopoulos 2008; Anis 2008; Peltola & Metso 2008; Hammar-Suutari 2009; Pitkänen 2006). The results from our study agree with the earlier studies, as all the clients and most of the workers brought up the lack of a shared language as the greatest obstacle to cooperation:

(1) Difficulties with language and comprehension pose major challenges to cooperation (C2).

(2) A different language is a big challenge (W3).

Although most of the clients already had a satisfactory or good level of spoken Finnish, the clients mentioned that Finnish socio-political vocabulary is difficult to understand, and that it is particularly hard to express emotions in Finnish:

(3) I do understand the Finnish language, but I did not understand the purpose or the terminology of social work (C6).

(4) Because of the language barrier, it is difficult to attain mutual understanding. It is important to have an interpreter at the meetings, because it is difficult to describe emotions in Finnish. (C3.)

It is of utmost importance to ensure comprehension and opportunity for self-expression for the client, for example through interpretation. If the client does not understand what the worker is saying, the result can be disempowerment in more than one sense. First, greater inequality develops between the client's and the worker's position of power, since the worker has more knowledge and power regarding decision-making, as well as power related to language use, with the worker speaking her native language and the client speaking a foreign language. Secondly, it is difficult for the client

to control the situation. It is possible that, due to lack of understanding, she is not aware of her options or her opportunities to influence the discussion and decisions based on it. Thirdly, failure to ensure that the client understands may cause the client to feel that she is not respected, because her opinions are not regarded as important. Generally, it can be assumed that an empowering approach and cooperation will be difficult if the involved parties do not understand each other, and the client's voice is not genuinely heard. In such situations, it is challenging to set goals that the client is genuinely committed to. (Rostila 2001, 39-40.)

The cultural interpreter expressed that uncertainty resulting from problems in comprehension can result in the clients having a sense of not fully managing their lives:

(5) Sometimes the clients may understand only a few words of what the worker has said, removed from context, for example "custody". This leaves them uncertain and creates a feeling that they are not in charge of their lives, even if the worker had been talking about preventing the need for taking children into custody of the state. (CI.)

Empowerment encompasses the idea of life being manageable and clear, as well as the empowered person being aware of things happening around her. If a sense of these is lacking, the intervention may have a disempowering effect. In addition, uncertainty can cause a feeling of lacking control over one's own life, or the lives of the family and children. Moreover, life can be perceived as unsafe and unpredictable. Such feelings form obstacles to empowerment (e.g Zimmermann 1995, 89). In the cultural interpreter's view, the client's emotional state affects comprehension:

(6) In addition to language, stress levels affect the clients' ability to comprehend matters. If the meeting is stressful and anxiety-provoking for the client, she will only try to get through it, and many things will be missed. It is important to use an interpreter and to ask clarifying questions, probing the client's comprehension level. The same applies to getting an overview of the basics of social work, either with the social worker or some other worker. (CI.)

However, the cultural interpreter felt that the main issue was not always language, but rather the client's stress level. Stress can be a result of experiences connected to immigration, to individual life situations, and to being a child protection client, with the fear of losing the children always present. In this situation, listening to a foreign language and using it to communicate can become challenging. Similarly, it became apparent in the interview with the workers that ensuring comprehension was of primary importance in working with immigrant clients:

(7) Because of the language barrier, getting things done requires numerous repetitions both in spoken communication and on paper (W4).

The worker described how the issues at hand required repetition, to try to ensure the client's comprehension. However, it is equally important to ensure that the client gets

to express her opinion in an appropriate way, since participation and self-expression are especially central to empowerment (Rappaport 1987, 141; Siitonen 1999).

Our analysis suggests that the lack of a shared language and the limited use of interpretation are not only major obstacles to cooperation between workers and clients, but a cause of disempowerment. These obstacles prevent the client's voice being heard, they prevent the client's participation in shared decision-making, and they diminish the client's sense of control and cause her to perceive the situation as unsafe. This affects goal-setting for the joint work between workers and clients.

2) Cultural differences and different views of child-rearing

Culture and cultural differences play a central role in working with immigrants. Culture can refer to everyday practices as well as values and norms. Defined in this way, culture can be seen as defining our daily lives and the way we perceive the world. (Huttunen et al. 2005, 26.) Culturally based so-called self-evident truths may be questioned, and culture may become visible, for example in encounters with people from different cultures (Draguns 1989, 3). The workers who responded to the questionnaire perceived cultural differences as one of the greatest challenges to cooperation, and they emphasized knowledge of the culture as a factor affecting success in cooperation:

(8) Sometimes there are extensive cultural differences (W3).

(9) Knowledge of the culture is necessary (W5).

Although there are differences in the views of people who have grown in different cultural environments, it is problematic to explain social phenomena through cultural differences. When explanations that emphasize cultural differences are used, there is a risk that cultural identities and differences are assumed to be static, and that placing people in distinct cultural categories is assumed to be simple (Honkatukia & Suurpää 2008, 48). The significance of cultural background to any individual is impossible to know beforehand. The individual's relationship to it may be highly personal and ambiguous. (Anis 2008; Lepola 2007, 208; Härkäpää & Peltola 2005, 148.) The cultural interpreter discussed the problems involved in explanations based on cultural differences:

(10) It is easy to use culture to explain things, because that way you don't have to think more closely. However, it is difficult to talk about a uniform Russian culture, because the clients have moved out of Russia at different points in time, some during the Soviet era. Also, the clients come from regions that differ from each other a lot. Rather than considering cultural differences, it is important to take into account individual life situations and the stress involved in the immigration process. (C1.)

The cultural interpreter suggests that it is easy to explain things away by referring to cultural differences, since this does not require more thorough reasoning. Excessive emphasis on cultural difference may lead to all individual problems being defined as expressions of a different culture, which causes workers to ignore other factors that

contribute to displacement. This increases polarization between the native population and the immigrants (see. Heikkilä-Daskalopoulos 2008, 14; Stier 2004). The clients' specific needs are not necessarily linked to the different culture, but to their different life experiences and the process of moving to another country (Anis 2008, 28-29). The issues at hand may simply be seen differently by different individuals: the officials may see difficulties in interaction as stemming from a different culture, while the immigrants see the officials' policies as the problem (Huttunen et al. 2005, 35). Explanations can also be found in personal relationships and socio-economic position (Ikäläinen et al. 2003, 28). Cultural environments certainly can affect a person's way of thinking, but in discussing this it is necessary to define more clearly what we mean by cultural differences. In connection with cultural differences, the workers mention other differences, such as:

(11) Differences in legislation (W1).

(12) Discomfort with support work (W5).

The same themes came up in the interviews with the clients. The clients experienced child protection work as interfering with the family's internal matters:

(13) The problem with Finnish child protection is that the workers will not let you raise your children in peace (C6).

Differences in legislation and experiencing discomfort with support work may be closely connected, since these two can certainly hinder the building of cooperation. Social work and child protection can be very unfamiliar to people coming from outside the western culture (Anis 2008, 28). For example, taking children into custody is an alien concept in many cultures where public authorities hardly ever interfere with child-rearing, and where children may, at most, be placed in the custody of their relatives (Heikkilä-Daskalopoulos 2008, 32). In Russia, custody means loss of parental rights, an irreversible process that leaves a mark in the person's record. This may affect the clients' attitudes towards child protection workers and their discomfort with support work (Mikkola 2008).

One of the interviewees felt that child protection meant interfering with family life. The interviewee particularly felt that problems arose with Finnish child protection services specifically. The cultural interpreter sees that attitudes towards social work are influenced by the clients' experiences in their country of origin:

(14) The parents are not used to an outside party interfering with their child-rearing, demanding that they make changes. It can also be said that in Russia people rarely turn to officials, and advice on child-rearing is primarily sought from parents and friends. (C1.)

In the cultural interpreter's view, the discomfort with support work reflects a habit of handling family matters within the family's immediate network. As extensive societal support systems are lacking in Russia, family, friends and relatives are considered

to be the family's safety net (e.g. Sailas et al. 1996, 252). Many immigrants compare the Finnish system to the system in their country of origin, which can make it difficult to adjust to the new system (Forsander 1994, 56-66).

It is noteworthy that the clients did not talk about cultural differences as an obstacle to cooperation, but rather saw the lack of a shared language as the main challenge, as described in the previous chapter. Another challenge mentioned by the clients was created by different practices in child-rearing:

(15) Different views on child-rearing (C3).

(16) Different ideas on how children should be raised (C6).

The universal basis for child-rearing has been assumed to be that parents have their children's best interest in mind (Värri 2000, 134). However, what is considered a good future or in the child's best interest varies with time and from one culture to another, as do the means considered to bring these about (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2005, 103). In the interviews, the cultural interpreter discussed how child-centered principles may be perceived as alien by many families:

(17) The child-centered approach in Finnish child protection may be seen as something quite alien. The lack of acceptance towards the Finnish child-centered approach also stems from not understanding the values and structures behind it. In addition, few clients have any contacts with Finnish mothers or knowledge of information sources that could provide them with more information on child-rearing. In this situation, it is difficult for them to reflect on their own child-rearing style. (C1.)

The cultural interpreter suggested that the child-centered approach in Finnish child protection may be perceived as alien to Russian families. However, the Finnish Child Protection Act and the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child highlight the child's right to participation and a central role in child protection (Act 417/2007, UN 1989). Consequently, the worker should try to provide room for the child's story and experiences to be heard. In the cultural interpreter's view, this premise is difficult to perceive if the client is not aware of the values and goals underlying the child-centered approach, or why Finnish child-rearing styles might be better than the client's own. The cultural interpreter adds, however, that:

(18) Deficient care or harmful child-rearing practices should not be explained through culture, because it means that the issues will remain out of reach. Also, even if there are child-rearing problems in some families of Russian descent, it does not mean that they concern all Russian families or that they are part of the culture. (C1.)

The above quote concisely summarizes the observation that using cultural differences as explanations is not a fruitful approach. If cultural differences are assumed to

be static, the workers may not even attempt to influence certain issues, because they are considered unchangeable. The cultural interpreter also brought up the observation that generalizing the child-rearing problems seen in a few Russian families to the entire Russian culture does not create an accurate image.

As a whole, the clients' and workers' different starting points and presuppositions, which may not be entirely clear to either party, can result in disempowerment in many respects. For the clients, the unfamiliarity with support work and the concept of child-centeredness may be a problem. In such cases the client does not want to receive the offered help, and help may be experienced as an extra source of stress, depleting the family's resources even further. It is noteworthy that the workers talk about cultural differences, while the clients talk about differences in child-rearing. However, using cultural differences as an explanation is not necessarily a fruitful approach, since it does not help the client to solve problems, nor does it provide opportunities to work things out. Also, phenomena such as cultural differences should be named and dissected with greater specificity, not merely handled collectively under the topic of "culture". Differences in child-rearing styles appeared to the clients as challenges to cooperation, but even when child-rearing styles do actually differ, it is important to emphasize and strive towards ethical ideals that do not change with time or society (see Launonen & Pulkkinen 2004, 17). The families should also be offered information on child-rearing and its underlying values, so that the self-reflection that is integral to empowerment becomes possible.

3) Lack of trust

In social work, establishing trust can be considered an essential prerequisite for good interaction and joint work. However, trust does not come automatically, since clients may be afraid of working with officials on the basis of, for example, their previous experiences, stereotypes, or the controlling features of social work that exist alongside the support role (e.g. Kananoja et al. 2007, 109-110). A theme that was clearly highlighted in the data set, in interviews with all involved parties, was the difficulty of forming a confidential relationship between clients and workers:

(19) Russians distrust officials. Winning their trust takes time and effort. Language problem? (W5.)

Several workers reported that winning the clients' trust is challenging and takes time, but no one suggested that it was impossible. The answers showed that the issue was specifically the clients not trusting the workers. The language problem was suspected to be a factor behind the distrust, and it may in fact be one contributing factor. It is difficult to trust someone if you are not able to communicate with them. The clients felt that distrust created obstacles to cooperation with social and family workers:

(20) I will say this frankly, I do not fully trust the family workers, we have no mutual understanding and it is important that the interpreter is present at the meetings (C3).

(21) It is difficult to trust the workers when you do not know what the purpose of their work is precisely (C1).

Distrust towards family workers and social workers can be based on a variety of factors, for example the person's previous experiences that are felt to be unjust, impressions that the worker is not competent to fulfill expectations, or asymmetry, with awareness of the risk that the person in a more advantageous position has opportunities to use her power against the other party (see Kankainen 2007, 53). In addition, predictability of the other person's behavior has been considered a prerequisite for trust, and the clients may not have a sense of predictability if they do not know what they can expect from the workers (e.g. Mayer et al. 1995).

However, a strong impression that emerges from this data set is that the clients feel the distrust to be engendered primarily, if not entirely, by the lack of a shared language and the lack of information regarding cooperation. According to Vilén et al. (2002, 31-32), trust is established when the worker succeeds in justifying her view and when the client feels that the decision, action or work is in her best interest. However, justification is difficult in situations where there is no shared language, as reflected in quote (20) regarding the need to use an interpreter when building trust. The cultural interpreter saw additional dangers in not attempting to ensure the client's comprehension:

(22) If the client does not understand the purpose of social work, she will not accept it, and she will not trust the workers, but at the same time she may passively submit to the worker's power, because she thinks that she has no say in her own affairs (CI).

In the situation described by the cultural interpreter, we can talk about failing to observe the client's right to self-determination. A situation where the cooperation between worker and client does not function because of the client's lack of comprehension may feed the client's dependence and helplessness, which in turn diminishes her ability to manage her life, thus causing disempowerment. The client's comprehension of the purpose of social work should be strengthened, so that the client knows about her options and the social worker can support the client to see her own resources and her potential for development (see Rostila 2001, 29, 32-33).

On the matter of distrust, the issue does not seem to be clients distrusting these workers specifically, but rather them not trusting the thing the workers represent, i.e. child protection, because they do not know or understand it. The cultural interpreter felt that the unfamiliarity of the social service system is the reason behind the distrust felt by the clients:

(23) The Finnish social service system was alien to the clients. That is why it does not inspire trust, but prejudice and fear (CI).

A study by Forsander (1994, 56-66) suggests that many immigrants living in Finland do not trust officials in general. This is, at least partly, due to experiences in their country of origin, lack of knowledge regarding Finnish administrative practice, or unrealistic expectations on the client's part. It has also been suggested that culture affects the development of trust. Cultural elements, such as the individuals' relationships to themselves and the authorities, influence the clients' behavioral expecta-

tions, and through these expectations they influence the building of trust (Doney et al. 1998). Due to widespread corruption, the level of trust towards state institutions and officials among the Russian people has been observed to be very low. In this situation, distrust may function as a type of survival mechanism. (Melin & Bloom 2002, 595.) It is quite possible that the participants' previous experiences, together with lack of information, have an effect on the development of distrust in Finland, as well. The cultural interpreter also brought up the possibility that the clients may have compared Finnish child protection with its Russian counterpart:

(24) People may have powerful presuppositions about nothing good coming out of social work. Russians often fear losing parental rights, because if a child is taken into custody in Russia, you do not get that child back. Also, having contact with social workers may affect for example your chances of employment in the future, since it leaves a mark in your record. And generally, if child protection gets involved, it means that the situation in the family is really bad. (C1.)

As was mentioned above, if the system is not familiar, it is possible that it will be compared to the service system in the client's country of origin. The cultural interpreter describes the last-resort character of child protection and the consequences of forced custody in Russian society. In a situation like this, it is understandable that child protection is perceived as a potential threat, instead of as a supporter and a provider of assistance. On the other hand, the fear of losing a child was also suggested as a factor that prevented trust:

(25) I cannot trust the social service officials because I do not understand them, and the fear of the children being taken is always present (C2).

The Family Federation's Centre for Multicultural Expertise, Kotipuu, has carried out an interview survey of immigrants, showing that the immigrant respondents associated child protection with a fear of losing their children (Vesterinen, 2008). The child and family disputes that have been in the news over the past years, with claims of injustice towards Russian citizens as a common feature, may for their part have influenced Russian families' attitudes towards child protection (e.g. Kemppainen 2012). However, the fear that focuses on child protection does not necessarily concern immigrants specifically. For example, the press release by the Central Union for Child Welfare on April 27th 2012 states: "The current public discussion feeds the idea that child protection means punishing the child and the family. At the same time, child protection is described as arbitrary and haphazard". This may also influence the way child protection is generally perceived by families living in Finland.

For immigrants, the lack of familiarity with the system and poor language skills may exacerbate the situation. It is obvious that if the character and purpose of the child protection family work remain unclear, trust does not develop, and instead the situation engenders fear. In the light of empowerment theory, distrust towards the workers may form an obstacle to empowerment (see Siitonen 1999, 143). Although distrust is portrayed in this study as a challenge and a factor that prevents empowerment, it

does not necessarily have to be considered a bad thing in itself. At best, it enables people to bring up problems and to solve them (see Kankainen 2007, 53). The responses of the clients and the cultural interpreter send a strong message that the lack of trust is based on lack of clarity regarding the tasks and goals of child protection, as well as lack of information regarding the Finnish service system and difficulties in understanding the workers. Therefore, in future work attention should be paid to these factors.

Empowering elements in the cultural interpreter's work

1) Emotional support

Emotions play a key role in the empowerment process. In the course of this process, emotions provide the individual with information and clues about how safe the situation is, about the general atmosphere, level of acceptance, support and freedom of action, as well as interactions between people. If the emotions are positive, they release the person's resources (Siitonen 1999, 152, 154). In this study, the significance of emotions emerged as a strong theme. All clients brought up the fact that the emotional support they received from the cultural interpreter was especially important to them:

(26) Emotionally the cultural interpreter backed me up a lot (C1).

(27) The cultural interpreter gave me emotional support, and our conversations gave me strength. This was important, because I was going through a difficult phase in my private life, and I had no one to talk to. (C2.)

The interviews showed that most of the clients had no friends or relatives in Finland, and some of them were going through divorce, which meant that they could not receive support from their spouses. The cultural interpreter was the only person to whom they could talk about their personal issues. With regard to empowerment, it is crucial that the person who is striving towards empowerment has a relationship where trust and dialogue are possible. Empowerment is a process that starts within the individual, but it often involves a social dimension, and a worker who supports empowerment is a prerequisite for the client's empowerment (Adams 2003). Interviews with clients, workers and cultural interpreter alike reflected the importance of communication in the native language:

(28) Psychologically I got a lot of help. I felt a lot calmer when I got to tell the cultural interpreter about the family problems in my native language. (C3.)

(29) The most important part of the work is the emotional support given to the family. This is best provided by a person who speaks the same language, both literally and figuratively. (W3.)

(30) People primarily need emotional support. It is important to be able to express emotion in one's emotional language, to understand the other and to be understood. (C1.)

The quotes show that the respondents consider self-expression in the native language an important element of emotional support. When the client has the opportunity to express herself in her native language, a communicative connection and an equal relationship are created between the client and the worker, as the most important preconditions for a dialogue-based relationship are understanding and responding (see Mönkkönen 2002, 40, 56-57). The client's role as an expert on her own situation is highlighted, and she is enabled to participate in defining her own situation, which influences her empowerment. In quote (28), the respondent mentioned how she felt calmer after she managed to talk about her problems in her native language. In addition, some other elements were linked with emotional support:

(31) I was suffering from psychological stress, but the cultural interpreter listened and supported me. She also told me what options I have, helped me to think positively, and helped to solve problems, which calmed me down and gave me strength. (C5.)

In this quote, the client described how being heard and being able to see different options brought her a sense of calmness and strength. We believe that this happened because her current unfavorable situation turned out, in the light of the discussion, to be something that could be changed after all. Thinking about positive future scenarios and being able to see freedom of action increases a person's self-confidence, self-esteem and positive attitude, and all of these are linked to the ability to release resources (Kempinen & Rouvinen-Kempinen 1998; Siitonen 1999, 118).

(32) Emotional support is the basis, without which it is hard for the client to receive any other support or to make any changes in her life. The discussions have had a therapeutic effect. When you are able to say your own thoughts out loud and another person comments on them, it is possible to look at yourself from the outside and find a solution, or to find the factors and behavior models that stop you from solving the problem. (C1.)

The cultural interpreter talked about internal processes, and how emotional support forms the basis for receiving other types of help and making life changes. Feelings of insecurity or a state of constant stress can dominate the client's life to the extent that she has difficulty receiving information or making decisions (see Riihinen 1996). The cultural interpreter mentions how the conversations had an effect through providing emotional release and facilitating self-reflection, which is an element of empowerment. Consciousness of oneself enables a person to observe herself critically and to change counterproductive behaviors, which leads to the release of previously unattainable resources (Adams 2003, 10). The interviews clearly show that the emotional support the clients received had empowering effects. This emotional support included being heard, understanding the other, self-expression in the native language, being able to see options, and support that enabled self-reflection.

2) Language support

In some situations, the cultural interpreter also acted as a foreign language interpreter. However, the clients, workers and the interpreter herself felt that mere technical translation was less important than the language support provided by the cultural interpreter. The interviews with the workers brought up the following comments:

(33) The language question and the issue of understanding people correctly are important. A language interpreter alone is not always enough because we also need an interpreter who knows the culture, who can express her views in more ways than just by interpreting. Then we can establish trust more quickly. (W5.)

(34) The cultural interpreter, as compared to an ordinary interpreter, can take part in the work process, can be a supporter of the client family (W6).

The workers described how the difference between a cultural interpreter and a language interpreter is that the cultural interpreter can participate in the work processes even as she interprets, express her views on the issues at hand, and be a supporter to the family, which also helps in establishing a trusting client relationship. The clients analyzed the content of this language support in greater detail:

(35) The cultural interpreter explained everything in detail and asked the workers many clarifying questions. Before that, many things had been unclear to me. (C2.)

(36) She gave answers to which I could not formulate questions. She also explained my situation and thoughts correctly to the worker when I was not able to do it myself. (C4.)

It was brought up in the interviews that the cultural interpreter had the role of clarifying matters between clients and workers. She explained things to clients and workers alike, asking both further questions. It was precisely these additional questions that seem to have played an important role. The workers may have been under the impression that the clients had more information than they actually did. The clients did not know what questions to ask, because child protection social work and the Finnish system generally were unfamiliar to them. It can be seen that clarifying matters increases the clients' awareness of the workers' tasks, and that this is important for cooperation and commitment on the client's part. In addition to clarification, sorting out misunderstandings was part of language support:

(37) The cultural interpreter sorted out misunderstanding that arose in discussions with Finnish workers. This is good, because no one was left to bear grudges. (C1.)

(38) The cultural interpreter has acted as a facilitator in matters that cause conflicts or misunderstandings (W2).

Misunderstandings prevent cooperation between client and worker, which can become an obstacle to providing the help the client needs. This can be reflected in accumulation of problems and mutual frustration. The negative feelings and resistance towards workers caused by misunderstandings may also deplete the clients' resources, which are already diminished, making the work even more difficult. Therefore, it is good to sort out misunderstandings at an early stage, so that efforts can be directed at the important issues. Further, the clients expressed that the cultural interpreter supported them by helping them to answer the workers:

(39) If you do not speak the Finnish language properly, it is difficult to answer well. The cultural interpreter helped me to answer the workers actively. (C5.)

Thus, the cultural interpreter enabled the clients to participate in the discussion and in defining their situations, providing them the opportunity to express their own views and opinions. This is important for empowerment, since getting one's voice heard gives a person the feeling that she has a chance to control her fate and to affect the decisions that concern her life. This is especially important in the context of child protection where the social worker has societal power to make decisions regarding the client's family (see Zimmerman 1995, 583). The cultural interpreter also mentioned that language support enables clients to feel that they are active participants:

(40) Clarifying matters is an important part of my work. Just interpreting is often not enough. More in-depth discussion on the perceptions, wishes, and values of the different parties is needed. When the issues become clear, the client will feel that she can have a say in how things are done. (CI.)

Experiences of participation may increase feelings of coping and managing one's own life, or conversely, they can weaken the client's sense of being able to influence things, if the client's voice is not heard. Expressing opinions also promotes assuming responsibility and facilitates active agency (Rappaport 1987, 141; Juhila 2002, 16-17; Niiranen 2002, 69-70).

We can see that language support involves many elements that empower clients. The support facilitated increased comprehension on the clients' part and reduced misunderstandings between workers and clients. As a result, existing resources could be directed at helping the clients instead of sorting out problems between clients and workers. The clients have been enabled to attain active agency by being able to express themselves and getting their voices heard.

3) Conveying information

Knowledge and power are often seen as intertwined, since some methods of managing and applying knowledge can bring power (Lonka 2001). For example, knowledge regarding society may be reflected in increased opportunities for societal action and choice, and thus increased freedom. According to both the cultural interpreter's and the clients' stories, one of the most important elements in the cultural interpreter's

work was conveying information regarding the purpose of child protection social work, the Finnish service system, and child-rearing. In addition, the clients described how the cultural interpreter had provided information they had not been able to request. First, the purpose of child protection social work was seen as a matter of primary importance in both the clients' and the workers' responses:

(41) Clarifying the working practices of Finnish child protection and legislation has been an important part of the work. Also, it has been important to bring up the fact that parental rights are not removed in Finland, but instead we primarily bolster the family's resources with the child's best interest in mind. (W1.)

(42) The cultural interpreter explained about the social workers' tasks, and my old fears disappeared (C2).

Both workers and clients emphasized that receiving more information about the social workers' work has led to the clients losing their fear. The interviews showed that these fears had primarily been connected to the possibility of losing the children. Alongside the support, child protection does involve control and the possibility of the authorities taking custody of the child, which can contribute to the generation of fear. This can hamper cooperation between clients and workers (e.g. Heino 1999, 24, 26-28). It can be assumed that such fears deplete the resources of a family already in a difficult situation, and conversely, freeing people from fear can be seen as something that frees resources and supports the family towards accepting help. The cultural interpreter also saw a connection between fear and lack of knowledge:

(43) In my experience, the clients' knowledge of child protection is minimal, and this can cause fear. It is largely a result of them having difficulty finding reliable and accurate information about Finnish child protection. The images portrayed by the Russian media and by their acquaintances may be misleading. In addition, the clients' limited resources, stressful situation and poor language skills can make it difficult to find information. It is not clear to everyone where information should be sought, in the first place. (C1.)

In the cultural interpreter's view, it was difficult for the clients to find accurate information regarding Finnish child protection by using their own channels. The cultural interpreter also emphasized that the clients do not always have any idea of where to look for information, in the first place. The same theme came up in interviews with the clients:

(44) The cultural interpreter gave me an accurate description of child protection and told me a lot of things I had not thought of asking about (C3).

Telling things the client does not ask about seems to play an important role. Asking can be difficult if the client does not know the system, since she will not know what she should focus on and what to ask. The cultural interpreter felt that just conveying

information is not enough, but the clarity of the information and explaining the context play especially important roles:

(45) Information should be conveyed in a clear and comprehensible manner. Giving the overall picture is especially crucial, because the entire service system can be totally alien to them. For example, if we tell the clients about family work, we should tell them what larger whole it is connected to, and what its purpose is. The service system may seem complicated, so it would be best to describe the services by using concrete examples. (C1.)

The cultural interpreter emphasizes that clarity is a crucial quality in the information given to the clients. Providing unclear information can be seen as preventing the clients' empowerment. This is one of the factors that maintain patronizing work practices (see Tuorila 2009, 106). Patchiness in the service system can hamper the immigrants' own initiative and attempts to get help (e.g. Peltola and Metso 2008). Therefore, comprehensible information regarding the service system is one of the most important empowering factors for individual people, as it helps the person to conduct her business with the service system independently, and to make reasoned decisions.

Secondly, information regarding the service system in general emerged as a strong theme in the workers' and clients' discussions:

(46) Explaining the Finnish service system has been important (W3).

(47) The cultural interpreter explained to me what support people can get in different life situations, and where it can be found. This kind of support could be given at the very first stages of moving. That way people would know where to apply for help, if they need it. Perhaps our family's problems would not have gotten so bad. (C1.)

(48) Now I know what services exist, and where I can conduct affairs myself and apply for help, should I ever need it (C3).

The workers described how information regarding the Finnish service system had been important, but the clients explained the importance of information in greater detail. They described how knowing about the service system allowed them to conduct their affairs on their own, and to apply for help when it is needed. Thus, it can be seen that their opportunities for action have increased. In terms of empowerment, it is important that a person understands what opportunities for action are available to her, and believes that she can influence the course of events in her environment (Zimmermann 1990, 174; 1995, 89; Siitonen 1999, 99, 117). Further, several respondents felt that receiving this type of assistance combined with the necessary information could also help in preventing problems, if the information was provided to immigrants in the early stages of moving to the country

In summary, it can be said that conveying information has had an effect on the clients' empowerment. As they received more information, the clients' fears towards child protection were allayed, and their chances of acting independently within the service system increased. Acting within the service system is considered important, since the immigrants' extended family and other social networks that support them are diminished or disappear completely in the process of moving to the new country. In this situation, the roles of various public service officials may become heightened in the immigrants' lives (Hirstiö-Snellman et al. 1998, 6). With increased awareness of the service system, it also becomes possible to seek certain kinds of help from the service system at the right time.

4) Creating an atmosphere of trust

As was mentioned earlier, trust is an essential prerequisite for client and social worker working together, since trust affects the level of success in communication. Trust can be described as something people can sense, which means that it is difficult to pretend that it exists if it does not develop between the different parties (Mönkkönen 2007, 120-123). The workers and the cultural interpreter involved in this study also considered mutual trust between clients and workers to be a prerequisite for cooperation. They described how challenging it is to establish such trust, and they emphasized the cultural interpreter's role in supporting the building of trusting relationships:

(49) Building trust with the family has been an important part of the work (W5).

(50) An important part of my work has been building trust between workers, mainly prevented by mutual prejudices (CI).

The workers describe how the cultural interpreter has helped them to build trust towards the family, but the cultural interpreter analyzes the matter further and sees prejudices as the obstacles to trust. Interaction between two people is influenced, among other things, by prejudices and the categorizing of people, which often guide our actions unconsciously. Their effect can be positive, neutral or negative. Interaction is also influenced by previous experiences of intercultural encounters, which may have been either successful or unsuccessful. Intercultural client service situations may involve uncertainty, fear and situations that are new to both parties, and the cultural interpreter tries to allay these problems (Hammar-Suutari 2009, 116-119). The clients were interviewed discussed factors underlying the development of trust in greater detail, revisiting issues mentioned in earlier chapters, including language support and receiving information:

(51) The cultural interpreter straightened some false assumptions I had about child protection, and helped to sort out some misunderstandings between me and the Finnish workers. Now it is easier for me to trust family work. (C1.)

In the clients' opinion, receiving information about child protection work and correcting false assumptions helped them to trust family work. It appears that once the

clients have information regarding the content and purpose of child protection, they feel that they can show confidence in family work. This may be connected to increased feelings of predictability and control (see Ilmonen 2005, 51). We can presume that confidence in child protection as an institution can promote the development of trust towards individual employees. (e.g. Seligman 1997, 18).

Further, the clients talked about an atmosphere of openness that came with the development of trust:

(52) When the cultural interpreter was present, the discussion was open, and I thought that now it is easier for me to talk and to trust them (C5).

This was probably partly connected to the fact that the clients were able to speak their native language in the cultural interpreter's presence. However, it is also possible that the feeling of trust partly arises from familiarity, from the shared language and the shared experiences of immigration. In addition, trust can be seen to be linked to a feeling of safety, in which case the clients' trust towards the cultural interpreter creates a general atmosphere of confidentiality, allowing the clients to trust other workers more easily, as well (see Seligman 2001). The cultural interpreter herself discussed how the generation of trust may have partly been due to her position and her attitude towards the clients:

(53) I'm on the same level with them. I respect them, and they respect me. I give advice, but I do not judge, nor do I make any decisions regarding their life or demand anything, so they don't have to hide anything from me, either. (CI.)

In the cultural interpreter's view, there was no great difference in the level of power between her and the clients. She felt that she was on the same level with the clients, which promoted trust. Further, the cultural interpreter brought up respect as a factor in building trust. Respect can be understood as considering the other to be a competent communication partner, and seeing the other's behavior as sensible in the light of her situation. As trust is established, it becomes easier for each party to believe in the information provided by the other (Ikäheimo 2003).

Empowerment takes place most naturally in environments where the person involved feels that the atmosphere is safe, and where she feels that she is accepted and her position is equal to others. It appears that cultural interpretation has promoted the development of such an atmosphere. Another crucial factor for empowerment is the kind of context the person considers to be supportive, appreciative, confidential and unprejudiced, as well as facilitating attainment of her own goals (Siitonen 1999, 143-144, 161). In the course of the cultural interpretation trial, the clients saw a model where trust towards official was being developed. They saw that it is possible to talk to officials about important matters, and that it is safe to accept the help they offer. The cultural interpreter did not work as an official with them, but instead shared similar experiences of immigration and spoke the same language, so it was easier to trust her from the outset. Receiving language support and information on child protection were factors that had a powerful influence on the development of trust. It is

apparent that as mutual trust is established, dialogue-based relationship with workers and personal commitment to the work on the clients' part become possible. In social work generally, trust is an important element in bringing about positive change (e.g. Dominelli 2004).

Discussion

The goal of our study was to analyze cultural interpretation as working practice that aims to support clients. We focused our attention on the types of mechanisms that prevent or enhance the empowerment of clients of child protection services. In the first part of the article, we discussed various obstacles to cooperation encountered by the clients and family workers. Such obstacles should be taken into consideration more widely in social work involving immigrant clients. First, the language barrier and difficulties with comprehension hinder empowerment. The primary issue to be solved should be ensuring that the client understands and can be heard by using interpreters. There can hardly be any discussion about trust or building cooperation if the client does not have a clear idea about the purpose of child protection, if she cannot express her thoughts appropriately, or if basic facts cannot be made clear. Secondly, cultural differences and different views on child-rearing were brought up. However, stating the existence of cultural differences is not a helpful starting point. Instead, it is important to define more precisely what is meant by cultural difference, in order to get to grips with the actual issues. Also, the Finnish child-centered thinking and child protection may seem alien to the clients, in which case it is important to convey information in a comprehensible form, discuss the issues, and justify decisions. Thirdly, the lack of trust in social workers experienced by the clients hampers the work and drains the family's resources even further, as many of the respondents feared they would lose their children and did not trust the child protection workers' willingness to help them. Factors brought up as underlying the lack of trust were the language barrier and lack of information, i.e. issues that can be given concrete names and that can possibly be solved.

In the second part of the article we discussed the empowering elements of cultural interpretation. The results of this study suggest that the clients received from the cultural interpreter: (1) *Emotional support*, in which case the mechanisms of empowerment were a positive future outlook created through interaction, getting heard, and the opportunity for self-expression in the native language. (2) *Language support* was another type of support received from the cultural interpreter. In this case, the mechanisms of empowerment were a feeling of participation, since the clients took part in defining their own situations as active agents, a feeling of managing one's own life, as the individuals' understanding of the factors influencing their lives increased, and faster resolution of resource-draining misunderstandings, allowing resources to be targeted at improving the client's situation. (3) *Conveying information* had an effect on putting an end to the fears the clients had about child protection, and helped the clients to understand the service system, increasing their opportunities for choice and action. All these mechanisms lead to a sense of security, brought about by removing the insecurity that resulted from lack of information, and by cooperation with child protection becoming comprehensible and predictable, which allows the client to fully participate in it. The general sense of security, in turn, leads to *trust and better coope-*

ration with workers. In addition, trusting the cultural interpreter has contributed to the development of trust between the clients and other workers, as well.

Although empowerment starts with the person herself, research evidence suggests that it can be supported through action that creates mechanisms which, in turn, support empowerment. In the course of the cultural interpreter services, the clients did gain a sense of internal power, adopt more active roles in defining their situations, and feel that their opportunities for action increased. On the basis of the data, these elements appear to be part of a process of empowerment, which in our view has taken place on three distinct levels: through the clients' personal, positive feelings and experiences, in client relationships with the workers, and on a societal level, as opportunities for societal action increased.

In the course of the study, we got a strong impression that cultural interpretation can be a holistic and effective working method in the field of social services, as it combines foreign language interpretation, peer support and service guidance. However, when developing a model of the service we have to consider the possibility that cultural interpretation is trust-inspiring and effective because it is a so-called para-professional service. By this we mean that while the cultural interpreter has skills in psychology, and she may use these skills in her work with the clients, her position is not that of an official authority, she does not make decisions regarding the clients' lives, and working with her is not obligatory. Thus the clients receive support from her with no elements of control involved. This challenges the usual helper-recipient positions, possibly engendering trust and willingness to receive help from the interpreter. In addition, refraining from developing strict definitions has allowed the service to be flexible and the approach to be adjusted case by case. In this way, the cultural interpreter has been able to take each family's unique life situation into consideration. In a similar vein, Adams (2003, 47) considers that in its most genuine form empowerment takes place in the context of non-professional, voluntary, low-threshold activity, for example in various peer support groups and citizens' movements, rather than through bureaucratic systems or professional social work.

Regardless of our positive results, we need to address the limitations of our study. The first limitation concerns the difficulty of measuring the empowerment process, since it can be influenced by numerous factors and events in a person's life. In the interviews only questions related to cultural interpretation, were asked, so it is natural that the interviewees only talked about this topic.

The second limitation we recognized had to do with the limited scope of the study. We could only draw on the experiences of one person working as a cultural interpreter. The personality and working style of the worker are quite significant in terms of successful interaction and subjective experiences of encounters with the clients. If several cultural interpreters had been available for observation, it is possible that the data and results would have shown more variation. Therefore, we believe that for a deeper understanding of the empowerment process in the context of cultural interpretation, longitudinal research with a more than one cultural interpreter would be necessary.

The third limitation that caught our attention when analyzing the data concerned possible interviewer and response bias. The positive accounts of the cultural interpretation given by all respondents, and especially the clients, may have been influenced by their perceptions of the researcher's expectations, or by politeness towards the current cultural interpreter. It is difficult to suggest any simple solution to this problem, but we feel that the reliability of the results is supported by the simultaneous observation of views from a number of different people. The results of our study are summarized in the following figure.

Figure 1: Empowering elements in cultural interpretation

Additional note

Eveliina Heino has worked as a researcher in the project Empowerment of Families with Children, and participated in developing a model of cultural interpreter practice. She conducted the interviews and questionnaire surveys described in this chapter and performed the data analysis. Nadezda Kärmeniemi worked as cultural interpreter in the project and acted as co-author and commentator in the writing of this chapter.

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Marja Katisko

Families of immigrant background as clients of child protection services

Background

For several decades, considerable numbers of families of immigrant background have been living in Finland. Municipal children's clinics, day care centres, schools and other public services have been working with parents of immigrant background and with their children, born either in the parents' country of origin or in Finland. Over the years, multicultural environments have become an everyday fact of life. Workers in the municipal services have observed the reality of immigrant families becoming integrated into Finnish society through the parents' employment, education and language learning. At the same time, in addition to the parents' cultural heritage, the children have acquired the Finnish way of life through children's clinics, day care centres, the school system, and their hobbies and friends.

Immigration to Finland has been increasing and changing its form since the beginning of the 21st century. The proportion of immigrants arriving on the basis of refugee status and other humanitarian reasons has decreased, while family ties and employment have become more common reasons for immigration. At the same time, Finnish policy on the integration of immigrants has changed, as has the legislation that regulates it. The importance of finding employment for immigrants is still emphasised. However, there is an increasing tendency to consider the well-being of the family as an important factor underlying the "ideal" individual's well-being and productive contribution to society (Katisko 2011; 2012, 15).

In Finland, the concept of integrating immigrants into society was introduced to the vocabulary of researchers and administrators in the 1990's. At that time, the legislation concerning immigration policy was being adjusted. The earlier translations of the term "integrate" did not seem appropriate because of their normative connotations. The term "sopeuttaa" suggested adjustment or adaptation, "mukauttaa" suggested causing people to comply or conform, and "yhtenäistää" suggested unifying. The terms "kotoutua" and "kotouttaa" ("to become integrated" and "to integrate", respectively; the Finnish terms are derived from "koti", home) were coined for administrative purposes (Linnanmäki-Koskela 2010, 15). The process of becoming integrated or "kotoutuminen" was defined as "the individual development of immigrants, with the aim of participating in working life and acting in society while maintaining one's original language and culture: Integrating ("kotouttaminen") means that the actions and resources provided by official bodies to promote the process of becoming integrated" (Paananen 2005, 177-178).

Thus, the definition of integration can include procedures carried out by the host society in order to facilitate the immigrants settling into their new environment. The Act on Promoting Integration (2010/1386) came into force on Sep 1st, 2011. The legislation emphasises speeding up the process of becoming integrated and finding employment. In addition, it stresses the importance of promoting services in the early stages of integration. This includes basic information on Finnish society, the officials' duty to provide guidance and advice, and early assessment. In addition to promoting employment, the new legislation has placed more emphasis than before on the entire family's integration. According to the Act, "...the municipality will draw an integration plan for the family, if the family's situation, seen as a whole, requires this. When assessing the need for such a plan, special attention must be paid to the prerequisites for parenting that supports and guides the development of children and adolescents, as well as the parents' need for support and education". In addition, the Act states that "...the family's integration plan will be devised through multi-disciplinary collaboration, and it will be adjusted to individual integration plans and other relevant plans created for the family members" (Laki kotoutumisen edistämisestä [Act on Promoting Integration] 2010).

As well as considering the integration of the family as a single unit, it is important to focus on the integration of children and adolescents as individuals. Most children and adolescents cope well in a situation where the family moves from one country to another, or from one continent to another. The child or adolescent does, however, face a variety of challenges connected with the process of moving. Learning a new language, facing a new type of school system, starting with new kinds of subject matter at school and building new social networks are only a few examples of the great changes that the child or adolescent faces in a new country. The integration of the child or adolescent can also be negatively affected by prejudice and discrimination. Furthermore, moving can result in the family's financial situation becoming worse than before. As Säävälä (2012, 7) points out, more than half of the children of immigrant background live in families with low income, and there is a greater proportion of single parents in these families than in the population on average. Any family member's past experiences of war and violence in the process of becoming refugees form an additional risk factor for children and adolescents.

The main premise of family-centred integration is an understanding of the significance of family and close relationships as a crucial source of well-being and support. Underlying this is the knowledge that immigration and the integration process are for many families a challenging experience which tests both parenting and the internal integrity of the family. The family that is becoming integrated is pushed towards change by various types of pressure. For example, the roles, values and childrearing principles of the family members may be questioned. Changes in family dynamics may be reflected in both intergenerational relationships and gender relations (Alitolppa & Söderling & Fågel 2005.). Säävälä (2012, 8) describes the concern of immigrant parents for their children as two-fold: on the one hand, they fear they will lose their children through excessive assimilation to Finnish culture, and on the other hand, they worry about their children being stuck in the role of second-class citizens as a result of their difference.

My research focuses on child protection. According to Pekkarinen (2011, 72), child protection as a research topic is without boundaries, as it touches upon all levels of societal and human activities. As practice based on legislation, child protection can be delimited as a specialised field handled by certain professions. Child protection research can thus, in Pekkarinen's view, mean research on the protection of children, research on child protection practices, or research to support the execution of these two. Applying this definition, my research can be described as research on child protection practices. However, I do not define child protection as the practice of any single profession (for example the workers at municipal social services), but extend the concept to cover a variety of different sectors and practices. I observe child protection practices from the clients' point of view.

In selecting the theoretical concepts for this research, my starting point has been the wish to express as clearly as possible the resources, or lack thereof, which are apparent in the children and adolescents. Because living as an immigrant or refugee adds certain issues, both individual and societal, to questions concerning an individual's survival, I have constructed the theoretical framework and the concepts used in this study around the concept of empowerment. As a concept, empowerment (in Finnish, "voimaantuminen") is ambiguous. In research it is approached from a variety of premises, and used in a variety of contexts. In this text, I use the following definition of empowerment: Empowerment means the individual sense of being heard and being a participant in one's own case as a client of child protection services. Empowerment involves participation in planning and decisions concerning one's own life. Like Siitonen (1999, 15-16), I understand empowerment as a process that is both personal and societal. The empowerment theory proposed by Siitonen forms the basis for data analysis in this study.

Finnish researchers who have studied social work have observed that the English term "empowerment", in this context, includes two main ideas: One of "gaining strength" ("voimaantuminen"), focusing on the individual, and one of "gaining power" ("valtaistuminen"), focusing on society. "Gaining power" represents a relationship to society, and "gaining strength" represents an individual's subjective development, competence, life management skills and strengths. The concept of "empowerment", adopted directly from English sources, has also become part of critical social work (Kuronen 2004, 279; see Fook 2004). In addition, Mäntysaari (1999, 9-10) has added to the concept the Finnish translation "valtuuttaminen" ("authorising"), emphasizing the process of handing over power and transferring it to the individual. The Finnish researchers mentioned above have been influenced in their definitions by Adams's (2003/1990) descriptions of the relationship between social work and empowerment. According to Adams's definition, empowerment will allow individuals, groups and communities to influence their own living conditions, to attain their own goals, and to improve their quality of life (Adams 2003, 5.) Adams stresses that empowerment is not synonymous with power grabbing, and that it is not based on individualist values, but rather on placing emphasis on ideas of social justice, joint action and harmonious coexistence (mts., 197).

An immigrant background adds a powerful social and societal dimension to an individual's experiences. In my research I do not, however, categorise empowerment on the basis of individual or societal viewpoints. When analysing the experiences of parents, children and adolescents of immigrant origin, I use the term empowerment while discussing two distinct phenomena. On the one hand, empowerment refers to an increase in the individual's resources, facilitated by interaction with a social worker or an institutional care worker. On the other hand, I have interpreted societal inequalities deriving from immigrant status, deficiencies in living conditions, and lack of opportunities, among other things, as lack of empowerment.

When child protection practices are discussed in a broad sense, as a discipline partly overlapping with social science, an adherence to margins can be perceived as their distinguishing feature. Thus defined, child protection practice has several crucial tasks in addition to the work that focuses on the individual. These tasks include drawing attention to relationships between people, groups of people, societal organizations and societal structures, and to phenomena arising in such relationships. From this point of view, child protection practices are in a position to significantly support the integration of families of immigrant background to Finnish society. As a family arrives in Finland, it immediately encounters several officials of the social and health care sector, as well as school administration. Preventive child protection practices applied by such officials are of crucial importance for the arriving family.

Rostila (2001) claims that in social work empowerment is expressed through positive change in the client's way of acting. According to this view, empowerment is a client-based process which should be founded on partnership or 'doing together'. Rostila describes the processes that comprise a resource-centred approach as hearing the client, using the client's goals as starting points, creating frameworks that support the client to gain strength, increasing the client's social connections and sense of belonging, utilizing synergy, and acting through a process of dialogue (Rostila 2001, 39-40).

Changes in the way individuals and families manage their lives and perceive their quality of life are in themselves a sufficient goal for child protection (see Hokkanen 2009, 318). Raunio (2009, 131) considers it important that child protection practice is oriented towards reality in a way that builds up resources. The ethical principles of social work, for one thing, create an obligation to act to recognise and develop resources. The approach typical of child protection practice, containing elements of both control and support, should ultimately aim at strengthening the clients' resources.

Research questions and methods

The aim of the study was to describe how parents, children and adolescents of immigrant background experience the child protection system. Because the target of child protection is the families' entire life, attributing the changes that take place to any individual intervention or event would be difficult. Therefore, it is important to analyse which factors the people themselves consider significant.

The research questions were formulated as follows:

- 1) Through what routes do families of immigrant background become clients of child protection services (in the experience of children/adolescents and parents)?*
- 2) How has the child protection service system supported/served the families (in the experience of children/adolescents and parents)?*

The study is based on interviews with seven parents and six children of immigrant background. The interviews were carried out in the spring of 2012. The interviewees were selected from the clients of a child protection institution in cooperation with the workers of the institution. To begin, the staff had discussions with the interviewees, describing the research to them and asking permission to give me their contact information. Information regarding the research, the theme interview questions, and a letter of consent regarding interviews with the children were translated to the native language of each interviewee. This was done to ensure that each participant understood the purpose of the research.

It was not easy to motivate parents to participate in the study. This is understandable, since most of them did not wish to share with an outsider the difficult life events surrounding their children's placement in custody. In addition, they brought up the fact that they had had to tell their story to so many officials that they were tired of sharing information about their lives with anyone. In phone discussions with the interviewees I emphasised that I did not intend to ask about their personal lives, but about the functioning of the service system in their cases. Two of the people who were contacted refused to be interviewed.

The ages of the children and adolescents in this study ranged from 12 to 18 years. At the time of the interviews, five of them were staying in child protection institutions, and one outside the institution with the support of post-custodial services. Interviews with the children and adolescents were carried out on the premises of the child protection institution. The parents were interviewed at the institution, in a café, or - in one case - at the interviewee's home. An interpreter was used in interviews with one of the parents. All except one of the children and adolescents had been born in Finland. The parents' countries of origin were in the former Soviet Union, Africa and the Middle East. All the children and adolescents participating in this study had been placed in the custody of child protection authorities.

As parents agreed to personal interviews, I asked them for permission to interview their children who were in institutional care. Parents and children were interviewed separately. One interviewee asked to be present at the child's interview, and one child requested the presence of the mother. These requests were granted, despite my awareness that the parent's presence may influence a child's responses.

The theme-interview outlines used with parents and children were similar in content. The interview themes had been planned to facilitate capturing the way the interviewees attached meaning to their experiences as clients of child protection services.

With the aid of the predefined themes, the interview talk took a form that allowed for later analysis of the data. This analysis concerned the effectiveness of the service system and the ways in which the client had gained resources (become empowered) with the help of the service system.

One of the questions posed in the interviews concerned the situation of the family before they became clients of child protection services. I asked what kinds of support and help the family had received before they became clients of social service based child protection, and why that help had not been sufficient. Next, they described their experiences of receiving community-based child protection services, specifying what kinds of support had been offered and how that help affected the family's ability to cope. Finally, we discussed institutional care and the support it provided. A further crucial issue concerned the perceptions held by clients of immigrant background. How could the child protection system be developed in the future, to better serve their needs? Had their views on the child protection system changed during the time they received services?

Naturally, the interview style and talk used with parents differed from that used with children and adolescents. The 'terminology' of the child protection system was not used with either group (e.g. terms like community-based services, etc.). Everyday language was used in referring to such concepts. For children and adolescents, the interview themes were formulated so that it was easy for them to understand what was being asked (for example: "What happened at school when you could not focus on what the teacher was saying?").

In this study, I have combined two styles of analysis: one grounded in the data, and one based on theory. The transcribed interview material was first categorised following the theme-interview framework. I collected from the interview talk the views expressed by parents, children and adolescents, regarding what had supported them and what had not. I utilised the theoretical framework and concept of empowerment in systemising and categorising the research data.

Parents' experiences before receiving child protection services

When a family moves to Finland from another country, the lives of the family members become entwined with a variety of municipal services (maternity and children's clinics, day care, school, morning and afternoon activities and youth work), which can support the family significantly without any particular need to problematise the situation. The entirety of child protection thus includes the development of the child's growth environment as a whole, the last resort being child and family specific child protection. The forms of child and family specific child protection are the following: Assessment of need for child protection, community-based child protection services, urgent placement, placing the child in custody, institutional or foster care, and post-placement care.

The children of all the parents who were interviewed exhibited serious problems of behaviour and concentration in day care or at school. The children of one family stop-

ped going to school altogether. It is not evident from the interviews who or in what instance reported the family to child protection authorities. From the interview talk it becomes evident, though, that day care or school staff contacted child protection authorities because of the problems encountered at the day care centre or at the school. In some cases the problems had to do with the child's behavioural problems or, in the case of schools, learning difficulties, for which the day care centre or school could find no cause by using its own professional networks. One interviewee, a mother, contacted a crisis service of the municipal social service system because of serious crisis situations that had been repeatedly occurring in the family for an extended period. The mother of one child described a visit by the police in connection with a domestic violence situation, but the actual report to the child protection authorities was done by the child's school.

The parents' interview responses contained descriptions of a variety of challenges that a family of immigrant origin faces in Finland. Internal family relationships become strained because of pressures in working life and lacking language skills, among other things. The lack of relatives and local networks results in loneliness, and it is not always easy to create new networks and relationships.

The parents recounted how the factors leading to the children's problems stemmed from the families' internal problems. Most parents described a marital crisis leading to problems in the children's lives.

"There were many problems, my son went to school and starting school happened at the exact same time we were getting divorced. My son lived in a world of such fear and uncertainty, he didn't know anything about his parents' relationship, and I was of course tense myself, and then he couldn't be at school any longer and he was aggressive there (at school). And I was working and my nerves were frayed all the time (...) like we were in the middle of a crisis, and a crisis will easily spread and crises don't tend to stop easily, so we were all in a crisis and we all reacted on a very emotional level, and my son suffered from this a lot (...) I couldn't do anything, I was really out of it." (father 1)

This excerpt from an interview with a father brings up the themes of conflicts between husband and wife, and the fear and uncertainty of a child living in a broken home. The father describes how work took up much of his time and resources, and how he had no knowledge or ideas on how to help his son and family. Underlying the conflicts between spouses, and conflicts within the family generally, there may be traumatic experiences related to the parents' situation as refugees. Such experiences may be eclipsed by the family's overall situation, and often they have not been processed. The father continues his story of the family's crisis:

"I, for example, have a very traumatic background, I have seen slaughter, I have seen people butchered like no Finnish person fortunately has. Except war veterans. Like I have seen women and children butchered before my eyes. 'cos you see all kinds of things. Well that's one reason. (father 1)

The two excerpts above describe experiences of life so distant from each other that it is hard to imagine the speaker being the same husband and father in both cases. In the first excerpt, the father describes the conflicts of divorce, the pressures of working life and his helplessness when faced with a child's predicament. In the latter excerpt, the father talks about his extremely traumatic war experiences. The interview did not reveal if the father had received therapy, for example, or if he had had opportunities to talk about his war experiences.

Since the 1990's, significant improvements have been implemented in the Finnish social and health care system in order to serve and support clients with experiences of war and other traumatic events. People with refugee background are still a relatively new client group in our country. Saurama (2002, 239) claims that social work encounters many societal phenomena in advance, before people are able to recognise and name them. The concern expressed by the social workers I interviewed, regarding insufficient therapy services and ineffective service paths, is an important viewpoint in the development of services targeted for immigrant families, and especially in the prevention of problems in families.

The interview data contains a variety of observations on different cultural views of childrearing and on the effects of the parents' education on their integration to the new country. The parents describe idealistic expectations that immigrants may have when arriving in Finland. The interviewees express that expectations of a better life, employment and financial security are not, however, easily fulfilled without a support network, family and relatives. Life may drift to a crisis. The network of officials is not perceived as supportive or helpful in such crises, but rather as a source of rules that limit and prohibit. At its worst, it causes a paralysis and a collapse of the individual and the life of the whole family. The immigrant does not feel at home in Finland, but returning to the country of origin would be an even worse alternative. Returning to the homeland would mean losing face in the eyes of the family, relatives and local community who live there.

Experiences of children and adolescents before receiving child protection services

All the children interviewed for this study described changing schools and social circles numerous times as the family moved. The interview talk of the children and adolescents reflects the presence of constant insecurity and change before they were placed in custody and moved into the institutional care. The children and adolescents did not directly recount the causes or circumstances that had led to them being reported to child protection authorities. In their interview talk, it is also interesting that they do not describe, for example, the workers they have met. When talking about family workers involved in community-based child protection, for example, they did not assess the effects of the work on the family's life, but rather described what they had done with the family workers.

Below I will give examples of an adolescent's experiences of everyday life in the family before he was placed in custody and institutional care was arranged. The in-

terview talk shows the family's chaotic daily life that was occasionally interrupted by community services, in the form of family work.

Table 1: The daily life of a family and child protection community services as experienced by an adolescent

<i>The family's daily life and the offered support forms and services</i>	<i>Adolescent (18 y) describes the daily life of his family and the services they received</i>
The family's situation reaches crisis, moving house several times, changing schools, repeating a school year, several visits by police and ambulance	"that situation got so bad then, everybody was shouting at each other, the children shouted at each other, the situation got worse and worse"
<i>The family's daily life and the offered support forms and services</i>	<i>Adolescent (18 y) describes the daily life of his family and the services they received</i>
The family's situation reaches crisis, moving house several times, changing schools, repeating a school year, several visits by police and ambulance	"that situation got so bad then, everybody was shouting at each other, the children shouted at each other, the situation got worse and worse"
The mother of the family asks the mother of the adolescent's friend to help, and gets the number of a crisis phone line	"Then suddenly family workers came, the situation calmed down"
Family work helps the mother and children to cope	"They (family workers) came and asked how are you doing and helped mother with the household and paid bills and. Mother said that angels came to help us. Dad got paranoid: who are these, he asked. They (family workers) asked mum too how she was, made mum happy, but when they (family workers) left the old mum came back. We baked with them (family workers), they took us to Seurasaari and we went to the movies and so on.."

In the table above, I have collected from the adolescent's interview talk his views on the family's situation before the children were placed in custody. The interview talk clearly shows the chaotic nature of the family's life, with the children trying to survive by being loyal to both the father, who suffers from serious mental health problems, and the mother, who gets physically abused. In the background, there is the influence of a strong ethnic community that supports the family, but on the other hand controls and steers the family's life. The police and ambulance workers sometimes "pop in" in the family's life. According to the interview material, they visit the family because of emergency calls made about the family, "to check the situation". The adolescent ponders the visits these professionals made to his home:

"he (father) took mom by the hand and smacked it into the window. There's still a big slash wound on mom's hand. Then we (children) called the ambulance and the ambulance guys asked what happened. All of us (children) were all quiet, the ambulance guys asked what had happened, a hand can't go through a window suddenly like that. We were all quiet, dad looked at us all. He (father) said, mum slipped. The ambulance guys said it's not possible to slip like that. They asked at first, but they didn't dare then either, they (ambulance staff) were like these short fellows, in their early twenties" (adolescent 18)

Marja: Would you have liked them to ask more questions?

"I would have liked, that they had taken us to another room or something and asked, they could have been more bold about asking then, at the beginning, how are you doing, like that, and not been scared. All those workers must have seen different families, shouldn't they know, don't they have training. They should just ask outright, there are people out there who really need help and who should be asked outright, hey they can really die, somebody can really kill them..." (adolescent 18)

In the data excerpt above, the adolescent stresses how vitally important it is for officials to have the courage to ask how the child or adolescent is doing, and to keep asking repeatedly. The adolescent suggests that if there is no answer on the first time, workers should keep asking, persistently. The interview shows how the adolescent feels that officials and professional support workers are living in a kind of bubble, or in a different reality from the families in crisis. The professionals bypass the violence experienced by the mother and children. The adolescent calls for the professional support workers to have knowledge and ability and to be aware families in crisis. It is also noteworthy that the boy wishes to see his family as an ordinary family, when he asks if the professional support workers have not seen all kinds of families.

Professionals may tend to rely on a type of cultural explanation when encountering violence in families of immigrant background. Violence is seen as a consequence of "culture", something that the immigrants have brought with them as they have moved to Finland (Keskinen, 2012, 296). When there are children in the family that is experiencing violence, there should be rapid and effective intervention which recognises signs of risk and underlying factors (Karimi, 2010, 186).

Parents' experiences of community-based child protection services

The term 'systematic stage of child protection work' is used to describe the stage of social work that takes place after the family has been reported to child protection authorities and the need for child protection services has been assessed. This stage is based on a client plan (Lastensuojelulaki [Child Protection Act] 417/2007/30 §). Community-based child protection carried out by child protection workers can be divided into five stages: 1) assessment of the need for child protection services or assessment of the situation; 2) the systematic stage of child protection work; 3) crisis

work; 4) custodial work and 5) post-custodial work. Each stage forms an independent unit with its own content (Muukkonen 2008, 38.) However, the procedures and stages of community-based work do not always take place in the order described above.

Because the children of the parents who were interviewed for this study had been placed in custody despite the community-based interventions, it was hard to find any instances of success in the period of community-based child protection services. Rather than success, the interviews reflect the parents' exhaustion and fatigue. They had not experienced child protection as supportive, and the social workers were seen as controllers and officials who set limits to the family's life.

"at the beginning it was a sort of, like, relief that somebody wants to help. But then the child protection work, it kind of depressed me. Because I somehow kind of drowned in it, too much, too much of this, meetings all the time, too much of that. It wore me out, it should have made things easier but it wore me out. There was too much. I felt like I was drowning in it." (mother 1)

In the data excerpt above, a mother describes a situation where she had become the single parent of two small children. At first, she felt that the family work offered as community-based child protection services provided relief and support, and that family work helped her to cope in a difficult life situation. With time, however, she got tired of the constant meetings where she did not feel she was receiving any support. Interdisciplinary meetings are an important form of child protection practice. In these meetings, issues concerning the child's development and well-being are discussed in the parents' presence. They form the foundation of systematic child protection work, and they are crucial for transferring information between various officials and the parents. The situation is assessed to provide the basis for a client plan. When the family has been in touch with the services for a while, further detail is added, and the assessment is updated. The daily life of the child and the family is thus assessed through a process of continuous assessment within the framework of child protection services, with the aim of providing the best possible, optimally effective help and support (Muukkonen 2008, 41). This requires continuous meetings and encounters between all the parties involved in the process.

Systematic social work is described in the interviews with the parents as follows:

"there was family work. At the beginning I was, like, happy about it. But then that family work became, like, too binding and there was too much of it. Yeah, lots of workers, a meeting here and at the school, and a meeting at child protection, and then they visited us at home and sat there for four hours. Like, we didn't have a life of our own." (mother 1)

"I was so tired of it all, but then twice a week, meetings and too much, things should be sort of peaceful and help people, not like chase you into a corner." (mother 2)

"yeah, those social workers, in any case, visited us often and did those assessments. And then we were offered home care. The home care workers visited us once a week. They primarily just had discussions with me at which point ... (mentions son's name) got upset because there were strangers in our home. Unfortunately this did not work." (mother 3/interpreted)

The parents are not aware of the systematic nature of child protection social work. They do not mention the concept of client plan at all when discussing the services that had been provided to support them. In the parents' talk, the client plan does not appear as an anchor that could provide a reference point to work performed on the individual and process levels. There may have been nothing but purely organization-based motives for writing client plans for the families involved in this study, such as complying with the letter of the law. This may mean that the client plan has been reduced to a tool for the social worker, a device that allows him or her to keep track of what work has been carried out, thus ensuring there would be no problems regarding legal accountability.

Muukkonen (2008, 43) considers a carefully devised, written plan to first and foremost provide help for the clients of child protection, the child and the parents. A written plan is also an important tool for the social worker in charge of the case in order to manage the process. In an ideal situation, the client may become motivated to work according to the plan. In the case of the families involved in this study, client work was not carried out in a client-centred manner. Therefore, the clients perceived social work as nothing but meetings and discussions where their abilities as parents were assessed. In the light of the interviews, it appears that the client plans had little content in the eyes of the families because they did not remember that such plans existed. This is highly significant, since the Child Protection Act grants client families the right to be present when the plan is drawn, to see the written plan, and to add dissenting views to the plan.

The concept of inclusion incorporates the right to receive information regarding plans, decisions, resolutions and procedures about oneself, along with the reasons that led to them, and the means to affect such matters by expressing one's opinion. Reciprocity is essential. It is not possible to influence matters if one is not informed or included in the management of said matters. Inclusion is a process where participation often takes concrete forms. In Rostila's (2001, 8) view, in goal-oriented social work the cooperation between social worker and client is constructed as a process involving several stages. The client's situation is assessed, agreements are made on goals and plans of action, the plan is carried out jointly with the client and the network, and finally, the work is assessed and terminated.

The parents involved in this study had few experiences of inclusion in the matters concerning their families.

"sometimes it felt like I don't know all the rules, like they are kind of exploiting the fact that I don't know all this stuff. That I don't sort of understand all the Finnish rules so well and in detail, and then the decisions were made,

that I didn't sort of understand it all, then I was, like, yeah, okay fine, like I trusted them, I sort of let them decide many things." (mother 1)

"yep it did feel a bit like I was being accused, that the work was that binding. Too much, like, I didn't understand everything, that they (social workers) didn't explain everything right away (...) I was all worn out and nobody knows a thing. I ran from one place to another and everybody said like this and like this... (mother 2)

In the excerpts above, the mothers discuss the shortage of information. In the first excerpt, the mother suggests that her ignorance of the Finnish system was exploited. She talks about decisions that have been made on behalf of her and the family, concerning their lives. An interesting detail is the talk about trust between the client and the officials. This is something that the entire functioning of the service system should be built upon. The mother feels that it was precisely her trust in the officials' actions that, in the end, resulted in harm to her family. In the light of these interviews, it can be seen that lack of information, or problems in understanding the information that has been given, may at worst lead to a loss of functioning and life management on the client's part.

A mother describes her experiences of the family clinic service she received.

".. and then they recommended the family clinic services to us, and there I went but they didn't have an interpreter, it was extremely hard for me. I did understand that they kept saying there (at the family clinic) that I have to set the boy some limits. But I couldn't communicate back (to the workers)." (mother 3/interpretation)

According to the mother, no interpreter service had been arranged for the meetings between her and the family clinic workers. In response to my enquiry as to why interpreters were not used, she replied that the interpreter had been invited to some meetings but not all. She believed that the workers had felt she knew enough Finnish for therapy sessions to be successful. However, the mother did not have sufficient language skill for reciprocal communication with the workers. She understood their speech, but could not contribute her own views on the issues that were discussed.

The right of persons of immigrant origin to interpreter services can be understood in the light of the concept of 'unquestionable rights' and service systems based on universalism (see Clarke, 2003). Immigrants do not have an unquestionable right to interpretation. Instead, the decision on providing interpretation is based on the officials' discretion. Services and immigrants do not interact sufficiently because of problems in understanding and conveying information. In service situations, the immigrants' legal rights are jeopardised if adequate interpretation has not been provided (see Clarke 2003; Anis 2007). Another crucial question is whether all documents concerning the client should be translated to the client's native language.

Children's and adolescents' experiences of community-based child protection services

A child protection social worker operates in a gray area between the child's rights and needs and the parents' rights and responsibilities. A central theme of discussion is the child's role as an active agent in relation to the parents. When child protection services are involved, the discussion turns to the question of whose needs are to be given priority, the child's or the parents'. If child protection considers the needs of the child as primary, then that means they consider the child as a client. If, however, the parent's needs are considered as being more important, then the parent is the considered client (Ojaniemi & Rantajärvi 2010, 231).

Knowledge produced by the child has been discussed over the past few years in research concerning child protection and children's inclusion. This discussion has covered issues such as how the knowledge produced by the child should be handled and whether this knowledge should be evaluated for reliability. Hurtig (2006, 167) writes about "the child's knowledge" as being a means through which the child's experiences, opinions, knowledge, and perspectives can be drawn together. Seen in this light, the issue is not only that of information produced by children, but the concept expands to cover children's right to inclusion and active agency.

The Child Protection Act of 2008 highlights child-centred principles and the child's best interest when assessments for the need for child protection are carried out. One could even talk about a paradigm shift. Previous child protection legislation and practice were criticised concerning the invisibility of the child in social work practice and an over-emphasis on supporting parenthood (e.g. Hurtig 2003; Ojaniemi & Rantajärvi 2010, 231.) The critique was focused on the child being too easily interpreted as the property of the family and the parents. As a result, child protection was seen as drifting towards supporting the parents' rights instead of supporting the child.

An 18-year-old girl in post-placement care recounts her experiences from the time before her placement in institutional care:

Marja: Did the support offered by the family workers help your family?

"I don't remember. And I was really shy. I didn't talk to anybody. I was like somewhere in my room with my bunny. Or I don't remember a thing, I was quite a normal little girl and dad had problems. I wasn't, like, beaten in my family. That's what I was like." (girl 17)

Marja: Were you the little girl with the bunny?

"Yeah, I wasn't a rascal like the other members of our family. How could I put it, all the members in my family have had terribly hard times, except for me. And I have always been burdened along with the rest, in a style like did ya hear what your bro did and so on, and like now we need to have a meeting, tomorrow the whole family will be there. I don't get it, if they've had problems, you don't have to dump it all on others." (girl 17)

In the interview quoted above, the adolescent describes her childhood in a family terrorised by an abusive father. She has several brothers, all of whom had behavioural problems in childhood. The mother was often physically abused by the father, and the family's life was dominated by uncertainty and having to move house frequently. The adolescent describes herself as a shy and quiet girl who often withdrew into her room in the family's difficult situations. Hurtig (2006, 169) describes how, when helping families with children, there is often an expectation that all the family members would be helped simultaneously. However, there is no clear picture of the family's situation. Views concerning the needs and problems of each family member are difficult to formulate, and even conflicting views may exist. Work with families of immigrant background may thus easily focus on family-oriented efforts.

In the excerpt above, it is easy to see how the support work was provided based on assumptions of the child's strong ties to the family. The child was seen primarily as a member of her family and through the relationships in the family. Support work was characterised by viewing issues through the lens of the family unit and from the perspective of the adults' needs and dilemmas. Helping the children was thought to happen through helping adults (Hurtig 2003; 2006). It is also possible to identify in this interview a set of ideas through which adults interpreted the need for support, a kind of 'framework of endurance' (Hurtig 2006, 170-171). The child is assumed to endure and tolerate the stress caused by crisis situations, even severe ones.

"sometimes I met them (workers from the child protection institution) on my own, too. But usually we had family therapy. At one stage there was my dad, mum and all the family members. I don't remember them exactly, I suppose they were helpful, and then sometimes we just shouted there at each other and at the workers. It (family therapy) didn't work out at all at one point, and then it wasn't done at all at one point." (boy 14 y)

The 'percolation support model' is the name given to a type of child protection work where the child is met indirectly through the parents (Hurtig 2003; 2006). From the child's viewpoint the model is problematic, since the child is not helped directly, but only through the parents. The basic premise is that if the parents are doing well, the child also does well. The focus of the work is thus on fixing the situation of one or both parents, not on a model of support based on the child's needs. Ojaniemi and Rantajärvi (2010, 234) claim that before the new Child Protection Act came into force, the initial assessment in child protection was carried out following the 'percolation support model'. Although the child was physically present at the social bureau or during the home visit, he or she was not seen as an individual with rights or as an active agent equal to the parent.

A child's inclusion is challenging for child protection because of the knowledge the child possesses. How should the knowledge of a child or adolescent of immigrant background be handled, especially when it is collected in the parents' absence? Should a child's knowledge be assessed from the viewpoint of assessing its reliability? Should the basic assumption be that immigrant children and adolescents are especially loyal to their parents? The 'loyalty framework' (Hurtig 2006, 171) brings

into child protection work the assumption that children do not like to tell outsiders about the family's internal affairs, but will protect the family at the expense of their own well-being. When working with families of immigrant origin, workers may tend to add on top of the 'loyalty' view the 'consequence framework' (Hurtig, 171). This involves the idea that a child who tells outsiders about the family issues is at risk of being punished in the family.

"yeah they (social workers and family workers) were afraid of dad. They didn't dare to ask about anything in front of him (father), they (workers) pretended to be cheerful, although they (workers) were mad about how someone can do that to his own child, d'ya know." (boy 18 y)

In the data excerpt above, the adolescent describes actions the social workers took to support his family. As the adolescent sees it, the workers were afraid of the father, but tried to hide their fear by "pretending to be cheerful" when they met the father. The adolescent saw, however, what their real attitude was. The excerpt brings to mind a kind of a theatrical play with roles being played by the social workers and the father. The adolescent was, in a way, an outsider who could see the situation as a whole, and perceive how absurd it was.

Parents' experiences of institutional care services

In child protection practice, placing a child in custody is the last-resort means of securing the child's growth and development. It is a procedure that strongly interferes with the child's constitutional rights and the family's autonomy. Therefore, it is a legal rights issue for all the parties involved: the child, the family and the workers. Forced custody and institutional or foster care are only used if the circumstances at the family home or the child's own behaviour pose a serious risk to the child's health and development. In addition, arranging forced custody and care services can only be initiated if community-based child protection services support measures have not been possible or suitable, or if they have proven to be insufficient. An assessment must also be made to determine if institutional or foster care is in the child's best interest (Child Protection Act 2007/417/40§).

The interview data shows that the parents' perceptions of how well institutional care served their children were linked to their own ability to adapt to the child no longer living at home. The road to acceptance had been extremely hard and it had taken a long time. Siitonen (1999, 117) discusses empowerment as a personal process that is connected to the individual's own will and ability to set goals, as well as perception of oneself and trust in one's chances. Furthermore, it involves unwavering responsibility regarding one's personal development, and ability and will to act in a way one knows to be right. To support empowerment, it is important to offer encouraging feedback and reflective, supportive interaction. Among the interviewees, those who were able to see their child's best interest and see that the child was receiving expert professional care were the ones who had set as their goal that the forced custody should be terminated, and that the child should return home at some point.

In the following excerpt, a father describes his preconceptions of the Finnish child protection system, especially the process of placing a child in custody. However, the important thing is how his preconceptions change through his interaction with a social worker.

"my initial impression was negative, I must admit. The initial stage went so that I heard a lot about forced custody, and custody as a word was hard for me to understand, and like I said it's about attitude and it did upset me since because I thought that if a child is placed in custody then the child is taken away from the family altogether. And this is why I say there should be a lot of attitude change. I had many discussions. As soon as I heard about the custody, I said that I don't know anything about this and could we discuss what it's about. I had discussions at the social bureau with the social worker. After this I understood and I have been keeping an open mind. It is important to me that the child gets support and care, nothing else matters."
(father 1)

The data excerpt describes how the reciprocal discussion between the father and the social worker leads, with time, to the father gaining self-understanding. He has been included in processing matters, and he has received information about them. A significant factor is the father's active role and subject status, in demanding and asking for discussions himself. At the same time, the social worker has given him space to ask over and over again, and to demand explanations. The control involved in child protection work has changed into support.

Juhila (2006, 254) describes cultural discourses, meaning widely known and shared ways of structuring issues and situations, and attaching meaning to them. Since social work is not an island apart from the rest of the world, workers will inevitably operate with these types of cultural discourses or cultural scripts and associated expectations. In the data excerpt, the father discusses his own cultural expectations and what child protection work meant to him. In terms of the child's best interest being considered, the most crucial fact is that the father's view of child protection changed in a direction where the child alone is central. In the open dialogue between the father and the social worker, the father reached a new understanding of child protection and the child's best interest.

In a discussion where the participants come from different countries, different culturally created scripts meet, as well as people. I define a culturally created script as a map which is shaped from the prevailing forms of knowing, built at various times and in various ways in different cultures. Each culture has scripts regarding how to act and proceed in certain situations. A client of immigrant origin cannot necessarily rely on a Finnish social worker's cultural process of attaching meaning to provide him or her with the means to understand the story that is being told. Questions that are felt to be difficult or complex may be actively avoided on both sides by escaping behind the idea of the fundamental nature of cultural difference (Katisko 2011, 59).

The interviews show that if a positive and respectful discourse has been formed

between parents and workers during community care services, it is much easier to form a positive, interactive relationship with the staff at the child protection institution.

"here (in institutional care) the child is helped to calm down. (A ward at the children's home) has the task of helping the child to calm down, nothing more, there is no more to their task than that. The parents' task is here, as the calming down is happening, to help with the child upbringing. Because being here (at the institution) should not end parenting. It should be precisely the reason and motivator, that now I have the support that will help with the part which I have no skill to handle. But this role of parenting and child-rearing is my own role, because I am that child's parent and a lot of work has to be put into that." (father 1)

The father wants to stress that the child being taken into custody does not end his role as parent and father. He wants to be present in his son's daily life and to convey his own cultural background by reading and having conversations. The father sees the role of institutional care as a form of support for him in his childrearing. His dream is to get his son out of the institution in the future, to live with the family again. The conditions that allow a positive interaction between father and institutional staff have been built on mutual respect and appreciation.

Among the interviewees there were some who feared that their child who had been placed in custody would forget his or her native language and the parents' culture. There were also parents represented in the interview data who cannot accept their child being placed in custody. For these parents, committing to working in cooperation with the child protection institution had been very hard.

The critical attitude towards institutional care dates back to a time before the forced custody decision:

"and then this situation ended and in June we were informed that a place had been arranged for my son in institutional care, that he will be covered by institutional services, that he has a place in a children's home. I had not given my final consent. But at that time the situation was such that I was totally out of energy. So very slowly and quietly, they led me to it. So it felt like everything was carried beautifully on a tray, I was led to the situation where the decision about the children's home was made. Because at the beginning we were talking about a sort of 6 month temporary solution in institutional care. But then it turned out that my son has to stay in institutional care for at least 2 years." (mother 3/interpretation)

In the above interview, the mother describes the social officials as leading her into a situation where the only option was her son being placed in custody and living in an institution. However, the forced custody decision had been preceded by several years of community care which had not helped the family.

Below are excerpts from an interview with one of the fathers involved in this study. This also shows some of the father's experiences from the time before the forced custody decision. Throughout the entire period the family had been receiving child protection services, including the period of community-based support, the father's experiences had been negative.

"from the officials, I want nothing. What I would have wished was that the mother should have been left alone, different support should have been given, hobbies for the boy or something. The mother was, like, tired, she couldn't set the boy limits, that's how it went, I had no trouble with the boy. They (social workers) took, like, charge of the whole thing, that like the mother speaks only bad Finnish and they (social workers) didn't use an interpreter. And she didn't understand what this custody means."(father 2)

Marja: how have you been managing cooperation with the child protection institution?

"they have started cooperation with a family therapist now. At the beginning it was, like, interesting, but then it was like the same stuff over and over, like how's it going, you get tired of it. Before it was almost like we were forced to do it, so we could then get the child back, we had to be well-behaved parents. But we didn't get the boy home, I understood that we'd been swindled. We always crossed swords with (mentions worker's name), she was always claiming that the boy had so many problems, when the social workers then turns up, that (mentions worker's name) talks an awful lot of bad stuff, that the boy has so many problems:" (father 2)

Marja: you said that you do play-acting in those meetings and therapy, what did you mean by that?

"yeah, that is, I act in those meetings and we do go to family therapy, we do what we're told, like we're supposed to do"(father 2)

Marja: and how do you describe cooperation between parents and officials over these years?

"well let's say there is no cooperation with parents at all. Let's put it this way, that they listen, but then they make their own decisions. Crank out their own opinions. I would listen to the parents more, parents are the most important to children, in my mind help should be given with the child in the family, arrange, like, hobbies, there should be activity clubs for children where they could blow off energy, of course it would cost the state something, but so does this institution."(father 2)

The father sees the child protection service network as something that interferes with his family's life. These experiences present an image of child protection as a machine, with him, his son and his ex-wife caught in its gears. The father engages in a type

of play-acting, performing his role to the best of his ability so that he may please all parties involved with his son. He has not felt that child protection community services, systematic child protection or institutional care services have supported him or his family, or that they have led to empowerment. Instead, the father feels that the services have offered only control. On the other hand, none of the parties involved in the child protection system, none of the working methods, and none of the individual workers have succeeded in transforming the practices that involve control into anything that would have supported the family's resources and empowerment. By performing the role of a dutiful client this father feels he has some control in relation to the officials. For him, this represents empowerment.

Children's and adolescents' experiences of institutional care services

At the time of the interviews, all the children and adolescents involved in this study lived in a child protection institution. The length of their stay at the institution varied from two to ten years. Placing a child in a child protection institution is an extreme societal intervention that affects the individual's personal life, relationships with parents, and the way the family's relationships are defined. On the other hand, from the child's or adolescent's viewpoint, the placement means numerous new relationships and growing in a community that he or she was not born into (Eronen 2012, 13).

The interviews with the children and adolescents show that their experiences of institutional care services and life at the institution were not all clearly positive or negative. The children and adolescents interviewed in this study had numerous good experiences related to the institutional placement, but they did not hesitate to express criticism towards the institution. Good experiences were associated with caring shown by the staff at the institution. For example, the personal care worker's role in supporting the child or adolescent was considerable. When talking about their everyday life at the institution, the children and adolescents described their lives through action (playing games, watching television, eating, and so forth). Their criticisms, on the other hand, were directed at rules that the children and adolescents considered too harsh, physical restraint situations, and limitations to freedom. The overall impression conveyed by the interviews with the children and adolescents was that they wished to be perfectly ordinary adolescents.

Marja: How did you feel when you came to the institution?

"Relieved, but then I had to start everything from the beginning, school, new friends... for once they were asking how I felt, how I was doing, what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go. For ten years no one had asked those things. We (the children) always had to decide what we were going to do. There was (at home) no discipline, you know, we came and went as we pleased. Like we had an evening snack and went to bed, like that, and we were like, huh? Me and my sister fought every day, called people names, yelled, threw stuff at the workers ... (boy 18)

The adolescent quoted above had experienced being placed in custody and living at the institution as a relief. The chaotic everyday life that had gone on for years in the

family, a life with no limits and continuous fear, was replaced by the limits and security provided by the institution. At this point in the interview, the adolescent offered numerous examples of how wonderful it was for him to get regular meals and to have a regular bedtime.

Especially those adolescents who had stayed at the institution for longer than five years (3 adolescents) described their relationship to their personal care workers as important to them. Törrönen (2003, 103-104) describes how children who spend their childhood at a children's home seek significant relationships among the staff and attach meanings to them that are usually attached to parents.

The rules and limits of institutional care were an important topic in the interviews with the children and adolescents. All interviewees discussed the restraint practices used at the institution and their fairness. The Child Protection Act (2007/417/68§) states that institutional staff may hold a child physically if it appears likely, on the basis of erratic or threatening behaviour, that the child could harm him- or herself or others. Restraining must serve the purposes of treatment and care. Limiting freedom of movement means that a child may be forbidden to leave the premises of the institution for a defined time period. Freedom of movement can be limited if the decision on placing the child in care has been made on the basis that the child has seriously endangered his or her health or development through substance abuse, or if limiting freedom of movement is otherwise necessary to protect the child in the context of providing treatment and care (Child Protection Act 2007/417/69§.)

Living in institutional care was, thus, not entirely good or bad in the adolescents' experience. The meanings attached to events changed with time. The purpose of the institution's rules and limits became clear only in retrospect. Unfair punishments and treatment may be etched into the memory of these children and adolescents for the rest of their lives. For adolescents of immigrant origin, experiences of being treated unfairly because of their ethnic background are the hardest of all to accept.

Conclusions and suggestions for future measures

In the sections above, I have discussed experiences that parents, children and adolescents of immigrant origin have had as clients of the child protection system. The aim has been to find out how they ended up as clients of child protection services, and how the service system has supported them. By 'service system' I mean various services provided by social and health care before the family came in touch with social service child protection, as well as child protection community services and institutional care. As background to my study I have utilised the concept of empowerment. In this study, empowerment means an individual sense of being heard and the opportunity to be a participant in decisions concerning oneself as a client of child protection services. Empowerment also means that the individual feels part of the larger society, and that he or she gets a sense of equal treatment as a client.

Often, in some way or other, the families' problems stem from being immigrants, either refugees or migrants. As they have moved to Finland, the families have faced

unemployment, work-related stress, lack of language skills, lack of networks of family and friends, and financial instability. As for families with parents who came to Finland as refugees, these parents' experiences of war and violence in their countries of origin can affect the everyday life of these families. All these reasons have contributed to internal relationships becoming strained and drifting to crisis in the families interviewed in this study.

Siitonen (1999, 117) suggests that an individual's internal sense of empowerment becomes an issue, at the very latest, when another party tries to prevent that empowerment. Certain circumstances, life situations, and even other people may lead a person to believe that he or she, or his or her work, is not valuable. Below, I have condensed the experiences of parents, children and adolescents, pointing out what prevented and what promoted their empowerment both before and during the time they received child protection services.

Table 2: Time before receiving services:

	Children and adolescents	Parents
Factors, circumstances etc that promoted empowerment	Friends	
Factors, circumstances etc that prevented empowerment	Playing	
	Internal problems in the family	Conflicts between spouses, divorce
	Domestic violence	Mental health problem in the family, depression
	Piecemeal style of going to school, repeating school years	Unemployment
	Moving and changing schools	Lacking or poor language skills
	Bullying at school	Feeling like an outsider
		Lack of friends and relatives, lack of social networks

Empowerment is considered to be a personal process. However, a positive process of empowerment requires the involvement of other people, circumstances and social structures (Siitonen 1999, 117-118). The interviews with children and adolescents show that they were empowered by engaging in quite ordinary children's activities. For the parents' part, in the light of the interviews, there were hardly any factors, circumstances or social structures that could have contributed to their empowerment before they became clients of child protection services. Their situation could have been better if they had better language skills, work or better social networks.

In terms of social status, the situations of the parents who participated in this study were poor. I did not directly ask about issues such as the parents' employment, but their speech suggests that they were struggling to find jobs and to stay in working life. All the parents who were interviewed described feelings of loneliness and being outsiders. The everyday lives of the children and adolescents are intertwined with the parents' difficult situations. At school and in day care the children's lives are encumbered by attention deficits and behavioural problems.

Table 3: Receiving community-based child protection services

	Children and adolescents	Parents
Factors, circumstances etc that promoted empowerment	Excursions and activities with the family workers	Discussions with the social worker
	Family workers help the mother with daily chores.	Courage and perseverance in asking about things the parent does not know
Factors, circumstances etc that prevented empowerment	Help and support are provided haphazardly	Numerous meetings and group discussions with different sectors.
	Meetings at the social bureau and school	The binding nature of family work
		The feeling that their life is being controlled and interfered with
		Lack of information
		Lack of language skill
		Lack of interpreter services

Participating in plans and decisions that concern one's own life is closely linked with empowerment. Siitonen (1999, 61-64) describes an internal sense of power that is linked with seven different categories: freedom, responsibility, respect, trust, context, atmosphere and positive regard. The categories are interwoven with each other. Deficits in just one category can weaken and even prevent empowerment. Safe, open environments and an unprejudiced atmosphere are crucial for building self-esteem and self-confidence. The interview data shows that neither parents nor children and adolescents had felt that they were participants in the community care child protection services that had been planned to support their everyday lives. From the families' point of view, the meetings and discussions that had been arranged to support and monitor their daily lives were nothing but controlling. The only exception is the experience of one father. His own will and perseverance to find out about matters concerning his family contributed to his empowerment.

Empowerment is challenging because power cannot be given to another person. An individual can be offered resources, skills and opportunities, but individuals can only

empower themselves. Some of the signs of empowerment are improved self-esteem and ability to set oneself targets and goals. Empowerment is also associated with a strong sense of responsibility for one's own personal development, and the will and ability to act (Siitonen 1999, 88). The limitations that immigrants have in their Finnish language skills make the question of the right to interpreter services an important one. For a person who does not understand what is being said, it is difficult to get a sense of empowerment. A thorough understanding of decisions concerning one's own child should be an unquestionable right for all parents.

Table 4: Placing the child in custody and moving into institutional care

	Children and adolescents	Parents
Factors, circumstances etc that promoted empowerment	Situation calming down as the child or moved out	Discussions with institutional care workers
	Regular mealtimes and bedtime	Seeing the child's best interest
	Personal care workers, support from adults	Peer support
	Going to school regularly, rules and limits	Family therapy
	A feeling of being "ordinary"	
Factors, circumstances etc that prevented empowerment	Limitations to freedom of movement, institutional rules and limits	Control and rules set by the institution regarding meetings with the child.
	Being treated unfairly	A feeling of parenthood being taken away.
		A fear of the child losing the parent's language and culture.

For all the children and adolescents interviewed in this study, being placed in custody and moving into the institution primarily meant that their situation calmed down. The children and adolescents had lived at the child protection institution for two to ten years. The overall impression from the research data is that the longer institutional care had taken place, the further the adolescents' rehabilitation had proceeded. Regularity, routine and making school a priority were dominant factors in the child's or adolescent's life. The adolescents considered unfairness, physical restraint and overly strict rules limiting freedom of movement to be factors that prevented empowerment. The adolescents did not view rules and limits in a purely negative light, but called for competence in the staff to consider what consequences were reasonable and just in each situation considering the age level of the child or adolescent.

Empowerment is followed by commitment (Siitonen 1999, 80). Personal, internal empowerment can be said to have happened in the case of one father. The elements

of a trusting and open interactive relationship had been created between the father and a social worker responsible for child protection community services. The father continued the discussion, based on openness, with institutional staff after his son had been placed in custody and moved into the institution. The father has self-esteem and he is able to see his son's best interest instead of his own shame and self-accusations. This has required an interactive relationship with the parties that handle his son's affairs. In connection with institutional care, factors that prevent empowerment are a sense of losing parenthood and the child being denied the culture and language of his or her parents.

Child protection practice, and more broadly social work, has been organised differently in different countries. For example, the areas of emphasis in child protection vary by country (Anis 2008, 27). As institutional and professional practice, social work and child protection are, however, products of western culture and modern societies (Meeuwisse & Swärd 2006, 69; Anis 2008, 27). To immigrants who have moved to Finland, the goals and practices of child protection may be alien.

While practices, procedures and work methods in child protection services are difficult to understand to the clients, the universal need to participate and to be heard is the same to all human beings. This means first of all that interpretation should be provided for the clients without Finnish language skills. But it also means the cultural sensitivity. This creates challenges in the interaction between worker and client. Themes in multicultural and inter-cultural work include cultural diversity and inter-cultural communication and understanding. One of the goals of critical social work is recognizing racism on both structural and individual levels, and developing practices to oppose racism (e.g. Dominelli 1988).

Situations in families who came to be as clients of child protection services, are often very complicated, involving different problems and networks in the situation. In many instances other professionals may have worked with the child or the family but without any worthwhile results. A child protection social worker has the challenge of helping a child who has been at risk for long time. As a "last resort" child protection must take the responsibility in cases in which families, the service system and overall child and family policy have failed in supporting the child. Effectiveness is required in work processes in which child protection social work comes as "the last" and often somewhat unwelcome visitor to a family.

Social work is one of the most important local professionals which are able to prevent the escalation of conflicts and stimulate participation and active citizenship. But social work and child protection services cannot be discussed without societal and multi-professional level. As number of immigrants' increases in Finland, successful integration is essential to the cohesion of the host society. Integration is a dynamic two-way process involving both immigrants and the host society with responsibilities on both sides. For immigrant background families from poor backgrounds and living in marginal areas, integration may be extremely difficult to achieve. It is important to create multi-professional and multicultural practices to help immigrant families in coming full member of the society and empowerment.

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Key issues in social work with people living with HIV/AIDS in Russia

Introduction

The present stage of development of the Russian society has been shaped by political, economic and social reforms which have been taking place since the beginning of the 1990s. These reforms have been carried out in rather radical forms, leading to negative social consequences, including growth of socially dangerous diseases, such as drug addiction, tuberculosis and HIV, among others.

According to UNAIDS, there were 34 million people with HIV infection in the world in 2011. According to the Federal Research and Methodological Center for the Prevention and Control of AIDS, 703,781 people had been registered as HIV infected in Russia by Nov 22nd 2012. In St. Petersburg, the number of people living with HIV was 51,552.

The modes of transmission of HIV infection have shown that the medical measures to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS are insufficient. The hopes for a speedy development of a vaccine against HIV infection have not been realized at this time. At present there is an understanding that HIV/AIDS is a social and public phenomenon with specific social and behavioral characteristics (Borodkina 2007). This means that not only medical models but also social models of prevention should be developed. It is obvious that social work is one of the institutions which have key roles to play in this process.

Main directions of social work with people living with HIV

Social work is the specialist activity of professionals focused on the creation of certain conditions which promote the improvement or rehabilitation of the abilities of a person or a group of people. These conditions enable that person or group to act independently, and to independently solve crucial problems in their lives. The methodology of social work can be defined as a system of principles and methods of assistance and support, targeting both individual and groups.

Systems of social work reflect the level of social and economic development of a country, as well as its traditional social norms and cultural values. One of the greatest challenges connected with the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Russia is the establishment of a system of social work with HIV -infected clients and their families. This work could be considered an essential part of social prevention, combining primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

There are various approaches to social prevention. M. Blum defines prevention as actions that are scientific, rational and carried out at the appropriate time in order to prevent possible physical, psychological or socio-cultural collisions in either individuals or groups that are at risk (Blum 1981). Depending on the target, the concept of prevention may require further specification. In the prevention of socially dangerous diseases, like HIV/AIDS, prevention could be defined as the action focused on changing the individual's risky behavior, changing the group norms encouraging risky behavior, and creating social structures that support safe behavior with regard to diseases. Social prevention of HIV/AIDS is social institute which focuses on the development, active assimilation and use of socio-cultural norms and skills that reduce the risk of disease transmission (Borodkina 2007).

Social work with people living with HIV involves several levels of prevention. With respect to these clients, there are secondary and/or tertiary methods of prevention. At the same time, both primary prevention methods and social work aim to prevent other people becoming infected with HIV. This preventive component is one of the distinguishing features of social work with HIV-infected people. HIV/AIDS prevention is a complex process, and social work deals with five main interrelated components: (1) legal provision, (2) policy context, (3) availability of services, (4) accessibility of services, and (5) participation and rights.

Social work with people living with HIV is particularly characterized by the clients' multiple problems. In addition to more general social problems, people affected by HIV face the medical, psychological, social and physical problems associated with their HIV infection. Above all, they are affected by stigma and discrimination. HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination significantly reduce the effectiveness of HIV prevention and care programs. Stigma has a negative impact on effective prevention by discouraging individuals from participating in medical and social interventions and from seeking information on how to protect themselves and others, thus deepening the adverse impact of HIV on their lives. Stigma and discrimination worsen the situations of the clients and their families. Stigma also affects the non-infected family members. Stigmatization usually leads to social exclusion, breaking established social relations.

According to the results of different case studies, stigma and discrimination are the most pressing social problems for HIV-affected people. The anonymous survey of 660 respondents, conducted in eleven Russian cities, demonstrated that more than 52% of the respondents experienced various forms of discrimination or stigmatization by others: they were the subject of gossip and they faced insults, harassment, threats and physical violence. (Report of case study 2011). For example, people with HIV were not allowed to participate in family or community activities; they were denied medical care; they experienced difficulties with rental housing; many lost their jobs; there were many problems with non-infected family members.

In addition to external factors, HIV causes inherent internal stigma: people living with HIV condemn themselves. They experience a sense of guilt and shame, they typically have low self-esteem, and they often feel that they deserve punishment and should

be punished. The majority of respondents, 56% of those with HIV-positive status, made the following decisions: not to have children, not to attend health facilities even when there is a need for this, not to marry, not to have sexual contact, to isolate themselves from family, relatives and friends, to quit work or school, to give up public life. HIV/AIDS affects the lives of different people, with different personal experiences, sexual preferences and cultural levels. HIV/AIDS is changing not only the lives of those who have HIV, but the lives of those who care for them as well, and sometimes those who simply happen to live nearby. As a result of the stigma, a 'devaluation' of the person takes place, a reduction of his/her social status.

It is possible to combat stigma and discrimination by distributing information about HIV / AIDS, protecting the rights of people living with HIV, providing social and psychological support for HIV-infected people, providing training on how to live with HIVinfection, advising where and how to get medical treatment and care, and raising awareness about the protection of human rights and support for other excluded persons and groups. These tasks have become part of social work with individuals and families affected by HIV.

One serious issue associated with HIV is that stigma and discrimination apply also to non-infected family members. The family is fenced off from relatives, friends and acquaintances, and ends up in a social vacuum.

According to Koltzova, the following factors give rise to problems which clients affected by HIV are unable to resolve on their own (Koltzova 2007):

- the client does not have sufficient means to resolve their financial problems (payment of housing, etc.);
- the client does not have a sufficient information regarding the issues; gaps in knowledge prevent the client from developing the necessary strategies to solve problems, so he or she turns to a social work professional;
- the client does not have a sufficient emotional or physical energy, so balance needs to be restored before the accumulated problems are solved;
- the client is experiencing emotional stress, which blocks rational understanding of the situation and positive attitude towards adaptation; the task of the social work professional is to free the client of the emotional pressure and help them in adapting;
- the client's own character is a source of problems, his or her actions being mostly based on feelings and emotions; the task of the social work professional, who has been trained to identify typical client behavior with respect to the situations and people surrounding the client, is to explain the situation and to solve the client's emotional problems.;
- the client lacks planning skills and adaptive thinking skills, assuming problem situations to be intractable; one of the tasks of the social work is to solve problems by teaching the client to solve them himself.

An important aspect of successful social adaptation is the involvement of the family's resources to help its members to adapt. Another key factor in the process of social

adaptation is the willingness of the family to take care of their infected family member. Work with the families of HIV-infected clients is one of the main directions of social work in this field.

Another important direction is community work. Social workers are involved in local community life and different health-related social activities, and from the very beginning of the epidemic they often become the initiators in providing various services to people with HIV/AIDS and their families. Community-based programs are also one of the crucial directions of social work in the sphere of HIV-prevention. In these programs, preventive measures focus on different subgroups within the population, or on particular regional units. Social work programs focusing on HIV/AIDS are generally targeted at two types of communities: firstly, inhabitants of a certain area (for example, municipalities and urban areas,) and, secondly, certain social groups which are, for behavioral and social reasons, at risk of HIV infection - for example, drug users, female sex workers and homosexuals (Borodkina 1991).

During the greatest periods of stress and difficulty connected with HIV-positive status, another important task of social workers is the creation of crisis intervention teams which provide legal aid and social and psychological support to clients and their families. Usually these teams consist of volunteers recruited by social workers. These volunteers are trained and remain under continuous supervision, receiving further training on an ongoing basis.

Another form of social work concerning people living with HIV is the creation of support groups for clients, family members, partners and care providers. In addition, social workers have been taking an active role in various educational and training programs from the earliest years of the epidemic.

Due to the fact that HIV-positive clients are usually socially passive people, professionals need to build up their work in such a way as to increase the activity of the clients, to boost their self-esteem, and to encourage them to develop a desire to solve problems independently. This can be achieved when the social workers use empowerment-oriented methods.

Empowering people living with HIV

The main components of the process of empowerment are self-activation and interaction. The professional acts as a partner, allowing the client to take a proactive position in his/her own case. Social problems are decreased by facilitating the maximum amount of family participation in the solution of problems. The empowerment process is focused on the creation of conditions which promote the development of the clients' independence and their ability to manage their own lives. The empowering approach aims to allow the client can see himself /herself independent of the opinions of people around them. Thus, the client can create their own self-assessment and they can use this self-assessment to independently solve problems.

Empowerment demands realizing four conditions (Parslou 1997; Rappor 1984, Wilson 1996):

- creation of joint partnership with clients;
- emphasis on the opportunities open to clients, instead of their difficulties;
- maintaining the “dual focus” on both individual and social environment;
- recognition of clients as active subjects with related rights, responsibilities, needs and requirements.

In the empowering approach it is assumed that each person has to make their own decisions, because each individual is a master of their own life, and each individual's goals are unique to that person. Social work has historically developed in the direction of expanding rights and opportunities. The client makes efforts to receive resources which will strengthen their well-being. Through this process, the client will achieve control over their own life.

Within the framework of the empowering approach, the “union” between the social worker and the client is understood as consisting of three parts:

- a general understanding of the specific problems facing the client;
- joint commitment to the solution of problems;
- tolerance towards the client, on the professional's part, independent of the client's sex, race or belief system.

A primary condition for the unique cooperation between social worker and client is the continual interplay between effort, ideas, resources and - most importantly - mutual respect. Understanding the concept and practice of cooperation depends on a careful analysis of the social, institutional and psychological barriers one will confront on the way to structuring and developing a partnership between the professional and the client. Empowerment is a multifaceted social process that involves an expansion of the rights and opportunities of the clients, enabling them to take control of their own lives.

The client is in a difficult life situation. In order to support him/her to act independently, the professional must work with the client in accordance with the following guidelines:

- mobilization of immediate financial support;
- training in elementary skills necessary for a survival and future well-being;
- empowering the client to develop problem solving skills.

Social workers who work with clients and families affected by HIV have not incorporated empowering approaches into their professional practice to the extent that this is needed. Rather than simply granting the various benefits, the empowering approach is focused on developing the client's skills and ability to find social resources. Empowerment-oriented practice should help to overcome the negative impact of HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination. Empowerment aims to realize not only the right to be

free from discrimination, but also the right to privacy, health, freedom of movement, education, housing and security.

Empowerment can be realized on the individual level as well as on the structural level. Realization on the individual level demands from the individual that they analyze themselves independently of the opinion of people and society around them, so that they may raise their sense of self-esteem. The structural level of empowerment depends on the creation of various self-help groups and organizations, and on the involvement of social services in the process of assisting the client.

Structural aspects of social work practice with HIV-infected people

In Russia, the social services to people living with HIV, their families and risk groups have mainly been provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the situation has remained the same for the relatively long period since the onset of the epidemic. Government social service agencies have not been paying sufficient attention to this problem.

Today the situation is changing, and St. Petersburg has been a pioneer of developing a state system of social support for people living with HIV. Recently, centers for families affected by HIV have been opened, based on the existing system of centers of social services for families and children. However, there is still no effective interaction between the government and the non-governmental organizations that provide assistance to people with HIV and their families. This problem is not unique to St. Petersburg, but frequently encountered in most parts of Russia. The non-governmental sector is still making significant contributions to HIV/AIDS prevention. The primary prevention activities of NGOs involve distributing information, HIV prevention in groups of high risk behavior, HIV prevention among youth, provision of medico-social services to individuals within the groups of high risk behavior (primarily drug users and sex workers), and assistance provided to people living with HIV and to their relatives.

At the same time, the NGOs face a number of serious problems: the unstable financial situation, the limited funding opportunities, often dependence from a single sponsor, which can definitely affect the policies of an organization. Only recently has the situation begun to change, and more funding opportunities have become available to the NGOs to realize their programs of prevention for high-risk groups, training, and education to reduce risk behavior. The involvement of NGOs with the social service system has now become a typical characteristic of Russian social policy.

When dealing with HIV/ AIDS prevention, social service organizations are quite often faced with the difficulty of finding well qualified personnel. This is not only a question of social workers lacking necessary education and experience, but the problem is also manifested at various managerial levels. One of the major problems is uncertainty regarding legal regulation of NGO activity. It is obvious that this field of social work needs new management as well as increased budgets for treatment and prevention. Modern management must be directed at (1) raising non-governmental funding,

(2) effective coordination of both government and non- governmental organizations working with the HIV infected, (3) developing a network to facilitate cooperation in the arena of HIV prevention, and (4) developing new forms of self-help and self-realization for people with HIV. Naturally, it is also important to structure the social work with HIV infected clients within the framework of the state system of social support. In this respect, very successful structural changes have been implemented in St. Petersburg.

One of the directions of St. Petersburg's state social policy is the development of a system of social assistance for people in difficult life situations. Families affected by HIV infection have recently been included as one category entitled to assistance. Comprehensive support for such families began in 2007 with the establishment of a structure for state instituted specialized departments and services.

A network of social support services for people living with HIV and their families now exists in St. Petersburg. The network consists of 18 public offices, situated alongside centers that provide social service to families with children. These offices provide social, psychological and other assistance, as well as medical aid, to families affected by the problem of HIV. Some medical establishments are also included in the network. All state institutions and public organizations within the network need to be coordinated to provide assistance to the families in a timely manner.

According to data from the Regional Center "Family" from 2007, 1038 families affected by HIV infection had started receiving social support (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The number of families receiving social support on the basis of being affected by HIV infection

Among the various tasks connected with HIV/AIDS that are expected of social workers, the most common ones are: Providing social and psychological support aimed at decreasing the psychological consequences of the infection and the ensuing social isolation, stigmatization, and discrimination; help in finding and obtaining social

services connected with housing, patient care and child care; aiding the client with the problem of constantly increasing need for medical services; and helping the client understand their basic civil rights and protecting them against discrimination on the basis of their HIV infection. For many years, the main complaints of people with HIV infection were connected with lack of necessary medical treatment. What the HIV-infected patients often need even more these days is continued psychological support and social self-realization. Psychologists and social workers should start work with clients as early as at the stage of testing for HIV. Most of these clients are not able to cope independently with the psychological stress, but will develop mental health problems. They are unable to adequately estimate their situation or to find socially acceptable models of behavior suitable for them. People living with HIV have great difficulties in communicating with the people around them, including relatives.

Many HIV-infected people refuse to talk about their condition, even with regular partners and family members. They have many reasons for this. They may fear being cut off from people close to them, or they may be convinced that no help or support would be available. They may not want to create additional difficulties for their family and bring suffering to their close relatives. Or they may just feel that the less people know the better for them. In any case, social work should involve whole families. This is one of the key issues concerning the new structures in St. Petersburg. The social service center of St. Petersburg provides families affected by HIV the following types of services: social, socio-medical, socio-economic, socio-educational, socio-psychological and socio-legal.

The family functions as a system where all its members are closely connected with each other. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a social and psychological assessment of the family as a whole: conditions of accommodation, material prosperity, psychological climate, social environment and family stability. The purpose of expanding the assessment to include the family is to enhance and strengthen the available internal resources of the family, and it can help to enhance support from the outside, as well. A family affected by the difficulties that come with HIV infection can be extremely reluctant to receive aid from outside, even though they may very much need external support. Therefore, one of the most important tasks for the professional, and perhaps the most difficult, is establishing contact and forming confidential relations with all family members. For these reasons, professionalism and highly qualified professionals are essential when working with this target group.

Issues of professional qualification in social work with HIV-infected clients

Social work targeting people living with HIV and their families is carried out by professionals with varying types and levels of expertise. For efficient, high-quality work, and to provide skilled assistance to families affected by HIV, professionals must have the specific experience and skills to work with this client group, as well as an understanding of the principles of social work and the social support measures guaranteed by law to people in difficult situations. Building up trust relationships based on mutual respect and tolerance is only possible if professionals possess high professional competence.

Social work among people with HIV involves a long list of specific and often urgent tasks. Developing a system of social services for this client group requires a solution to the problem of special training and protection, including measures of psychological protection for social workers. Societal myths and stereotypes concerning HIV/AIDS are deeply ingrained in many social workers' minds. Therefore, the social worker can feel fear and an unwillingness to work with HIV-positive clients and members of their families. For this reason, one of the most important issues to be dealt with is the education and training of social workers concerning clinical and practical questions connected with HIV/AIDS. The maintenance and preservation of the social worker's psychological health requires the creation of special support groups, or establishing a practice of supervision for all social organizations providing services for people with HIV. Supervision could help the workers to cope with their own fears, so that they may overcome their prejudices concerning AIDS, and to be psychologically prepared for the possible death of the client.

Other difficulties of social work with HIV infected clients include moral and ethical conflicts. A considerable number of these clients belong to social groups engaging in high risk behavior which is approved in their larger society (for example, drug users, and prostitutes). This may result in a conflict between the worker's social norms and values and the behavior of the client, leading to refusal to work with this group of clients. Within our society, stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV are widespread phenomena, causing increased vulnerability and exclusion of this group of people. One aspect of working with people with HIV is often the concealment, by the client, of the diagnosis from members of his or her family. Disclosing the diagnosis to close relatives is a difficult but necessary step, and the social work professional has to urge the client to take this step. It is important to prevent similar situations of concealment, and this also requires special training of the social worker.

Successful work with families affected by HIV infection is based on a tolerant attitude towards people within "vulnerable" groups of the population, as well as the ability of the professional to feel sympathy for these people and empathize with their difficulties.

This social work requires that the professional has good communication skills because, in the course of their work, the professional will interact closely with people of different ages, different social environments, educational levels and cultural backgrounds. To be able to identify with the client and develop communication, the professional should strive to build a dialogue with the client. This, in turn, will help in gaining an adequate understanding of the client's abilities and capacity to act responsibly.

The professional provides information to the clients and teaches them to use available resources most effectively. When working with families affected by HIV infection, the social worker needs to help the clients to identify the causes of their maladjusted behavior, to further the client's chances of taking an active role in solving their own problems.

Social work with families affected by HIV infection is carried out by professionals with various qualifications and various types of vocational training. As well as relevant educational background, the professionals have to possess the experience and skills necessary for delivering high-quality support services to the clients and their families. Each professional must also have an understanding of the functioning and the resources of the public institutions which render social, psychological and medical care, as well as the ways in which such institutions interact. Furthermore, the professional needs to be aware of the legislation that determines the limits of social support available to citizens, and the resources of non-governmental organizations working in the city.

The professional who does not have sufficient knowledge or experience must undergo additional training. Continuous professional development is a necessary requirement for all professionals, regardless of their work experience. Social work with families affected by HIV infection requires professionals working directly with these families. They tailor their methods and approach to each individual family as required. There are studies that describe some practical forms and methods for working with these families, such as family club, psychological training, self-help groups, etc. (Borodkina, Ivashkina 2009).

In December 2012, in connection with the Russian-Finnish project “Empowerment with families with children”¹, a survey was conducted of professionals working with families. A total of 41 respondents, all professionals from 18 government-run “Centers of Social affected by HIV infection in St. Petersburg. Assistance to Families and Children” were involved in the survey. The data given below (Table 1) shows the active use of forms and methods of work with families and children affected by HIV infection. The assessment was on a scale from 0 to 5 points with 5 being the maximum measure of use (I use constantly) and 0 being the minimum (I do not use):

The data presented in table 1 shows that working methods used by most professionals include diagnostic interviews and consultation. Some respondents also noted that they use such techniques and methods as family consultation and conflictological counseling.

By using these methods in their work, the professional generally takes an active role, and the client takes a passive role, thus slowing down the process of social adaptation. The life goals of the client are unique to each client, so the decisions should not be made by the professional. It is the client who has to make these decisions. The professional should structure their work so that the client has a variety of choices to obtain the resources which will enhance their welfare. The most effective forms of social work with families affected by HIV infection are ones that promote empowerment.

¹ Project “Empowerment of Families with Children” SE141,f South-East Finland –Russia ENPI CBC Program

Table 1. Forms and methods of work with families and children

forms and methods of work with families and children	The averages scores
diagnostic interviews	4
counseling	4
motivational consultation	3,6
interaction with other professionals	3,5
assessment of results and quality of work with the client	2,8
social network of the family	2,7
genogram	2
groups of mutual aid and mutual support	2
club work with the family	1,7
sociometry (adults)	1,5
feedback questionnaire with the client	1,5
"life line"	1,4
sociometry (children)	1,2

Conclusion

Social work with families affected by HIV infection has to be focused on the specific social needs of the clients. They have various and unique problems as well as HIV infection. Services should always be provided with the rights of the client in mind. These rights include the right to self-determination and choice, confidentiality, attention, respect, and an acceptable quality in the social assistance provided. In working with "vulnerable groups" and their families, it is important to address the full range of the client's existing social problems. The ultimate goal in working with a family is to improve the quality of life of that family. As for assisting with the social adaptation of families affected by HIV infection, it is necessary for the social worker to possess certain skills for this work. Teaching the client to independently find constructive solutions to problems enables a quicker and more effective process of social adaptation, and the process increases the family's quality of life. The use of the empowerment process in social work is important, directing the worker to focus on training the client and searching for social resources so that client and family can gain control over their own lives.

At present, professionals do not employ empowering methods in their work with HIV-infected clients. The majority of professionals are not educated about empowerment-oriented practice. Therefore, training programs directed at increasing the knowledge and skills of professionals are in great demand, and hopefully empowering methods will become more widespread in professional practice in the near future. Undoubtedly, this will bring about improved results, and help families affected by HIV infection with the process of social adaptation.

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Susanna Rautio

Diaries of family workers: empowerment and working with families with children

Introduction

The renewal of the family services and the developing of new kinds of functional structures are seen as a challenge for social policy in Finland. In the past few years there has been an increase in projects and new services with different working methods for supporting families with children. Many projects still concentrate on corrective work although preventive services should be emphasized more. It has been argued that the existing structure of services does not entirely correspond with the service needs of families with children. The reform of the municipal and service structure has made the development of the preventive services and different projects an even more topical issue. This in turn has underlined the importance of studying these kinds of project-based services. Family work is one of the models that support families with children.

In this article, work that was performed by family professionals with families with children is studied qualitatively. The family professionals worked in a Finnish project (PERHE-hanke) that was designed to support the well-being of the Finnish families with children. The project was implemented as a partnership project together with public and private sector as a part of national development projects in social and health services in Finland. The ministry of Finnish Social affairs and health offered financed to the project and administration was organized by local cities where each municipality project was taking place. Municipality projects worked in partnership with several partners such as local organizations, institutions and voluntary actors. The project ran from 2005-2008 in a number of municipalities in Finland; some of its practices are still running today. The overall project was designed to be a partnership program for family services with the objective of reforming the operational culture and methods of delivery of primary services for children and their families.

The aim of the program was to improve the structures and functioning of the primary services, such as child health clinics, the child day-care system and school, through extensive and systematic national, regional and local co-operation between the different administrative sectors and other actors. The goal was to form a family center model or a service network where the public sector, the families themselves, NGOs, voluntary actors, local communities, and the private sector act in partnership. The project aimed to strengthen parenting and the wellbeing of families with children. (Viitala & Saloniemi 2005, Viitala et al. 2008.)

These kinds of projects reflect a shift that is ongoing in the professional arena. The public sector has been re-organized and reformed along project-like lines, and in social and health care, and especially in family services, the different professional groups have started to work as teams in interprofessional collaboration. Interprofessional collaboration is a process which includes sharing of resources, responsibility and expertise. In this project for example, family workers collaborated not only with their clients but also with other professionals such as child health nurses. This kind of collaboration is one of the key elements in the current health and social care. From the point of view of contemporary social research, projects can also be seen as examples of a so-called project society in which the public and private sectors are intertwined in a new kind of way and the bureaucratic hierarchy is replaced with different networks. (See e.g. Molyneux 2001, Pärnä 2012, Sulkunen 2006.)

In the area of family work there are several directions in the many tasks and different sectors, which all have different goals. Supporting parenthood is nevertheless seen as the main task of family work in general. The context of family work can be with for example home service, family rehabilitation, family houses, family nursing, family counseling or child custody. (Viitala & Saloniemi 2005, Heino, et al. 2000, Myllärniemi 2007.) Within this project-based family work studied here the context of working was mainly preventive. The family professionals' work with families with children varied from preventive family work done via the child day care centers to work done with the fathers alone. In addition, the project manager and a project coordinator were involved in the project. Their working tasks varied according to their position, from work done with families, for example giving home visits, to coordinating events or peer group activities for the parents. Home visiting is one of the main and popular practices in family work which is utilized in several programs and projects. Home visiting can be used to different kind of interventions focusing on different goals for families. At the home visits, family worker is able to map family's situation and their social network, together with the family itself. Home visits give the family worker possibility to observe the daily life of the family and it can be seen as an intervention to family life. For the family it is easy to receive support directly at home and they often respect the possibility to receive it but on the other hand it can be also a very sensitive and contradictory situation to be a client and receive support. Family worker can help the family to recognize their own strengths and support them by listening, discussing and consulting. Building trustfully and strong relationship with the parents and providing emotional support is important. (Hebbeler & Gerlach-Downie 2002, Hämäläinen et al. 2011, Jansson et al., 2001, 144, Lynn-McHale & Deatrick, 2000, Rautio 2012, Roggman et al., 2001.)

In this article, family professionals' experiences of their working are studied qualitatively from the empowerment perspective. The concept of empowerment is used in several disciplines. The concept is abstract and therefore it is not clear what it means in practice and it is also questionable as to what it means to have such an enabling role strengthening the parents (Baggens 2002, 352). In the similar manner, Kendall (1998, 1-7) questions what empowerment actually is, and how it is attained. She states that in the nursing literature there are tacit implications that empowerment is in itself a good thing, that nursing personnel who work at promoting empowerment

become more efficient, and that people become healthier if they are empowered. Kendall also questions what people want to get from health and nursing care: whether they really want to be empowered, and which methods are the most efficient. Many questions about empowerment remain unanswered. Askheim (2003, 203-231) on the other hand argues that there seems to be an agreement that empowerment contains both individual and a structural dimension and that empowerment is seen both as a goal and as a means of attaining that goal; it is both an ideology and a methodological approach.

In the context of this study, empowerment is seen as parents' improved parenting skills, family life and well-being as a result of the family work done by the professionals. This can be achieved by the family professional by approaching the client family from a strength perspective, and in a family-centered way, for example by helping the parents to identify their own recourses, activating and encouraging them to discuss and change behavior. In the same vain the family members needs to set personally meaningful goals and take action towards these goals. (Early & GlenMaye 2000, Hebbeler & Gerlach-Downie 2002, Feeley & Gottlieb 2000, Cattaneo & Chapman 2010, 647.)

If the relationship and collaboration between professionals and the parents is well-functioning, open, respectful and trustful it is likely to have empowering benefits for the parents. Professionals' role is then shifted from being an expert to become a person who working together with parents. Empowering outcomes from the supporting parents can be, for example, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors associated with perceptions of control, competence, and confidence. Interventions, such as the family work studied here, which enhance the existing resources of the families, can be valuable in improving well-being and health. Family worker can for example help the parents to find new viewpoints and to find their own solutions or give concrete advice or instructions. Empowered clients take more responsibility for their choices and their changes in behavior. When they become more aware of their own resources with the support of the family working, they are also able to conduct better decision-making and have a greater understanding of their life-course. They also can find new ways of perceiving possible problems, accomplish a revival of hope, and are better organizing their family life. Clients consider such helping relationship successful which provides equality, non-judgmental stance and flexibility. (Dunst & Dempsey 2007, Falk-Rafael 2001, Häggman-Laitila, 2005, Ribner & Knei-Paz 2002.)

Aim and questions

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of the professionals who worked within this project by analyzing their professional diaries and to consider critically whether this kind of family work has an empowering effect on the well-being of the families. In addition, it was to give the family professionals a voice and at the same time make their work more visible. The research question in this article asks: What kind of challenges and highlights did the professionals experience in their daily working with families in relation to empowerment? Implications for practice will also be discussed.

Method

Professionals' diaries as data

Traditionally, diaries have been written by the clients of the services in healthcare research (Furnee & Garrud 2010, Jones 2000, Richardson 1994, Verbrugge, 1980, see also Bolger et al. 2003). There are, however, a number of studies written by carers as well (Skott & Erikson 2004, Åstedt-Kurki, & Isola, 2001, Roulin et al. 2007). In addition, within family studies diaries have been utilized lately (Lämsä et al. 2011). In qualitative research, diaries as a data collection method can also be used together with other methods such as interviews, telephone conversations or field notes. In addition, audio diaries can be used instead of written ones. (Elliot 1997, Jacelon & Imperio 2005, Hislop et al., 2005.)

The data in this article consists of the diary data of different family professionals. These professionals were family workers, both from the child health clinic and from the day care center, the project coordinator, the project manager and a father worker. The professionals worked in the same project. All of the eight professionals except one were women. In Finland, professional family workers come from different backgrounds and educations. Educations usually vary from practical nursing to degree of Bachelors of Social services. There is a somewhat of need for making social education more consistent.

Family workers collaborated with other professionals, child health care nurses, child day care personnel's and others linked to their working community. Their task varied according to their position. Family workers' working included home visiting, peer support group activity and guidance on other services when needed. In the home visits family workers for example offered families with children support by discussing and consulting about those family matters that they needed to. The principle of the working was to offer support with low threshold and the working was free and voluntary. Family work was meant to be short-term and preventive. Some of the workers conducted partially also corrective family work. These professionals were guided by the project leader to keep an up-to-date a diary on a weekly basis and then to send it to her by e-mail. For these diaries, the professionals were asked to write about their weekly events, feelings and so forth. The professionals approached their diary writing in personal and different ways. Some informants wrote little about their doings, whereas others reflected more detailed on their work and what had happened in their current week.

Originally, the diaries were written for the evaluation purposes of the project. The project aimed to develop and reform working methods of preventive and early supporting of families with children and to strengthen partnership between professionals from different sectors (Viitala & Saloniemi 2005, Viitala et al. 2008). The diary writings were collected by the project between the end of 2005 and 2008. The length of time the diaries were kept varied by a few months. The length of the diaries varied from between 10 to almost 100 pages, including weekly memoranda parts. The overall data consist of circa 230 pages including also the professionals' weekly memoranda,

in which their working schedules are shortly illustrated. The diaries were written in a personal style and sent to the project manager who collected them. The project manager approved of the study and gave access to these diaries. In this article diaries of the family workers are taken into closer analysis.

Diaries are a suitable method for collecting the experiences of the writers. For some people it is easier to write about experiences and feelings than to talk about them. Diaries construct rich data, which varies according to the writer. Diaries can also act as a self-help tool and help writers to deal with emotions and analyze events. When professionals write about their work, they can reflect on their thoughts, emotions and actions. However, there are both benefits and limitations when using diaries as research data. The family professionals who wrote the diaries had relevant information and experience about the research topic and therefore the diary data was a successful choice for this study. Keeping a diary can be also a therapeutic experience for the writers (Välimäki et al. 2007, 73, Roulin et al. 2007, 899). However, the professionals wrote these diaries alongside their work and sometimes did not have enough time to write so there could have been deficiencies or limitations in some of the writings. Also, writing about personal issues and then letting someone read it can have an impact on the content of the diaries. The request to keep a diary might add extra stress to a professional if they are in a busy stage of working. The researcher also solely depends on the written text. Diary writing is nevertheless a good way to collect and record work and also gives the possibility to reflect on daily work and one's professional identity. (See Elliot 1998, Välimäki 2007.)

By studying diaries the researcher can achieve subjective feelings and experiences of the studied. When analyzing writing the researcher is dependent on the finished text, whereas with interviews the researcher is able to ask additional questions to define details. Diary texts can also include inconsistencies. The role of the researcher is different when studying diary data than when for example conducting interviews with the research participants. When obtaining ready-to-use diary material the researcher relies on the data as it is and does not meet the individual behind the text. Diary data offers interesting information about the studied by revealing personal experiences and makes them more visible. (Elliot 1998, Välimäki et al. 2007, Roulin et al. 2007.)

Ethical considerations

Ethical issues which are required when conducting qualitative research were taken into consideration during the research process. Ethical considerations follow the code of ethics set by Declaration of Helsinki. Before the project started it was evaluated as being ethically acceptable by the city in which the study was conducted. The project itself collected the diary writings for evaluation purposes and the manager gave access to the data for the research purposes. The city had evaluated the project and was also conducting the study in accordance with its own ethical rules and practices, and therefore the ethical board of the researcher's university (University of Jyväskylä) considered that a second evaluation was not necessary. The diary data was treated with confidentiality. The anonymity of the family professionals was taken into consideration and the identification information of the writers was eliminated from the quotations used in this article. Furthermore, pseudonyms are used when presen-

ting the data in the article. Quotations from the data are translated from Finnish into English and they are used to clarify the analysis. Clarity and clear presentation is the aimed when analyzing the diary data and reporting the findings.

Data analysis

Diaries as data allow different types of analysis methods. In the analysis of the professional diaries a qualitative, narrative and thematic approach was utilized. For studying the experiences of individuals, qualitative methods are well suited and due to the descriptive type of data a narrative approach is also suitable. Narratives represent, reconstitute as well as express experiences. Researchers using a narrative approach should retain their awareness of existing social conditions when they consider how culture and social structures surface in the stories of both the participants and the researcher. (Riessman 2008, Squire 2008, Frazer 2004, 182). The data-based analysis was started with several readings of the diary data and making notes and summaries of each diary. Each diary was read closely to obtain a sense of the whole and the focus was on the content and not for example on the timely structure of the writings. Nevertheless, narrativity is present due to the temporal dimension of the diaries and there is a sense of progression present as well from experiencing the challenges to experiencing the success of the family work. Firstly, the diaries were read to obtain a sense of each professional's working description and to learn what their positions and tasks were at that time. Secondly, each text was observed by looking at the expressions given to the experiences. Descriptive sections of the diaries were given closer and interpretive analysis. Thirdly, any similarities between the texts were searched for and collected as categories. Two narrative themes were identified from the data by looking for congruence between their descriptions and in the narrative form of the data; challenges in working in collaboration and experiencing the joy and success of the work.

Findings

Challenges in working in collaboration

According to the family professionals, there were certain factors that made them experience their work as challenging. For example, Minna had confusion about her role in the work community, which made working occasionally difficult.

I really like my job, but I do miss my colleagues for sharing and talking my things through. Also this being like "a tramp" without having my own permanent chair sometimes bothers me. It would be nice to have my own space for my belongings and not to have to carry everything with me in my car all the time. (...) it would be nice to have a common space for working where I could collect different materials. A place where we (other workers) could share our experiences and get mental support. Presently I feel like I am weirdo among the other workers. (Minna's diary, family worker, child day-care center)

The above family worker felt somewhat of an outsider and different to the others due to not having a permanent workplace or office. Different expectations between diffe-

rent actors in the field were described as a challenge. A lack of support from the other professionals was mentioned as well and there being a clear need for more collegial company and peer support. Having a hectic working schedule or lots of client families was seen as a challenge to the work itself and to the professionals' ability to cope. It also challenges the quality of family-centered working and possibilities to support and empower the parents. Like Aliisa wrote in her diary in the following extract, having too many families at her task was challenging her working capacity.

I feel like new client families are coming out of the walls. I am very busy until the winter holidays, but still I try to fit in meetings with new client families. This thing is really not working at the moment. (Aliisa's diary, family worker, child day-care center)

The working relationship with the families was experienced as a challenge if the families' expectations about the support were not realistic or when they did not want to receive support from the family work.

A mother expected that she could get help for child care and with household duties. I clarified my role to her and we agreed that the working with her would start and that she could leave the house for a while when I arrived, but that the purpose of the visit was to discuss about things and reflect together where the family could find its own resources. At this point I was pissed off because my work role was marketed to the family as being one where the mother would get concrete help at home. (Maija's diary, family worker, child health clinic)

When parent's expectations did not match with the family work's tasks, it can be more challenging to be able to support and empower the parents. There should be somewhat common understanding between the parents and professionals about the goals of the working.

Experiencing the joy and success of the work

Having positive experiences and feedback was important for the professionals' with regard to their experiences of their daily work. For example, when a client family was open towards accepting a professional conducting family work through home visiting and there was development in the family's situation present, the work was experienced as rewarding and successful. The following extract from the diaries illustrates this.

On Monday night I felt good when I went to a home to visit a family. I had met the family for the first time last week and their situation was mostly chaotic. Their two-and-a-half-year was totally dominating the parents. Now their situation looked different and the parents were managing better. They followed the instructions I gave them and their interaction had improved. This is exactly what I think day care's family work is all about; when such small things and only a few home visits can bring about big changes. (Minna's diary, family worker, child day-care center)

As such, a family's situation improved due to receiving family work and support and the project's aim was accomplished. The family met their worker at the child care center and the co-operation started then and there. Home visiting was a meaningful

point in the working; the parents were able to re-organize their daily life so that their life was not so chaotic and their parent-child interaction improved. This is a good example of empowerment in the family work; the parents gained knowledge about child rearing and tip about the how they should to act with this situation. Parents' goal was to improve the interaction with their child in order to eliminate the chaotic situation at their home. This improvement was gained only with a few home visit made by family worker. Nevertheless, time and effort was sometimes required to accomplish successful working with the clients.

When family work and its support were no longer needed it was seen as a joyful and rewarding moment for the family worker and the work was considered as having been successful. Also, gaining appreciation from the other co-workers about the good work done was valued. One of the family workers wrote how she was delighted when the day-care center's personnel acknowledged her job and the advice she had provided to the parents.

Regardless of the current position and the tasks of the family professionals there were similarities between the narrated experiences. One of the main things was to have a working alliance with the client families and with other professionals. When collaboration was fluent the work was experienced as being successful and helpful both for the parents and the professionals.

On Tuesday we ran this 'power group' for mothers in which two mothers took part. We discussed about positive ways of thinking and the mothers worked with class paintings. A depressive mother told me afterwards how good she felt that she could produce such a beautiful thing with her own hands. (Erja's diary, family worker)

In the above extract the family worker tells how she gained direct and positive feedback about her work and the group activity their project had organized for the mothers. Having a peer group activity was felt as empowering for the mothers at that time not only because of the possibility to discuss with other parents, but also because of doing a class painting. Performing a functional group activity with other mothers offered the mothers strength and the feeling of competence and achievement.

The examples above describe how the family workers felt that their work had a positive and empowering effect on the parents and their well-being. The family professionals' experiences about the successfulness of their work and their professional identity was strengthened by receiving direct feedback about the family work and seeing the positive changes in the parents taking part. Appreciation was also felt for having the possibility to receive peer support, share thoughts with other professionals and take part in education.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of the professionals who worked within this project by analyzing their professional diaries and consider critically whether this kind of family work has an empowering effect on the wellbeing of the

families. In addition, it was to give the family professionals a voice and at the same time to make their work more visible. The research topic of this article can be justified because it is important to study these kinds of multi-professional family supporting models in general and in particular from the insider's perspective. Although the project itself has ended, some of the actions that were modeled in the project are ongoing. This means that studying such projects and working models remains important and highly topical. Working in multi-professional teams and collaboration are typical features in the working lives of postmodern professionals thus important to study them as well. Development of multi-professional collaboration is important in order to offer services for families with children of good quality. (Molyneux 2001, Pärnä 2012.)

The family professionals' diaries offered interesting and rich data regardless of their length, depth and style of writing. In this article the research question asked: What kind of challenges and highlights did the professionals experience in their daily working with families in relation to empowerment?

The family professionals described their work as being challenging when they had hectic schedules, which can be seen as a result of a lack of resources. The situation was regarded as demanding if the professionals have to work for example without having a permanent office, without the support of other colleagues, or without having a clear role in the working community or with regard to work tasks. These factors challenge the work done with the parents and the possible empowerment as well.

One of the most important things in family work is to have a working alliance with the client families, and with other professionals. Client families have a good possibility to be supported and empowered when they accept family work, such as home visiting, and its support or take part in family activities or peer groups. In addition, parents' expectations for the family working should be realistic. Professionals' experiences of their work are positive and successful when a family's situation can be seen as improving and the family gives good feedback about the support. Families respect the fact that they are treated in a family-centered way and as such trustful cooperation is built. For the parents being a client of a family service and asking for and receiving support can be a very sensitive and contradictory situation (Hämäläinen et al. 2011) and therefore trustful encounters are important. Trust requires respect but also time, communication and mutual intention. When trust is established collaboration becomes easier and parents' engagement to support increases. Trust is not only an important feature in the client-family relationship, but is also important between professionals working together as teams (Häggman-Laitila 2005, Jack, et al. 2005, 185-187, Jansson et al. 2001, 144, Lynn-McHale & Deatrick 2000, 217-221). The peer support received from colleagues supported professional identity and was seen as useful.

This kind of family work and its actions can help parents with children and empower them. For example, receiving home visits can effectively support families but they require working collaboration and common understanding of the support's goals and how to gain them. As noted earlier, empowerment as a concept is understood in many ways in science. It can still be questioned, as Kendall (1998) and Baggens (2002)

pointed out, what it actually means to have an empowering effect on the well-being of families. Family professionals' work can be empowering when collaboration works between the client families and between other professionals working in the same field. Parents themselves need to adopt goals that are personally meaningful and take action towards them (Cattaneo & Chapman 2010, 647). Also when the working conditions are adequate, the role of each professional is clear and the resources for working are decent, work can be done effective and empowering. With family work it is possible to support families even with only a few meetings such as home visits to prevent families' problematic situations from evolving. Home visiting is especially appreciated practice among families. Parents often value the support they get, and also for example having a peer support group or activity is seen as empowering and important for the parents and their well-being. (Häggman-Laitila 2005, Häggman-Laitila & Pietilä 2007, Rautio 2012). Despite the benefits of this kind of family working it can be argued as to what extent family work supports and empowers the families and who really benefits the most from it. It can also be questioned whether this kind of family support reaches enough of those families who would profit from its help and support. Some parents can for example refuse from accepting the support.

Even though the project has ended, some of its practices are still in place and running. In addition, many of the professionals continue working in new family work projects and are therefore in a great position to transfer their experiences and possible practical innovations. The family professionals themselves wished for more preventive manners of working and they should be emphasized even more. Collegial support and work counseling should be available when needed for the professionals working with the families. Also, there should be appropriate working conditions for each professional group and more standardized practices for achieving the best possible results from the interprofessional collaboration and family work.

Further research is needed on family work and similar multi-professional working models in order to develop family work, collaboration and ways by which to offer them in the most appropriate way and as effectively as possible in addition to being able to respond to the needs of the families with children.

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PART III

Empowering Social Work with Children and Young People

CONTENTS

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Child-sensitive elements of the construction of child well-being during an acculturation process. Exploring the narratives of well-being of children with a Russian background

*"Yes, our children are our judges."
Maksim Gorky: Mother*

Gorky (1907) has over a hundred years ago described a situation that Finnish social sciences have found actual in the 21st century social work: the importance of children as the reflectors of our society as a whole. There are at least three main reasons why child well-being requires special attention. First, the problem of child well-being is not restricted to the present lives of children; it has repercussions on their future. Secondly, children are still one of the groups most afflicted by poverty, and thirdly, there is still a basic lack of 'direct' information on children's lives. (Fernandes, Mendes & Teixeira 2011, 239.) Most of our contemporary research on immigrant children sees them as vulnerable victims of migration, concentrating on refugees, asylum-seekers, trafficked or separated children. The focus of contemporary research is on integration in host society contexts and on the children's futures as adults. Vulnerability, passive role as only a member of a migrant family, children's rights and the identities and education of second generation migrant children have been the main themes of interest. Recently, however, the emphasis has moved towards exploring the complex, processual and negotiated nature of immigrant childrens' identities and belongings. (Ní Laoire et al. 2011, 1-15.)

Immigrant children are special in at least two ways: as themselves, unique children living, developing and experiencing their lives, and as members of immigrant families. In the field of social work it is very important to understand immigrant families child-sensitively, from the point of view of the well-being of children and adolescents. (Anis 2008, 9-10.) Immigration has been described as a bewildering, confusing, depressing, anxiety-provoking, humiliating, embarrassing, and generally stressful process (Dow 2011, 221) in which acculturative stress can be present. Immigrant families construct their own well-being in the ecocultural context they live in, together with their past cultural experiences and expectations.

Contemporary global discussions of immigration focus on transnationalism (Stone, Gomez, Hotzoglou & Lipnitsky 2005). South-Eastern Finland has local and national cultural specialties that challenge the global understanding of immigration and immigrant families. The family acculturation process can be totally different in a unique ecocultural context. In the past, Finland has been a meeting-point of east and west. However, recent development in the country has included different immigration discourses. Local situations vary, and so do the class- and gender-specific attitudes towards immigration. In Kymenlaakso and South Carelia districts in Finland the amount of immigrants with Russian background has grown ten-fold in only the past two decades (Jäppinen et al. 2007, 15). At the same time the local discussions include plenty of negative attitudes towards immigrant people in general and Russian immigrants in particular. One of the catalyzators of this discussion is, still, the traumatic war between Russia and Finland during the years 1939-44. The local situation has to be taken into account when the well-being of immigrant children with a Russian background is discussed.

Well-being has been considered a central indicator of good human life, even the ultimate target of human life. As a research topic it has proven to be quite elusive (Martela 2012, 30.) Saari (2011, 354-355), discussing the future tasks of Finnish well-being research, emphasizes the pretention to combine resource-based and experience-based traditions into a new synthesis of well-being research and to study the interfaces of inequality and justice. This is also the aim of my research. Well-being is generally accepted to be the goal and result of social work (Niemi 2009, 209-211). This research focuses on how child well-being is constructed in immigrant families with a Russian background in South-Eastern Finland.

Child well-being

The concept of well-being has been present but has often remained undefined in recent research studies (e.g. Haghseresht 2012; Clarke 2005) especially from an interdisciplinary viewpoint. For example developmental psychology and educational psychology understand a child's growth and development in the child's ecocultural context. Developmental psychology and statistical, index-centered research are well-presented in contemporary research of child well-being. Child well-being could also be interpreted through the evolution theory in families (Roos 2012, 369) or through the socio-political viewpoint (Roos 2012, 366; Eräsaari 2012, 377-378). Here, the topic of immigrant children's well-being is understood multidisciplinary, but the focus is on the acculturation process, and so it has close connections to the social psychological interpretation of immigration and its influences on children and families (see Alitolppa-Niitamo 2010). This research is situated in the field of social work, family and childhood research, immigration research and well-being research. The purpose and task of this research is to widen the understanding of the objective of social work.

In the contemporary thinking about children and childhood there has been a dichotomy of understanding children either as being or as becoming creatures (Figure 1). Earlier in the field of education and developmental psychology children were seen as growing and developing brains and physics that need assistance in their task of

becoming adults. On the other hand, in social sciences and especially in childhood research children were seen as present childhood actors, living their life in the society they have born into. These two lines of thinking can both regard children either as vulnerable and protection-needing or as capable and strong human beings. (Bardy 2009; McAuley & Rose 2005; Chambers 2012; Ní Laiore et al. 2011.) This research combines the dimensions and sees the children both as being and becoming human beings (see also Eerola-Pennanen 2013).

Figure 1. Dimensions of conceptions of a child and the child-sensitive viewpoint.

In this research children are seen to be growing and developing but also living their present childhood. When a child is seen as a developing individual, with the task of becoming an adult, for instance Aldgate (2010, 21-38) defines children's well-being as "well-becoming", ecology-influenced development, wellness, strengths and attachment as well as abilities to shape their own lives. She points out that the best start in a person's life, the elements that are needed for children in becoming confident individuals, effective contributors, responsible citizens and successful learners are nutrition, activities, respect, responsibility, safety, health, achievements and being included. (Aldgate 2010, 34.) At the same time children are, from an adult's point of view, vulnerable and need to be protected. This does not make them passive, but can also contain the elements of understanding children to be powerful and participatory. This four-dimensional viewpoint combines and challenges one-dimension approaches. Defining and constructing a versatile picture of child well-being requires multidimensional understanding of a child and childhood. This viewpoint is in this re-

search called “child-sensitivity”. Children are here not only understood through one of these dimensions, but through all of them. Child-sensitivity creates new possibilities for understanding and developing intersectional work (Keskinen et al. 2012).

Child-sensitivity points out the importance of children’s own perspectives. For instance Fernandes et al. (2012) have studied eight major indexes of child well-being in their world-wide comparison. They found them different and still requiring new discussion. In spite of evident progress, research on the measurement of child well-being is still evolving, particularly with regard to composite measures. (Fernandes et al. 2012, 251.) They found that the child should be the unit of analysis. In more concrete terms, children’s perspectives on their own well-being should be taken into account. In this approach, multidimensionality is a requirement. Interactions between the different aspects of well-being should also be considered when engaging in such a measurement exercise. (Fernandes et al. 2012, 242-243.)

The English word “well-being” is here used as a synonym to the Finnish word “hyvinvointi”, realizing that these words do not exactly have the same inner meaning. In the Finnish field of well-being studies the most important name has been for decades now professor Erik Allardt. His idea is, that well-being is based on mostly needs but also resources, and can be defined as having, loving and being. (Allardt 1976.) Economic, cultural and social capital as resources (Bourdieu 1984, Törrönen 2012, 33-45), capability and choices (Sen 1990, 30-31) and goal-framing motives (Lindenberg & Steg 2007, 117-118) as well as elements of flourishing (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment) (Seligman 2011, 5-30) have all been described as definitions of well-being. In this research well-being is understood in line with another Finnish scientist, professor Pauli Niemelä (Niemelä 2009, 209-235) in a wide sense, as a combination of all these: needs and resources, capabilities and choices made according to motives, possibilities and action. It is important to understand well-being as a dynamic, changing, contextual and constructional concept. Well-being is constructed in social relationships and in interaction.

This definition of well-being is based on the socio-constructionist idea of knowledge being socially constructed. Social constructionism questions platitudes, sees the relation of knowledge, history and culture, regards knowledge to become and be sustained in social processes and combines knowledge and social action. Socio-constructionist research does not provide results in the sense that, for example statistical research does. It searches for unidentified meanings and processes thus saying something meaningful about the social world we live in. Research is a part of the construction process of its object and the meanings it gets. (Gergen 1999; Burr 1995; see also Hacking 2009.)

Child well-being is understood in this research as a construction through the elements and dimensions presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Elements and dimensions of child and youth well-being (Paaso & Veistilä 2012, based on Allardt 1976; Bardy 2009 and Niemelä 2009).

Elements of well-being	Dimensions of well-being		
	MATERIAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL/ SPIRITUAL
HAVING resources, welfare provision	financial security, housing, spending money	leisure activities, social capital, cosiness of neighbourhood	early education / day care, education, learning, study possibilities, language
BEING and DOING well-being, well-doing participation	housework, summer jobs, possibility to influence on the family's purchases, travelling	playing, organizational activities, use of media, friends, entertainment and recreation, experiences of participation	cultural activities, experiences in significance, ethical choices
LOVING well-feeling satisfaction of needs protection	received basic care, nutrition, clothing, health, appearance, physical well-being	family, friends, love, happiness, well-being in relationships, quality of early interaction, dating/sexuality	authenticity, faith, autonomy, self-acceptance, safety of growth and development

The construction of a child's well-being includes the elements of having, being/doing and loving as presented in the Table 1. These elements of well-being are constructed through the three dimensions of a child's life: material, social and mental/spiritual. (Niemelä 2009, 218.)

Dimensions of having, resources, are provided to a child mostly by adults. A child is a subject of her own being and doing, thus participating actively in the society and making individual choices. A child receives protection and care as well as gives love and friendship to the people close to her in reciprocal relations.

Social dimensions are an important part of child well-being. For instance, in her research of children's conceptions of well-being, Helavirta (2011) has heard the voices of more than 700 children of the ages from 5 to 15 years. These children pointed out the

subjects of mothers as the sources of good life, the scope of social relations, inclusion and exclusion of children, the demand of success and the threat of failure as well as mutual, reciprocal caregiving at home to be the most important issues regarding the well-being of children. (Helavirta 2011, 72-78.) So the well-being of a child is not constructed only by the child herself but also by her family. In this research a family is a research context and considered to be a community in which the members share a sense of unity and affection. A family is to be understood contextually and age-, gender- and generation-sensitively, as an active factor of everyday life. A family has the responsibility of the socialization and upbringing of its members as well as economic, safety-giving, rehabilitating and supporting tasks. These tasks are accepted in the emotional context of love, affection and caring. (Bardy 2009; Chambers 2012; Yesilova 2009.)

In order to get a wider understanding of mental or spiritual dimensions we need to see for instance the developmental psychologists' views towards the well-being of children and youth. Heli Paaso (Paaso & Veistilä 2012) has divided the indicators of infants' well-being into the parents' sensitivity in understanding infant's feelings and needs and the developmental stages of feelings, play, language and other ways of communication in the lives of children of different ages. Paaso underlines that it is essential to pay severe attention to the relationship of a parent and an infant considering the well-being of small children in the context of their growth and development.

In this article the versatile picture of child well-being, here especially immigrant children's well-being, is understood through an immigration process, which is here defined as an acculturation process.

Acculturation process

Finland has traditionally been a border region and a meeting point between East and West (Liebkind, Tandefelt & Moring 2007, 3). The majority of Russian-speaking migrants in Finland are so-called 'ethnic returning migrants'. They are mostly Ingrian Finns and their spouses and children. With the introduction of legal repatriate status by president Koivisto in 1990, a large wave of ethnic return migration began from Russia to Finland, increasing the proportion of the total immigrant population in the country from .01 per cent to almost 3 per cent in 18 years. (Jasinskaja-Lahti 2012, 1427.) Today, Russian-speaking immigrants constitute the largest immigrant group in Finland, over 60 000 or over 40 per cent of the total immigrant population (Jasinskaja-Lahti 2012, 1427). Most of them live in the metropolitan area or in the South-western Finland and Kymenlaakso district (Alanen 2009).

Liebkind et al. (2004, 22) divide Russian immigrants in Finland roughly into four groups: returnees with ethnic Finnish roots, family members of these returnees, ethnic Russians who have moved to Finland because of marriage, work or studies, and Russian language speakers who have no ethnic Russian roots or whose moving to Finland has other bases than returning, marriage, work or studies. In Kymenlaak-

so and South Carelia districts transcultural marriages are very common especially among Russian women and Finnish men. This explains the over-representation of women among the Russian-speaking inhabitants: 64 per cent of them are women. (Jäppinen et al. 2007, 16.)

Acculturation is a process which takes place within communities and individuals, but especially within families, when different cultural groups come into contact with each other and this contact changes the original cultural model of the groups. Acculturation is a powerful change that influences the inner interaction models of the family, parenthood and the upbringing of children, the well-being of all family members and the development of children and youth. This process is constantly changing and it is affected by several factors: in the case of immigration, political decisions and the attitudes of the host society are especially important, as are the immigrants' own human, economic and social capital and cultural distance. Family structure, the roles of different family members and family dynamics, as well as the ideals and values of child development and upbringing children, also play significant roles. (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2010, 45–61)

The model of acculturation can have two dimensions, attitudes towards the culture of both countries: the one the person has left behind and the new one. Immigrant exclusion/inclusion and acculturation are reciprocal processes, where the minorities and majorities strongly influence each other. According to Berry (1990), an acculturation process can be described as negotiations between minorities and the majority. He identifies five general and partly overlapping categories of changes that acculturation includes. First, physical changes may occur: a new place to live, a new type of housing. Secondly, biological changes may occur: new nutritional status, new diseases. Thirdly, cultural changes necessarily occur: original political, economic, technical, linguistic, religious and social institutions become altered, or new ones take their place. Fourthly, new sets of social relationships and dominance patterns may become established. Finally, fifthly, for the individual there are psychological changes: behavioral changes and an alteration in mental health status almost always occur as individuals attempt to adapt to their new milieu. (Berry et al 1987, 492.)

Attachment attitudes to one's own immigrant group and/or to the majority of people can be described as a four-part field, the parts being integration (both networks), assimilation (to the majority), separation (only immigrant networks) and marginalization (isolation). (Berry et al. 1990, 2006; Liebkina et al. 2004, 55–57.) Each individual migrant's idiosyncratic demographical and psychological characteristics influence their acculturation. Individual factors include age, gender, education and socioeconomic status as well as language acquisition ability. These individual factors have in common the ability to increase familiarity with the new culture and lower the amount of uncertainty experienced. (Dow 2011.)

Kosonen (2008) has in her longitudinal research studied the psychological well-being as an adult and sociocultural adaptation of Vietnamese children in Finland. Her research shows that different factors predict acculturation outcomes at different stages of the life span. She states, that it is not just time and exposure to a new society that

explain acculturative change. For children and adolescents it was acceptance among peers that mattered in their young lives in school, and not how well they were speaking the majority language or how well they were doing academically. Even though she only defined acculturation as language, values and identity and psychological well-being as depression and self-esteem, and was looking at socio-cultural adaptation as school achievements, she came to an interesting finding, that the factors influencing these acculturation outcomes are myriad and definitely age-specific. Individual dimensions of values, language, and identity, and not composite ethnic, national or bicultural profiles, were the best predictors of outcomes. The best predictors of psychological well-being and sociocultural adaptation included dimension variables from both the ethnic and the national profiles. (Kosonen 2008, 201.)

Language is a very strong contextual element as well as an element of the acculturation process. Liebkind et al. (2004) have noticed that a better knowledge of Finnish language indicates a larger amount of experiences of exclusion and furthermore a larger number of stress symptoms among Russian and Estonian immigrants in Finland. This connection can be explained by the role of exclusion, but it can also indicate better courage of reporting illness in a survey, due to the longer stay in Finland and better language skills. Nevertheless, this result questions the idea of language skills being the key to positive immigrant integration. It does not strictly lead to successful mental integration. (Perhoniemi 2005.)

Research questions and methods

"Families have always told stories, but for those who work professionally with families, family stories seem to have become the DNA of family life", Stone et al. (2005) write.

In my study I use narrative methodology. The data consist of narratives (Hänninen 1999; Frank 2010), storycrafting (Karlsson 2003) and thematic interviews (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2011). The data-gathering research methods were chosen in order to understand family stories of child well-being during the acculturation process.

My research questions are following: How is child well-being constructed in immigrant families with Russian background in South-Eastern Finland? What kinds of elements of child well-being do these constructions include during an acculturation process?

These kinds of questions are essential in the field of social work, since well-being is considered to be the objective of social work with children and families. The objective is to gain a more in-depth view at the well-being of immigrant children by listening to them with their parents. For me it has been important to reach their own stories of their well-being.

I started the data gathering by storycrafting the small children, who seldom have their say in the field of research. Storycrafting is a way of giving space to children's authentic voices, without adults' interference. In order to listen to the children in their other

contexts of everyday life, six children with Russian background, from the age of 6 to 7, in two day care centers were asked to tell stories and the researchers wrote them down just as they were told. The same children told a story about a frame narrative: *"Once upon a time there was a little puppy dog called Sasha. It was very happy. Tell us a story about why Sasha was happy."* With this method the stories were focused on well-being. Storycrafting is essential as a method of giving a child an experience of the importance and value of his/her own thoughts (Karlsson 2003). Children can use stories as a *"bummer"* between themselves and the yet non-understandable world. By storycrafting a child can structure and discern experiences, combining feelings and believes into reasons and causes. This *"telling to oneself"* is a preface of inner dialog, guiding one's own psychological processes and actions. (Hänninen 1999.) In addition, five young people of Russian background, from the age of 13 to 18, wrote their narratives of life. These stories and narratives were collected by students of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences and will also be used in their bachelor's thesis.

When thinking about the knowledge production of small children we can refer to Helavirta (2011, 26-27) who has studied the knowledge of well-being that children themselves produce. She thinks that it is different from the knowledge of adults. Also Lahikainen (2001, 33) emphasizes in her research of children's fears, that many of the fears are not known to the parents, thus claiming, that the information that parents give us about their children's well-being can, for several reasons, be untrustworthy. Children themselves can give us information unreachable from somewhere else. However, looking at a child from her own perspective, as important as it is, does not give a full picture of the construction of child well-being. The family as a whole has to be heard as well. For that purpose, I interviewed, with a Russian-speaking co-researcher, 25 families with Russian background during the summer of 2012 in South-Eastern Finland. We interviewed these families by a thematic interview frame, consisting of six themes: family and relatives, life and immigration experiences, networks and well-being, Personal Well-being Index (International Wellbeing Group 2006), the most important things constructing family well-being, and service experiences. We used common social work methods, genograms, timelines and network maps, as interviewing tools. With some families we also used a miracle-question: Imagine that you wake up in the morning, and a miracle has happened: everything has turned out to be just wonderful, life is as it should be. What has happened? How do you notice that a miracle has happened?

The interviewed families were found with the help of an enquiry of Empowerment of Families with Children –project. The enquiry was sent to a sample of 1000 families who lived in the Kymenlaakso and South Carelian districts, had at least one child under the age of 18 and had Russian as a mother tongue of at least one family member. We sent a separate sheet with the enquiry questionnaire, asking if the family would like to take part of an interview. The families could send their contact information by this sheet together with the enquiry questionnaire. My Russian-speaking co-researcher telephoned all of the families who had expressed their interest. If the family still wanted to be interviewed, the time and place were set, according to their wishes.

Most of the families wanted the interview to take place in their own home, but some wanted a meeting to be arranged elsewhere. At the beginning of each interview the families received a research handout in Russian and, if needed, in Finnish, and they all gave a written consent to the research. The cities of the Kymenlaakso and South Carelian district, where the families lived in, also gave us permissions of research.

The interviews consist of 35 hours and 58 minutes of recorded material and drawings of genograms, timelines and network maps together with other notes of the interviewees. The families interviewed can be described as a very heterogeneous group: they varied from single mothers with one child to a three-generations-family with four children. The presence of family members in the interviews also varied. The families were informed that we would like to interview the entire family. In these families there were 62 children, 44 of whom lived with the family at the moment. 19 of these children were present in the interview meetings together with 21 mothers, nine fathers, three grandmothers, one grandfather and two friends. Children were not present for different reasons: Some of the children were on holiday or at day care, they themselves did not want to participate or the mothers or fathers did not want the children to be present. Some parents considered the interview as a chance for themselves to speak freely about their feelings.

The interviews were mostly bilingual. Either the family members spoke Russian and I spoke Finnish and my colleague translated, or the family spoke Finnish with us and used translation help with difficult words and phrases. In addition, we conducted one of the interviews partly in English. I transcribed the Finnish- and English-spoken parts of the interviews first, and then my Russian-speaking co-researcher transcribed the Russian-speaking parts of them, all into Finnish. The transcriptions consist of 298 pages of transcribed text (Verdana, 12 points).

After the transcription process I handpicked all the marks and questions regarding children in the interviews from the interview transcriptions and translated them into English. Then I wrote them into 16 child well-being narratives and combined them with the six storycrafting-stories, five life narratives of young people and our observations in the interviews. Narratives have, according to Gergen (2003) a valued endpoint, selected events, principle of organizing the events, causal linkages, steady identities of persons and demarcation signs. By using these conventions of narration one can generate a sense of coherence and direction in life events. I used these elements of narratives when I wrote the child well-being narratives.

I analyzed these narratives with dialogical narrative analysis method (Frank 2010) as child-sensitive narratives of well-being. I asked the five questions of storytelling practice (Frank 2010, 74-85): What does each story make narratable? Who is holding or not holding their own in the story? What is the effect of people being caught up in their own stories? What is the force of fear and what animates desire in the stories? How does the story help people, individually and collectively, to remember who they are? After asking these questions I looked at the narratives according to the themes of the child well-being indicator elements and dimensions (Table 1). I divided the

narratives into one or several of these nine themes in order to find answers to the research questions.

There are no rules and steps according to which the dialogic narrative analysis should be conducted. (Frank 2010, 74). With the help of the above mentioned narrative conventions and questions I wanted to reach deeper understanding of the stories of child well-being. After writing, questioning and dividing the stories I interpreted them through the other stories and the family interviews. As Frank (2010, 86) writes, "Stories call for interpretation even as they resist it". Interpretation belongs in dialogic storytelling. Narratives are interpreted in discussions by both tellers and listeners and written narratives are also interpreted by readers. There is a tension, however, between an interpretation and a story. My interpretations are not to finalize the stories by claiming to know the truth, but rather to open up different angles from which the stories can be looked, to engage these narratives in the ongoing dialogue of child well-being. In choosing this method, I also chose to meta-analyze the way stories work in the construction of well-being. (Frank 2010, 87)

Finally, I chose nine stories and quotations to present each narrative and theme in this paper. I chose fragments of stories as a discretionary sample of a qualitative research (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 18; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2011). These fragments of stories represent the particular elements of well-being (Table 1), even though all the stories of the children are unique and different. Every fragment of a story presents at least one new way of constructing the well-being of a child. These fragments of stories of child well-being describe the way parents and children themselves construct well-being, but they also create images of well-being which might have some effects on how it is interpreted.

The stories of child well-being

The children, young people and families told me about what they considered child well-being to be, and how it was constructed. These stories present and point out especially the three elements of child well-being: having, being/doing and loving (Table 1).

Having-stories

The first fragment of a story describes a 13-year-old boy. His family had moved to Finland two years ago. His father wanted to explain us the differences of their past and present life.

P16: His hobby was football, but there were no possibilities for that, it was too expensive and took too much time to take and bring him. It's usual, if you don't live in Moscow or St Petersburg and have lots of money. [...] Here it's different, if children can practice sports freely it's awesome and good, I have seen it. [...] In Russia we knew that the boy had no future, unfortunately. Even if he is talented, it doesn't help, you have to have good relations and money. [...] Unfortunately he has no time for football now, he is not going to be a good football player. He wants to get to a university.

E: what would you like to become?

C16: a lawyer.

Parent 16 and Child 16.1, 13 years-old boy

This boy's story made the time-related interests of an acculturation process visible. The family had moved to Finland two years earlier, and the parents still were unemployed. Yet they were very grateful and hopeful, seeing all the Finnish possibilities for a good life ahead of them. In their life situation, during the acculturation process, the hope for better future was still left. The well-being of a child had been the moving force, demanding radical decisions from parents. Thus, Finland was seen as "a paradise", in order to justify the decision. Present difficulties were explained and bared in order to reach a better future.

The interviewed families often described the decision of moving into and staying in Finland to be at least partly made for financial reasons, securing the elements of having. Financial security was essential, and it was not defined in terms of the parents, but it was often concretized for example as children getting enough food. Material elements of surviving can be difficult and connected to different situations in life. The economic situation of the family in Russia and in Finland was a question of comparison. The families wanted the children to have better economic possibilities than what was possible in their own country.

The future of the child was also described here with the fact that children have to make serious decisions at a definitely young age. This 13-years-old boy had no future as a football player, because he had chosen to concentrate on school. He wanted to become a lawyer. The boy was very quiet and serious when telling this to us. His reasons for this decision remained unreachable. Did he want to fulfill his parents' hopes? Did he want to have a financially secure future? Or had he heard so many stories of his father's interesting work that they had made him want to do the same? The demand of success and the threat of failure that Helavirta (2011) found in her research of child well-being could also be seen in this story. However, telling us about this decision made the goal a little more visible and reachable for the family.

The next fragment of a story gave us a different viewpoint to the comparison of upbringing children and to financial well-being in Finland and Russia.

It's like night and day, like my Finnish and Russian children. In Finland it's too free, everybody is praised all the time, they are all darlings, whereas in Russia children are scolded and forced to do things [...] when my oldest son practiced karate in Russia, if he was 3 minutes late he made 30 pushups and the coach stood aside and hit him to the butt. But here I let the boys go to football, and the youngest just sat in the goal for a month – because he didn't want to do anything [...] in the day care, if a child draws a few lines they call it wonderful, whereas in Russia if a child draws a house, it has to be a good one with door, windows, roof and everything. [...] Anyway, the

children are healthy, well, he has some problems but he has legs, he has hands, he understands what he can and can't do, everything just works out slowly. In Finland everybody needn't be smart and president, you can be a worker. And if he won't succeed, there is a law in Finland that he gets help, he is not alone, and that is enough, thank you.

Parent 7 about Children 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3, 20, 10 and 7 years-old boys

This family had moved to Finland because the father of the two youngest boys was Finnish. He turned out to have stolen maternity supports from the mother. He had also used violence towards the children. The mother and children had to start their life in a new country with no money, no language skills and the 10-year-old boy having disability.

Trust could be heard as the key word in this family. Well-being was described through trusting the society. Children's differences were accepted. The mother wanted the children to have good education, as all the interviewed parents did. Most of the family experiences of day care and schools in Finland were positive, even though the parents saw clearly a big difference in the educational cultures in Russia and in Finland. However, even if the children could not get good education, the promise of equal human life in the Finnish welfare society was trusted in by the mother.

The rebuilding of having social capital resources (Bourdieu 1984) after immigration was one of the most important child well-being issues. This is clearly seen in the third fragment of a story.

At first I had no friends and they started to bully me in that school. I told my mother about the bullying and it happened that we moved to another town and then I changed the school. It is in the midtown and here it was a lot better. Now I have lots of friends. Almost everybody from my class, except one, who is my competitor. Finnish language is not either difficult anymore and studying in Finnish is now easy. Or sometimes I don't understand everything and sometimes I do. I remember that it was really difficult in the beginning. It took a lot of time to study, but then I easily learned the language. I learned it at the preliminary class and a friend of mine taught me. He helped me a lot. He was Russian, but born in Finland. He always interpreted me everything and e.g. read with me in Finnish. The most difficult thing about moving into Finland in the beginning was that I was alone at first. I had no friends and it was boring and it was hard to find places. I was also irritated about us moving into an area that was far from the center and my first friend. It was not nice.

Boy 3, 13 years

It had not been easy for this boy to adjust into a new social network. Most parents and some children told stories about teasing, bullying, even violence, and not getting friends. Friends, neighbors, class mates, families and relatives were seen as essential

strengths and the lack of them was as serious threat towards child well-being. The importance of having even one friend was enormous. This was a survival story, where with the help of a friend, parents and one's own learning and choices, assimilation happened.

Bullying was mentioned several times in the data as the most important threat to a child's well-being. The young people explained their bullying experiences with the attitudes towards their Russian backgrounds. The scope of social relations, inclusion and exclusion of children can also be found in the wide discussion about bullying. (Helavirta 2011.)

The boy in the third fragment saw language as a means of assimilation or integration. The choices that the parents and children had made about which languages they spoke were different. Especially the young people saw language as the main acculturation problem that most of them solved by learning Finnish as fast as possible. Some children were totally bilingual, others spoke some Russian, mostly with their grandparents, and understood more than they spoke. Some spoke some Finnish and did not want to learn more, while some children spoke only Finnish or only Russian. The boy from the second story had made his language choice visible this way:

Do not speak Russian. If you want to speak Russian, go to Russia.

A paper in the door of Child 7.3, 7 years-old boy

There were also some children who did not speak any language, either due to their young age or some learning disabilities. The differences in chosen languages were explained with parents' own experiences, services and language training available, children's need to be similar to the other children and everyday life necessities.

Being- and Doing-stories

For the young people the word "well-being" mostly meant health and healthy habits, including attitudes towards exercising, drinking, smoking and healthy eating. The fourth fragment of a story tells us about the being and doing of a young girl.

Well, well-being is important to me, because there are nowadays lots of bad thing in the world and so on. I myself don't drink at all, like really little, maybe a can in two months. And I don't smoke and I try to have the others also to stop smoking, well because it is anyway bad for lungs, causes cancer and anything. And I don't like at all that people like smoke, or someone nearby, or drink. Exercising is important too. I can't exercise myself because of a few things, but I move as much as I can, I go out every day, I'm not stuck with my computer all day. It helps you to be healthier all the time, not to have fever, become ill easily or get allergies. My hobbies are all inside, I sew a lot, but I use the costumes in occasions outside. Well, the computer is a bit of a bad example, but... with my friends I spend time somewhere in the city and well,

drawing has maybe nothing to do with this but I draw a lot. I draw every day, and paint sometimes too. But not so often.

Girl 4, 17 years

This young girl wanted to live a good, healthy life. She knew that drinking alcohol and smoking were bad for one's health. She cared for people around her and tried to tell them to stop smoking and drinking as well. Healthy habits have become an important issue of life in Finland. Health promotion has reached everyone, and even children and young people are very aware of how they should live. In spite of the knowledge, they make different decisions. Some of the decisions are made under the influence of friends and media. The use of money, fashion and children's willingness to be like others were seen to be important material issues of these children's being and doing in everyday life.

Family, kin, friends and peer networks were seen essential to children's and young people's being and belonging together. Friends were found and maintained through different kinds of important hobbies. Especially for children under the age of 10, parents often wanted to choose friends and look after their possibilities to have friends. The children themselves were very imaginative in their ways of spending free time. The importance of friends and hobbies was obvious, and the families were ready and willing to help the children to have them. The birthdays of the children were often mentioned as big, well-organized celebrations where it was possible to maintain good relationships to school mates, family friends and relatives. Even very young children could colorfully describe their relationships and important doings, as we can read from the fifth fragment of a story.

Grandpa fetches me from the daycare, we go to my grandparents'. We play there, play games and play with toys. In the courtyard you can water the flowers and help grandma and grandpa. You can swing and play basketball. It's nice to wrestle with grandpa. Inside you can also watch Junior. Then I help grandma to water the flowers, make the table and cook. We bake together. Bread, rieska. I sometimes add the subjects. Now I can't think of anything else.

Boy 1, 7 years

This boy described an everyday event, staying with his grandparents, with a lot of joy and satisfaction. The happy moments included doing different things with grandpa and grandma. Being able to help, being a respected member of the family, being someone that these people want to spend time with, is very important. Different types of activities and doings constructed the day of the boy. He had a place to belong to, an identity of a beloved grandson.

Identity had been an issue of concern for the interviewed parents. Is the child going to be Finnish or Russian or both or neither? Who is to decide that? How are race and gender differences seen and how do they affect the identities of these children? Are

the difficulties in the family acculturation process going to influence the identity of the child? The sixth fragment of a story is a small flash of a developing self and a feeling of self-identity.

P18: How old are you?

C18: Five.

P18: She is four, but she says five.

C18: I'm very big already, I was vaccinated and I grew up.

Parent 18 and Child 18.2, 4 years-old girl

This little girl was very sure that she was a big girl already. She had a 17-year-old sister, and wanted to grow up fast to be like her. She lived in a family where she was very much taken into account. Her parents listened to her and even though she had rules, she could sometimes persuade them to make exceptions. This family had a clear idea of their identity. They called themselves an Ingrian-Carelian family with Finnish roots. This girl knew who she was and what she wanted to be.

The children of the interviewed families were described as persons with different temperaments. Parents and grandparents had lots of opinions about the characters of the children. Most of the children were capable of telling who they were and what kinds of persons they were. Both the children and their parents described their experiences of significance as well as experiences of maltreatment or neglect. The children had several ways of showing and maintaining their self-autonomy in all kinds of life situations. They made individual choices, sometimes in spite of the efforts of the adults. The young people recognized their own capabilities and unique talents and wanted to be able to work with them.

Loving-stories

Family, friends and well-being in relationships, especially the quality of early interaction were present in every parent's and child's narrative. The definition of the concept of family varied from a single mother with one child to nuclear family and enlarged family with close relatives, especially mother's parents, as an active part of the family. The seventh fragment of a story defines family in a beautiful way.

M If you asked the children, who are the members of their family, what would they answer?

P2 Well, the younger one doesn't say much yet, but the older says mummi and ukki so she would list them all. Immediately if we have goodies on the table she asks who will come to visit us and then she lists her father's brother and sister and my sisters and mummi and ukki and babushka.

Parent 2 about Children 2.1 and 2.2, 1,5 and 3,5 years-old girls

This was a part of the story of a family with mother, father and two small children. Close family ties had helped the family through difficult times of death in the family

and different illnesses. Even a young child understood the importance of family ties and knew who belonged to their coffee table.

Parents and kin were seen as the basis of love and safety for the children. Helavirta (2011) has pointed out mothers as the sources of good life. The same idea of the importance of close people to child well-being was present in this research. Close people gave the children and young people the context of trust and safety which allowed them to also give back help and caring.

Family ties were strong and visible and the small children learned them. For some children, the family ties were more complicated, like in the eighth fragment of a story.

I had a job, I worked 3 days a week, 12 hours a day, but when I came home my child was sleeping and when I left home he was sleeping. And then he called me and said: "You don't need me." and this is why I stopped working. [...] I don't know how to be with a child, this is my first child. A course about interaction with a child would be good.

Parent 4 about Child 4.1, 7-years-old boy

This mother told us that she had been forced to move to Finland at the age of 13, with her grandmother. She had tried to escape back to Russia, but was found and taken back. She told us a story of Finnish society ruining her life, both as a child and now as a parent. The father of her child was Russian, and did not get a permission to stay. She felt angry, frustrated and depressed. Her son was the only thing left for her, and she loved him with all her heart. She wanted to do everything for him.

All the interviewed parents told that they worked hard for their relationships. It had not always been easy, but the parents felt that it was worthwhile. A reciprocal parent-child relationship was described in many narratives. The parents constructed their own relationship and obligations towards the children partly with issues of material loving. Parents thought that they have to be able to feed the children, protect them from health problems and see to that they receive possibilities for a decent adulthood. Failing in these essential issues was extremely hard for them, and the narratives included inner explanation models, mostly about society taking or not taking care of its responsibilities.

The interviewed parents often wanted to underline that they had fallen in love, got married and had the children by purpose. For several parents the marriage was a second one, and in almost half of the families there were children from either one or both parents' previous marriages. Life sometimes does not go as planned, the parents explained. Some of the children had lived through the divorce processes without visible difficulties. For some, divorce had been a difficult situation in life, as we can hear from the last, ninth story.

She was 7 and we had just divorced and she went to school. I couldn't leave her at home, because she was afraid. I couldn't even go to the toilet, she was

afraid of being left alone. I had to go to work at 6 and the school started at 10, it was 2,5 kilometers so she didn't get a taxi, but for a year I had to hold her hand all the time because she was afraid of being abandoned. That is how our divorce influenced her. [...] Our oldest daughter is very aggressive, she changed in two years and she can't control herself. I don't know, maybe I'll have to contact Family consulting clinic. When she starts to hit me, she really doesn't know how to stop, she has to try all the ways. She changed, she was always a bit pig-headed but after the divorce she became impossible. [...] even all the way to taking her to a foster home of some kind, because she needs limits and we don't know how to give them to her. [...] she is my own child and I have seen all the school shootings and I'm worried about what can happen. [...] she is very loving, she likes to be loved. I tried to explain her that life is not just a pleasure, that you must also have disappointments.

Parent 9 about Children 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3, 11, 8 and 4 years-old girls

In this family loving meant also recognizing one's limits. The mother had tried her best to bring up her children, but now she was very worried and exhausted. Loving her child so much, she even wanted to consider giving her to a foster home, if she could be helped there. The children and families had faced difficult situations of life. They had survived with the help of each other, friends and relatives. A couple of the families had also been able to receive formal help, but mostly the experiences of social and health care services were not very good. The main thing that the families were asking for was people who really cared for them.

Conclusions

The task of this research was to create a deeper understanding of the construction of well-being of the children with Russian background in South-Eastern Finland during an acculturation process. The research was pursued with qualitative research methods using narratives, child-sensitive understanding of child well-being and the background concept of acculturation to understand the immigration process. The research questions included the ways how children and parents in families with Russian background construct the well-being of the children, and what kinds of elements of child well-being these constructions included.

The stories show that these children and their parents negotiated actively together to construct child well-being. The children and their parents acted in several different ways in gaining resources for the children, making choices regarding their life, defining and fulfilling children's needs, living every child's unique everyday life, taking care of different kinds of relations and defining the child's identity as a person. The construction actions and negotiations built up the well-being of these children. Each element and dimension of well-being was important in a different way in different situations of life, as the narratives showed. Difficulties in one of the actions could influence the entire well-being of the child.

These actions are presented in Table 2.

Elements of well-being	Dimensions of well-being		
	MATERIAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL/ SPIRITUAL
HAVING	immigration decision, providing the children a better standard of life	choosing the living area, organizing possibilities to meet people	day care and school choices, language choices
BEING and DOING	negotiations of family everyday life, purchases and travelling	negotiations of media use and hobbies, playing and spending time together, making friends	defining the child as a person, joining cultural activities, making ethical choices
LOVING	giving and receiving basic care, nutrition and clothing, promoting child health	loving each other, giving emotional support, holding the child in mind	joining religious communities, taking care of personal needs

Table 2. Family actions and negotiations of child well-being.

The table summarizes the main results of this research article: child well-being is based mainly on *contextual and customized constructions*. The construction of resources, actions and needs is contextual. Here I refer to Moore et al. (2008) who have interestingly defined the domains of subjective and contextual well-being. They also share child well-being indexes into two age groups: 6-11 and 12-17 years. Younger children are not considered in their research because of the data source (US National Survey on Children's Health) and the data source also defines well-being in a health-centered way. (Moore et al. 2008, 17-50.)

Contextual construction is where the children and families have to co-operate and decide matters of child well-being mostly depending on the context of life they live in. They negotiate and make decisions regarding child well-being according to their relations with time, place and society. This type of construction has to be rebuilt in an immigrant family. In a new country, the resources have to be redefined and regained. The ways of acting, such as jobs, friendships and hobbies, have to be reconstructed. The order of needs has to be rebuilt, which may mean going back to the basic needs, or not having to consider them as much as before the immigration. In their research of

migrant children's multiple belongings Ní Laoire et al. (2011) emphasize the paradox of the children's attachments and identifications. They found that they are shaped by the migrancy but also by the involvement in class and other social relations, and by the interactions with institutes such as the family, school and global consumer culture. (Ní Laoire et al. 2011, 157.)

Customized construction includes the negotiations and actions in Table 2 that are mostly child-centered. The children and families construct a child's everyday life taking into account the individual child as a person of a certain age, gender and interests. The child is a person with an opportunity to build her own identity and relations according to her own personal choices. Results show that children had power in the construction of their own well-being (Assmuth 2013). The power can be seen in both the narratives of the children and young people and in the family narratives. Capability of choice was of importance to these children and young people (Sen 1990). Subjectivity, agency, being involved in the course of one's own life and having the power of say were present in the narratives of child well-being. Chambers (2012, 76-93) describes the contemporary change in parent-child-relationships. She points out, that "children are no longer treated as passive recipients of parental care and socialization". Instead she sees children to be "acknowledged as moral and social practitioners of family life in their own right." The results of this research are equal to her findings, although, at the same time children were vulnerable and needed adults. Being other, different and bullied challenged the children to construct different ways of surviving, identities, understanding their own places in life. Changes in the context and routines, like divorces, school changes or moving, could influence child well-being. The children needed their parents and kin to cope and negotiate with in these changes. (Weisner 2002, 279; Chambers 2012, 92-93.)

The children's acculturation strategies were mostly assimilation- or sometimes segregation-oriented (Berry 1990.) Children and young people wanted to belong to a group, to be like the others, to be accepted. This wish was not always fully understood by the parents, who constructed a strong idea of integration. (Berry 1990; Ní Laoire et al. 2011, 161; Alitolppa-Niitamo 2010, 50-55.) Every child's language choices were negotiated in these families with the influence of the parents' own past experiences and hopes as well as children's wishes. Stressing the importance of making new friends, the children pointed out the meaningfulness of play and hobbies. (Ní Laoire et al. 2011, 157-161.) In the course of everyday life children enjoyed being able to help their parents reciprocally. (Helavirta 2010.) The families moved into a foreign land, to a strange culture, and stayed there despite all the difficulties, to give the children a good life. The children gave their parents a hope for a better future.

More research should be focused on the holistic understanding of immigrant children's well-being. Also the different elements need to be researched more in detail, for instance the element of loving was strongly present in the discussions of these children and families. Yet it is the least researched part of well-being (Karisto 2012). As some ideas for future, research could include participatory elements so that the interviewed persons themselves could also be able to figure out how to study well-being, analyze the data, as co-researchers, to find out how they interpret and

give meanings to the narratives of this research and maybe how to act according to the results in the society.

One of the validity issues in this research was the transcription and translation process. Russian-Finnish-English-changes may influence the language and meanings. In order to avoid that, the transcription was made by both the Finnish- and Russian-speaking interviewee, separately. The quotations could have also been written in this article in both English, Finnish and Russian, but there was no possibility for that. (Nikander 2010, 432-442.)

One of the interviewed mothers summed up her idea of ideal well-being in a way that is most suitable for summing up this paper:

I think I would wake up in a bright, large apartment with a decent bed. I would not worry about the future, my child would be happy and smiling and I would have a job, I would wake up happy every morning and go to the job. I would like my child to wake up and run towards me happily like in the movies. I don't want our life to be dull and boring. And of course I would like my child to be happy.

Parent 4 [answer to the wonder-question]

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Mervi Kaukko

Everyday choices, meaningful activities and reliable adults. Diverse paths to empowerment of unaccompanied asylum-seeking girls

Introduction

Empowerment is often defined as the power to make major, life-turning choices, and as a possibility for relevant participation in a community. Since the 1970's, the notion of participation has become increasingly central in research with people who are seen as somehow "marginalized", or live in cultures very different from those of the researcher (Pain & Francis 2003, 46). The UN Convention on the Rights of a Child (the CRC), which was drafted in 1989 and has since been ratified by most UN-member-states, has stimulated an interest in the potential of children's participation both in general, and in conducting research with children (Doná 2006, 22; Hart 2008). As Cooke and Kothari (2004, back cover) note, participation has become no less than a "new orthodoxy" of social sciences, promising empowerment and appropriate development but at the same time carrying a risk of leading to unjust and illegitimate exercise of power.

One reason for the "illegitimate use of power" is that despite its widespread usage, there remains lack of clarity about what the term "participation" means (Lansdown 2010, 11). Activities of any kind can be justified as being participatory, as the concept is so intangible and difficult to measure. In social science research participation usually refers to the involvement of participants, ranging from answering questions to becoming co-researchers (Christensen & Prout 2002; Doná 2007, 211). In developmental studies, participation often means valuing local knowledge and promoting social change through the active engagement of participants (Doná 2007, quotes Chambers 1994). Some understand participation as a means to ensure greater relevance, efficiency and impact of different participatory projects, whereas for some, it is an end in itself: through the process, people who have been somehow excluded from the decision making process can acquire skills, knowledge and experience which they can use to improve some aspect of their lives, that is to be empowered (Hart 2008, 407). Some think participation can only be empowering if it is transformative on the macro level; for example changing something in one's own living environment, whereas others acknowledge that participation on the micro level, for example en-

hancing individual productivity within existing structures and practices, can just as well be empowering (Parpart 2002, 165-166). So, participation and empowerment are by nature blurred terms; there are no comprehensive definitions that all scholars would agree upon. An aspect upon which the scholars do agree is that participation of children, young people and adults should be empowering; somehow oriented towards the transformation of individual lives or societies. (Hart 2008, 407; Kothari 2004, 139)

If empowerment is understood as the capacity to make major choices, it is a distant goal for unaccompanied minors in reception centers. As asylum seekers and as children, the most important choices are out of their reach. Their living conditions and limited material resources during the asylum process pose limitations on participation in a community. In this chapter I discuss the participation and empowerment of unaccompanied minors, especially girls, in two under-age living units of a Finnish reception center. The aim of the chapter is twofold: to explore the special conditions for participation and empowerment for children and adolescents who seek asylum without their parents, and to demonstrate how participatory action research (PAR) could be used to find suitable, culturally sensitive techniques to enhance participation of unaccompanied asylum seeker children. As an example, I refer to a PAR which I conducted with 12 unaccompanied girls (ages 8-17) and their counselors in two under-age units of a Finnish reception center, including interview data from two group interviews and 11 individual interviews of the girls. The aim of the PAR was to develop activities from the girls starting points; something they found relevant and empowering in their current situation. The results indicate that despite the challenges, participation and empowerment can be promoted in the under-age units of a reception center by allowing the children to make choices in their daily lives, and encouraging them to participate in planning activities. The results also show that as a flexible and participatory research method, PAR can be used as a tool to create activities which the children truly want and benefit from.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. I begin by describing PAR as an empowering research method. Then I explain briefly why participation is a right of all children and young people in Finland, including the unaccompanied asylum seeker children. After that, I explore the concept of empowerment on a structural level; how the rules, practices, material resources and location may impact the way in which the children in the reception center can be empowered. Then I discuss empowerment on a more individual level; how the special status of the unaccompanied minors influence their empowerment and participation. I also consider how the configurations of power in the reception center, and in conducting PAR, affect the girls' agency. Finally, I conclude with the girls' suggestions of how empowerment could be fostered in the daily life of the reception center.

Method: Empowering PAR

Participatory action research (PAR) is a research method, which often focuses on problem-solving actions in a collaborative context. It is a reflective process of enquiry which is done by or with the insiders of a community, never to or on them. (Guif-

frida et al. 2011, 282; Herr & Anderson 2005, 3) It is usually presented in a cyclic or spiral form, which has its origins in the work of Kurt Lewin (1948), including repetitive phases of observing, planning, acting, and reflecting. Theoretically, PAR is situated within critical pedagogy or critical sciences, aiming to promote awareness and social change from below (Doná 2007; Fals Borda & Rahman 1991; Reason & Bradbury 2008). PAR combines theory with action, formulating critical conscience and learning of all participants through methodological steps (Gadotti 1994, 22). While Paulo Freire did not use the term empowerment, his emphasis on education and its purpose to increase people's awareness on social inequalities is very close to the idea of empowerment (Parpart 2002, 5). Freire (2000, 79) criticizes positivist or empirical research for investigating people as "objects"; instead, research should enable people to structure their realities from their own perspectives. According to Freire, "The silenced (...) are the masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of the events in their world. In this context research becomes a means of moving them beyond silence into a quest to proclaim the world" (quoted in Torre & Fine 2008, 29).

In our PAR with unaccompanied asylum seeker girls, I first observed the daily life of two under-age units of a reception center, discussing with the children and the counselors, identifying possible problems to solve. Our PAR focused on the problem that the girls in the under-age units did not have meaningful activities during their free time, and the currently offered activities did not attract girls. To approach this problem, we started weekly meetings with the girls and the counselors, trying to plan activities which the girls wanted; something they would find meaningful and empowering. In the meetings, we discussed the girls' dreams and hopes, fears and concerns, trying to find ways to combine them all in a compromise that would suit everybody. During the process, our aim was to get to know each other, to plan and realize the action, and finally, to analyze it together. The end-project was a three-day camp with different activities, followed by reflection and a new round of PAR with new girls. I conducted the PAR as a part of my PhD-studies. I asked for a permission to do a PAR with the children of the reception center and the staff as well as the children and their guardians welcomed me kindly. After the projects, I interviewed the girls individually. Most of the quotes used in this chapter are from the individual interviews, some are also from group interviews, in which all the girls participated after each project.

The first group consisted of seven unaccompanied asylum seeker girls (ages 14-17), and the second group of also seven girls (ages 8-17). Two of the girls participated in both groups, and one girl moved out before the individual interview. The girls came from three African countries and had lived in Finland between two and 15 months by the end of the projects. The first project lasted six months (Sept 2011-Feb 2012), and the second project five months (May 2012-Sept 2012).

Our PAR can be described in a cyclic form (see figure 1). However, the cycle is not necessarily a very inviting starting point to start telling the participants about PAR, especially when they have never heard about this kind of research before. I found it more purposeful to start from the intended outcome; telling the girls that they can participate in planning an activity of their choice, and I would help them realize the plan. In the case of our PAR, some phases were more and some phases less participatory according to the interest of the girls. Not all of the girls wanted to be as

active in for example reflecting the action and planning the next cycle, which would be implemented in to action after they have most probably left the reception center already. Although the cyclic form is adaptive and represents the developing process of PAR quite well, it should not be treated as a strict norm. All phases have to serve to help the participants meet their common goal; for example further action is not obligatory. Also, basing PAR strictly on the cycle is a form of the initiative researcher imposing a technique on the participants, and ignoring them as equal co-researchers (McTaggart 1997, 141).

What makes PAR empowering is that the facilitator, or the initiating researcher, helps to create the pre-conditions and find the suitable techniques needed so that all participants can reach the intended outcome, or solve the problem. The adults do not use their power to dictate how the process should go, but help the participants realize their plan using available resources. This might mean practical work which the researcher is familiar with, such as getting funding, permissions, or finding suitable places, while helping the co-researchers find their assets and learn the skills to do the tasks themselves in the future. PAR acknowledges the skills and knowledge of all participants, bringing together action, reflection and learning to build upon the participants' lived experiences and to create a desired outcome. (Costello 2011, 5; Rodríguez & Brown 2009, 23) The girls of our PAR were amazingly artistic and musical, as well as skilled in handicrafts, so we planned our project so that those skills

could be used. The meaning, motivation and purpose which the participants bring to their activity make the process empowering (Kabeer 1999). The achievement is the outcome of the process; the end-project which all participants had committed to and had worked for.

Participation as a right of unaccompanied minors

The reason why child- and youth participation should be fostered in reception centers is not only that it is proven to be especially important for children in difficult circumstances (Ray 2010), but it is also a right of all children and adolescents in Finland, including the unaccompanied minors. Finland is committed to promoting child- and youth participation by ratifying the UN convention on the Rights of the child (CRC), which includes one of the most widely accepted definitions of children's participation. According to the article 12 of the CRC, every child has a right to be heard and to be taken seriously in all matters concerning him or her. A general comment to the CRC titled *Treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside of the country of their origin* (6/2005) states that asylum seeker children should be treated primarily as children, secondarily as asylum-seekers (UNICEF 2007). In our PAR, the CRC was used as a lens to examine the participation of unaccompanied girls in the reception center. However, my main question was how these girls view participation and empowerment themselves, so instead of giving them the definition, we used the article 12 of the CRC as a foundation of our discussion.

Previous studies show that understanding participation and empowerment is strongly influenced by gender, socio-economic situation, mother tongue and a sense of group identity (Kabeer 1999; Mason & Bolzan 2010; Quintelier 2009). The results of our PAR showed that what the girls viewed as empowering was not consistent with the mainstream definitions of youth participation. Therefore, promoting participation in a reception center should be done in a culture- and gender sensitive way, listening to the own views of the children. What is significant is that the process should include elements which are relevant to *all* children and youth regardless of their background or living conditions. The counselors, researchers or other adults should not dictate what kind of action should be empowering for the children. "Top-down"-implemented methods would mean trying to normalize a certain cultural practice; it would imply a very dubious expression of the adult's power and be hardly empowering or participatory for the children (Feldmann-Wojtachnia et al. 2010). As a child or youth centered, flexible method, PAR can be used to create activities which ethnically heterogeneous groups of children and youngsters really want, instead of imposing ready, "approved" models of youth participation. Through a comprehensive observation period, and getting to know the participants thoroughly, it is possible to help them find their own resources which are needed to contribute to participatory and empowering activities.

Structural empowerment – where can it be found in an institution?

Empowerment can be defined as an opportunity for meaningful participation, i.e. the power to make relevant life choices, connected with a sense of knowing that one's actions and views are taken into consideration and may be acted upon (Alsop et al.

2005, 10; Boyden & Ennew 1997). The definition is quite broad and flexible; most people want to make choices in their lives. Naturally, the possibilities of the unaccompanied girls to make significant choices have to be considered from the point of view of their special status as asylum seekers; the most important life choices appear to be out of their reach. Preconditions for empowerment include aspects connected to the structures of the reception center, its material resources and also the various human and social resources which are needed for the children to become empowered (Kabeer 1999, 437). Even when the individuals would have the will and the capacity to make choices, they might not be able to use that agency effectively. They might be constrained by what Ruth Alsop (2005, 10) calls an "opportunity structure", i.e. the psychological, informational, organizational, material, social, financial or human assets of the institution where the choices should be transformed to action.

Erving Goffman (1969) and Michel Foucault (1995) are among the most famous ones who have written about the influence of structures on people's identity, their empowerment or disempowerment. Erving Goffman wrote about "total institutions", in which he would have counted the underage units of reception centers as well, as organizations which are both part of and separate from modern societies. Total institution is a "place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed formally administered round of life". (Goffman 1969, translation from Davies 1989, 77) The most significant features of total institutions are that all sorts of activities take place under one roof, and that these activities are spatially separated from the lives of other people, not living in a total institution (van der Horst 2004, 39). Also, the inhabitants are confined so that their access to resources, such as time, personal space and routines are controlled, and that the daily life is organized purposefully to fulfill the official aims of the institution (Goffman 1969, 7; Scott 2010, 215).

A reception center makes a good example of concentrating a large number of human needs under one bureaucratic roof, accommodating people in similar life-situations. Although in Finnish reception centers all inhabitants are free to move in and out of the center with their key cards, and within the curfews for the children, people tend to spend a large part of their time indoors. Most residents do not have much choice; they lack the resources to go outside, where transportation and consumption cost money (van der Horst 2004, 39). Most importantly, they often have neither possibilities nor reasons to leave; because of the requirements posed by the society (language, social networks, familiarity of the functions of the society), many asylum seekers feel unable to participate in the community. Our PAR addressed these problems by creating activities which required skills the girls already had, for example artistic skills instead of fluent language. We also reached out to the community by inviting students from local vocational schools to teach us skills which the girls wanted to learn, such as baking and beauty care. At the same time, the girls of our PAR had a possibility to meet local girls of their age and to learn about study opportunities.

Most of the mortifying procedures which Goffman (1969, 17) describes are luckily far from the daily life of the underage units of Finnish reception centers. The prin-

ciple of the best interest of a child is considered as a comprehensive guideline in all actions, as it should be in all child welfare work (Parsons 2010, 31). Nevertheless, the children live in an institution, in which their access to material, human and social resources is limited. Access to these recourses in the present, and also a belief that these are available in the future are significant for empowerment (Kabeer 1999, 435). The future claims for any resources of these girls are defined by the forthcoming asylum decisions, which makes them subjects to bureaucratic authority (Goffman 1969, 18).

The inhabitants of the total institutions rarely enter voluntarily, and having entered, they cannot move out when they want (Goffman 1969, 50). Anticipation fills the waiting time, and according to Goffman, individuals can start acting as they are expected in order to get out. PAR focuses on the acquisition of knowledge on injustice, as well as skills for “speaking back” and organizing for a change (e.g. Cammarota & Fine 2008, 5; Fitzgerald et al. 2010, 300). According to earlier research, asylum seekers in Finland may associate all Finnish people to be part of the same system with the immigration officials, making them reluctant to “speak back” or do anything which could harm their position (e.g. Ekholm 1994, Suoranta 2011, 126).

They act as they think they are expected. As one of the girls noted in her interview,

Sometimes when you ask them (unaccompanied minors) how their life is, they are afraid to answer. They don't want to say anything bad about your country. (G3)

In my interview data, the frustrating, confusing anticipation was mentioned as the most unpleasant aspect of the time in the reception center. One girl noted that unlike prisoners, they do not even know how much of the “sentence” they have left. In addition to being reluctant to criticize anything, according to Ravi Kohli (2007, xi) it is possible that unaccompanied minors also consider carefully if they want to state their ambitious goals, such as getting a good education and a well-paid job in a receiving country, because they cannot be seen as having financial motivations. In the fear of being labeled as “welfare refugees”, they might present the simplest, most acceptable version of their reasons to flight. In the interview data, the girls often mentioned the importance of education, but also highlighted the fact that the most important thing was to have a safe place to live.

In the whole country it is irrelevant where you are, as long as you are given a place where you can be. It doesn't matter at all. If you are in a small town, it is all the same, as long as you get used to it. (G8)

Structures as instruments of power

Another aspect of the structural empowerment of institutions is demonstrated by Michel Foucault, who viewed the structure of institutions as an instrument of power. He argued that regulatory control in institutions results in maintaining the power of one group over another. He claimed that the idea of panopticon, where one person

can keep watch over all inhabitants of the institution without them knowing it is common not only in prison, for which the idea of panopticon was originally designed, but also in other institutions, such as hospitals and schools. (Foucault 1995, 199-200) In the lives of the children in the reception center, power lies in the norms, that is the social and cultural practices of the center (see Kothari 2004). The girls of our study were aware of how the things worked in the reception center; that the adults decided what was going to happen, and informed the children in the monthly unit meetings about current issues. Most girls did not think that there was room for children's voice in deciding about the activities in the house, some also thought it would have been unnecessary. Foucault (1980, quoted in Kothari 2004, 144) argues that invisible means of control which are embedded in ordinary life legitimate the kind of control which eventually colonizes the individual. They control the individual's behavior and thinking through invisible forms of normalization, while he or she is unaware of that. This would mean that the girls of my study would have started behaving as they thought they were expected, letting the adults make all the decisions on behalf of them. However, considering that they are children and adolescents in a new country, without their parents, I think this behavior is not a sign of repression or colonization, but perfectly normal adaptation to the new situation. Towards the end of our projects, I could see the opposite trend too: many girls showed activity and initiative in introducing new ideas to our PAR as they learned that their participation was valued.

In the underage units of reception centers a certain amount of necessary control is justified, simply because children wouldn't survive without adult supervision and care. The girls noted that children shouldn't decide on things which could possibly harm the child, for example they shouldn't be allowed to go out at night or skip school. Empowerment is the possibility to make choices, but those choices must be considered according to the evolving capacities of the child (Lansdown 2005). What is relevant from the point of view of the children's empowerment is how the supervision and control is communicated for the children, and how it is realized in practice (Piro 2008). One aim of PAR is to create an equal dialogue between the participants, i.e. dialogue where one does not have to fear for being incorrectly labeled in the eyes of others. Dialogue, discussing the reasons for rules and practices, and most importantly, acknowledging the opinions of all participants would be one way to decrease the risk of repression or normalization in PAR and in the daily life in the reception center.

To give an example which highlights the importance of dialogue, and also the discomfort caused by surveillance is when I suggested that we would record our PAR meetings and watch and analyze the sessions together afterwards. This caused objection; why should we record our meetings as there were so many cameras already? Many of the girls in our study had not been in touch with a lot of technology before entering Finland and did not understand the purpose of video cameras, which are used in the reception center. The girls reminded me that because the common areas were already monitored by video cameras, and because the girls were unaware of who watched the recordings, many of them felt obliged to wear their veils even when they were alone. The discussion went back and forth, finally concluding to the decision that our sessions should not be even audio-recorded. It is easy to understand that the girls, not knowing me for long, and not yet understanding how the videos could be

used in our PAR, did not accept the idea of recording the meetings. The most important question for them was not whether the sessions should be analyzed afterwards in detail, but how to produce an enjoyable end-product.

Considering the points made by Foucault and Goffman, the underage units of reception center are hardly empowering in a structural sense. My intention is not to argue that video surveillance, curfews or other means of supervision are unnecessary in institutions for unaccompanied asylum seekers. As Goffman would argue, these means of control are to ensure the function of the institution, which is to keep the inhabitants and workers safe. However, locked doors, video cameras and tight control of visitors make the reception center feel more like an institution and less like a home for the children. Fortunately that does not mean that empowerment is impossible for the unaccompanied minors in the reception center. Empowerment for one person in one context might not be seen as empowering for another person in another context (Lairap-Fonderson 2002, 183). Significantly, empowerment requires agency to be able to benefit from whatever resources there are in one's own context, be it organized activities or specifically planned participatory projects, such as PAR.

Agency as the power to benefit from the existing resources

Naila Kabeer defines agency as the ability to define one's goals and to act upon them; it encompasses the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity, i.e. the "power within" (Kabeer 1999, 438). Agency can be predicted by the assets of the group or the individual, meaning the stock of resources needed to use social, economic and political opportunities, to be productive, all depending on the previously described structures (Alsop et al. 2005, 11).

Foucault's (1980, 98-99) notion of power as a circulating force means that in the context of a reception center, where the power seems to be strictly in the hands of the adults, it is in fact everywhere. All individuals are vehicles of power; it circulates between individuals in social encounters. In our PAR, the children could have as much power as they saw relevant, and with the help of the adults, they could decide on all matters which they thought were important. Helping the children participate in their terms, without imposing them with a mainstream definition of participation as it "should be", transfers some of the power from the hands of the adults to the children. If I as a researcher tried to define participation for them, and present it as a goal towards which they should aim for, I would be using my power through normalization. So while the girls wanted the adults to decide on many aspects of our PAR, such how to get funding and where to go, they all wanted to contribute to the discussion about things they were more familiar with, such as what to cook and what kind of activities to do.

The unaccompanied minors' opportunities to achieve empowerment are influenced by the fact that as asylum seekers, they are objects of government policies, subjects to welfare, and social actors in their living environment, the living units (Doná 2007, 212). Their agency has probably been stronger earlier; the escape from their home country, regardless of whether it has been decided by themselves or their parents,

demonstrates a brave attempt for a change for better (Ghorashi 2005). Many girls noted that they used to have more responsibilities, more agency in the past. 16-year-old girls claimed that they were already adults in their country, but regressed into childhood when coming to Finland. The treatment as children might make them feel that they should also behave as children, as can be read in the quotes of these two girls:

I think that for example 15-year old could already be an adult, because she knows what is wrong and how she should behave. And there, in our country, if you are a 15-year-old girl, you already have your own life, own room and own things; you are on your own. You are already an adult. (G4)

Yes, we start from early on to help Mother with domestic work. Sometimes boys help fathers too. Then you become responsible. But here, it feels that 15-year-olds still behave like children because they are always called children. (G5)

In the reception center, the girls can only wait for others to decide whether they can stay in the receiving country or not, and whether they will be rejoined with their families or not. Such major choices, which Naila Kabeer (1999, 437) calls “first-order choices” are usually considered as requirements for individual empowerment. However, in a situation where major choices are out of reach, the smaller, “second-order choices”, such as influencing the daily life of the current situation or planning a menu for a camp, become more significant (Kabeer 1999, 437). A sense that their views were heard was important for the girls, regardless of the fact that many who thought so simultaneously noted that they had never suggested any changes, as can be read in the following quotes:

Children should be asked at least what they want, whether they would like to do something or not. If they are forced, if the decision is made elsewhere and you have to do it even if it is annoying, that's not right. (G7)

We shouldn't be moved. If somebody decides, then you go there. You don't know what kind of a place it is, you don't know anybody, you don't know anything about it. --- I wasn't asked, I was just given a time. This day you will go, nothing else. --- Nobody told me why or asked me if I wanted to go. I was surprised; I had been told that after the immigration interview I will be moved somewhere. But before the interview I was told I have to go.” (G8)

On the other hand, it should be remembered that participation, taking responsibility of one's life or making major choices should not be mandatory for children; the children should be allowed to enjoy the freedom of liability and be able to rely on adults around them. Many girls noted that they did not even want to make any important choices, because that is what the adults were there for, and they knew what the best interest of a child was. This might be a result of the feeling that they have not always had enough strong adult guidance, and they want to enjoy the possibility to have fewer responsibilities in the present. It is also suggested that asylum seekers actively seek privacy and anonymity. For the fear of detention or deportation by the authorities,

they try to remain as “invisible” as possible, not complaining or suggesting any improvements in the current practices (Boyden 2001, 52). In many stages of our PAR the girls preferred to let the adults do the tasks they found difficult. The power to be “powerless” might even be empowering for a child coming from an area of conflict; they have managed to enter a new country on their own, which alone is responsibility far too big for a child or even an adolescent of their age, not to mention all the other challenges most of them have faced (Mannion 2010, 331). The belief that the surrounding adults know what the best interest of a child is, and work to achieve it, is definitely comforting.

According to Parpart et al. (2002, 4), empowerment is produced by meaningful participation in a community, and the structures of power which individual encounters in the community affects his or her agency. The assumed existence of a community might be problematic when working with unaccompanied asylum seeker children, or other transient groups (Doná 2006, 24). Unaccompanied minors have been brought together by a crisis; they do not share common origins, and have fractured family relations. According to Doná (2007, 217), this makes communal participation difficult. However, in our PAR, some girls noted that although they come from different cultures and speak different languages, the strongest connecting force between them is that they are all in the same situation, waiting for the asylum decision. In my opinion, the counselors worked hard to strengthen the sense of community in the underage units, for example by organizing trips and activities for all the children in the units.

The sense of community does not imply that there would be no conflicts among the girls. Agency can also be exercised in a negative sense, as the capacity of an actor to override the agency of others (Kabeer 1999, 438). In PAR, this negative agency can be exercised by the initiative researcher, as he or she has the responsibility to guide the actions, and can do it to an excess to meet his or her own goals. There is also a danger of some participants achieving such a strong agency that the more silent voices find it hard to be included in the discussion. In our PAR, the older girls, who lived in the supported housing unit and had stayed longer in the reception center were the ones who spoke significantly more than the new-coming, younger girls from the group home, especially the ones who were the sole representatives of their language group. We had most of the meetings in the supported housing unit, making it a home ground for some girls. As the initiating researcher, I had to make sure that the chosen space was as welcoming for all of the girls, reminding them that the project will only work if we listen to all the girls equally, and learn to compromise when needed. One girl found it especially difficult to negotiate about the content of our PAR, but she eventually agreed that the outcome, achieved by teamwork, turned out to be good.

I felt bad because the movie we planned first didn't work out, because it was such a good idea. It was a shame because everybody wanted to do it first but then they changed their minds. --- I didn't want to go to the camp but in the end it was a good idea and it was fun.” (G4)

Empowerment and gender

The unaccompanied girls' empowerment should not be considered only through their status as unaccompanied minors, but also through the lens of youth and gender. Most asylum seekers, including the girls of my study, come from comparatively conservative rural areas where gender, generation and class hierarchies are entrenched, and interaction between different social groups is limited by tradition (Boyden 2001, 52). Naila Kabeer (2011, 499) writes about girls' and women's empowerment as a multidimensional process of change rather than some final destination; a process touching the women's self-worth and social identity, their willingness and ability to question their possibly subordinate status in society, their capacity to exercise strategic control over their own lives and to negotiate better terms in their relationships with others, and finally, their ability to participate on equal terms with men in reshaping the society.

Although reflective thinking and questioning the disempowering structures of the society, both on the micro and the macro level (the reception center and Finnish society) is necessary, the structures are insufficient to explain the way the girls decide to behave in the reception center. As noted before, the girls may consciously decide not to challenge the existing configurations of power. This may be because of their attempt to be as "invisible" as possible, in fear of jeopardizing the forthcoming asylum decision (Boyden 2001, 52) or because coming from cultures which restrict the ways in which girls and women can participate, many of the girls of my study might even view their disempowerment as right and proper (Aziz et al. 2011; Kothari 2004, 144). Furthermore, exercising control over their lives or participating in reshaping the society is challenging for these girls not solely because of their gender but because of their status as asylum seekers in a new society. However, "adaptive preferences" influence the way people see their life possibilities; if they are brought up to believe that they cannot do certain things which other people can do, they are likely to invest less in their own aspirations and make choices which perpetuate their disempowered status (Alsop et al. 2005), regardless of whether this idea is a product of their gender, background or their status as asylum seekers.

One of the aims of PAR is to uncover the "silenced voices" which are rarely heard in scientific discussion. Including the "silenced voices" in a dialogue is a step towards a multivoiced society where people are not led to adopt a certain way of being to participate and be accepted (Vuorikoski & Kiilakoski 2005, 310). PAR can also uncover voices which challenge the knowledge conventions, for example the ideal of sexual equality. Promoting participation and empowerment in the girls' terms means that conventional assumptions of "good" and "bad" choices must be put aside; all participants, including the initiating researcher, bring their personal values in to the process, but also have to appreciate the contradicting values. Cultural sensitivity of methods requires all participants to acknowledge that own understanding is only one among many, and the alternative understandings should be viewed with an open mind.

Although the girls told me about patriarchal gender roles in their home countries, all girls viewed Finland as a more equal society. They also seemed determined to benefit from the choices they would have in the future. For example, all of the girls

mentioned that a good education is important for the future, regardless of the fact that most of the girls come from cultures in which girls' education is not very valued. The PAR-process is shaped and developed by all participants' persona and experiences. My example as a school teacher and a working mother might have influenced the way the girls discussed the importance of education and sexual equality with me. Instead of aiming for objectivity or neutrality, PAR emphasizes the importance of natural relationships and equal dialogue. In addition to forming the process, all participants transform and shape each other, and learn from each other.

Whose power in PAR?

According to Uma Kothari's (2004, 140) critique, the fact that most participatory approaches focus almost exclusively on the micro-level, on those who are considered powerless and marginal, has reproduced the simplistic notion that social power and control are only to be found at the macro- and central levels of the society. According to Kothari, this happens because the nature of power is simplified; considered as a static force in the hands of few; that those in power can "empower" others, exercise power over, make things happen. The idea of somebody having the power and being able to give it to someone else (empower him or her) is problematic, and reproduces the hierarchy and the unequal power structures of the powerful protector and the powerless "victims", the marginalized vs. those in power. Kothari suggests that Foucault's theory of power as a circulating force, focusing on exercise of power rather than possession of power, could challenge this inequity (see also Parpart et al 2002, 4).

Setting the micro against the macro, the margins against the center, the local against the elite etc. implies also that the researcher, often coming from the "wrong kind" of background with biased, colonized knowledge, has nothing to offer (Kothari 2004, 140; Mohan 2004, 162). It is also claimed that participatory research methods, such as PAR, might encourage a reassertion of power and social control not only by certain individuals of groups, but also of particular bodies of knowledge, by producing certain types of knowledge. Instead of the "true" local knowledge which they aim to represent, they might reproduce the dichotomies of the morally "good" and morally "bad" knowledge. (Henkel & Stirrat 2004) In my opinion, labeling the knowledge from the macro level or traditional scientific discussion as "morally bad" means wasting resources which could be used to achieve the desired outcome. Fortunately PAR can also be used to combine the different sources of knowledge in a fruitful way, strengthening co-operation instead of reproducing the dichotomies.

However, the criticism of PAR as reproducing power-relations and social control is not far-fetched, and needs to be considered when aiming for an empowering PAR. The whole idea of the initiating researcher inviting participants to join, the act of inclusion, can be seen as symbolizing an exercise of power over an individual. As a researcher, I had the power and resources to invite the girls of the reception center to plan activities which they wanted. I also had the power to exclude boys, as I was told by the counselors that it would most probably be necessary to get the girls involved. However, I doubt that this made the project less participatory; the project required an

“invitation” from adults who knew the restrictions of reality. Eliminating adult presence does not equal maximizing the children’s participation; on the contrary, it often leads to unrealistic plans and failure (Hart et al. 1997). Besides, in many cultures youth participation, for example questioning adults, expressing one’s own views and showing signs of assertiveness, is seen as disrespectful social deviance (Twum-Danso 2010, 134). Therefore it took time to assure all the girls that their participation was appreciated. Participation also meant that the girls had the power to act like teenagers do; they could come and go as they liked, and to decide not to participate when they felt like it. Instead of challenging the continuity or development of the research process (see Doná 2006, 24), this kind of behavior was the kind of participation the girls wanted.

As the initiating researcher in our PAR, I had to balance between making the process as participatory and empowering as possible, enabling the girls to be in charge as much as they wanted, but at the same time remember my role as a facilitator, trying to help the girls to find the best possible resources and suitable techniques to meet their goals. Kress et al. (2011, 138) ask who can decide what the “good choices” are; can those in power (the initiating researcher) label themselves “good choosers” and feel destined to choose for others? According to the idea of PAR, the power should be divided as the participants wish, even if there would seem to be obvious benefits in choosing something otherwise. Considering empowerment, the inequalities in people’s possibilities to make choices should outweigh the differences in the choices they make; empowerment means also that there would have been the possibility to choose otherwise. (Kabeer 1999, 439) In reality, it would have been naïve of me to assume that the girls could independently make their choices without any examples of what the choices could be. Without much prior knowledge on the topic, they could not know what our PAR could include.

PAR with multicultural and multilingual children

Cultural sensitivity is the capacity to acknowledge that one’s own culture is only one meaning-making system, and a skill to interpret situations from many points of view (Räsänen 2007, 28). The starting point of our PAR was to let the girls know about ways of participation, and then decide as much as they could, and wanted, defining the kind of participation they saw relevant. I explained them that our project could be transformative. We could for example try to find ways to improve some practices they don’t like, within the limits of reality. However, the girls chose the other option: participation within the existing structures. PAR does not have to be transformative; it also acknowledges that finding personally meaningful ways to participate inside the existing system can sometimes be more rewarding than rebelling against it (Swantz 2008, 31). Cultural sensitivity in PAR means also adapting to the ways of working which may seem unnecessary from the point of view of the researcher. In our case I did not anticipate that we would exclude boys, or would not record the sessions, but from the point of view of the girls, both these decisions were reasonable.

The weakness of PAR, and in fact most forms of research, is that it relies heavily on a linguistic representation of knowledge (Mohan 2004, 161). In our group discussions

and individual interviews we did not use academic jargon, such as the terms *participation* or *empowerment*, because it would be difficult to ensure that all the interpreters and girls would understand the concepts the same way. Therefore we discussed the topics in a broader sense: what kind of things the girls wanted to improve in their situation in life and what made them feel good or bad in their daily life. I used simple language and many ways of explaining to ensure our mutual understanding. Nevertheless, discussion about children's right to have their voices heard (CRC, article 12) caused misunderstanding; the idea of "noisy children" was confused with the children's right to be heard. One of the girls gave us an example of what had happened to her for being too "noisy" at a dinner table, which is a sign of disrespect in her culture. We used many non-linguistic methods of self-expression throughout the project, such as music and drama. For example, when listing the dreams and hopes of the girls, as well as the unpleasant things in the current life, the girls were encouraged to draw as well as write. However, the aim of these methods was not so much to produce new knowledge of our research topic but to entertain, help the group in getting to know each other and strengthening the sense of community.

When discussing the girls' needs and wishes, many referred to not what was the best for them individually, but what was in the best interest of their community, or their living unit. Although I think that juxtaposition of individual cultures and collective cultures is insufficient for explaining this, the girls' backgrounds might provide a partial explanation for emphasizing the collective needs over individual needs. Another reason for this might be the girls' reluctance to "be a burden" for the society, or the fear of being seen as "welfare refugees". The girls reminded me many times that they did not come to Finland for a good life, but to save their lives. When we talked about the right to privacy and private life (CRC, article 16), I noticed that one of the interpreters used the English word *private life* in his speech. When I asked about this, the interpreter and the girls told me there is no word for it in their language; it is a term that needs explaining.

Towards more empowering activities in the reception center

The discussions during our PAR produced valuable information about how the girls viewed their possibilities for empowerment not only in our PAR, but in the reception center in general. Empowerment means a possibility to make choices which improve some aspect of one's life, but it also implies to future claims for material, human and social resources; a better future (Kabeer 1999, 435). According to the girls, one of the best ways they can use the waiting time to get ready for the future is by learning practical skills which will be needed in the Finnish society. The girls wished to learn more IT-skills to be able to be in touch with their friends and family, but also to get more information about their rights and responsibilities in Finland. These are both empowering assets which equip children to use their opportunities (Alsop et al. 2005, 11). IT-skills could help them communicate with the safety net of people they might have elsewhere, whereas civic skills would enable them to participate in their community. According to previous studies, (Aspinall & Watters 2010, 88; Enoranta 2007, 47; Owczarek 2007, 52-53) information about the new country, the asylum process, benefits and work or study opportunities are important in empowering asylum

seekers, as well as supporting their integration in to the society. Although the girls chose not to spend our sessions in learning IT- or civic skills, they understood that those skills would be useful in the future. In their current situation, the girls found it hard to participate in a community which they knew so little about.

When discussing adults helping the girls participate or to be more active, the most common examples were how the counselors had first showed the girl how to do something, then let her practice and finally manage on her own.

We will live here (in Finland) all our lives; we have to learn for ourselves. You don't learn if somebody shows you every time, it is not learning. You become lazy. --- The counselors do a good job, they help everybody in the beginning, and then they leave you alone. It's good for the future. --- Children get a good life when they learn to do things by themselves. (G3)

This was mentioned also when analyzing our PAR; some girls could think of ways in which they could use their new skills, such as organizing a summer camp with all its practical work in the future.

As the big choices which determine the future of the girls are out of their reach, many girls wished to be able to decide on smaller things in their daily lives. The choices which the girls thought would have a significant impact on their well-being in the daily life included for example the power to decide whom they shared a room with, or how the cleaning schedule should be organized. Considering participation and empowerment, these wishes should be taken into consideration in the living units. If catering these wishes is not impossible, it would be a good way to demonstrate that the article 12 of the CRC is actually implemented in practice.

Conclusion

Empowerment can be seen both as a means and an end; it is a process of developing individual capacities through gaining skills which are needed to improve some aspect of one's life. As an end, it is the change which has occurred as a result of the process. The vivid discussions during out PAR-meetings suggested that non-formal, all-girl meetings worked in this context in getting the silent voices heard. Letting the girls plan the whole content and realization of the project made the project not only participatory but also empowering. My assumption was that helping the girls to use their assets and find the required resources to organize youth-led activities would definitely improve their self-esteem, co-operation skills and life-quality during the asylum process. The final analysis of our PAR showed that most girls viewed it as a success; they enjoyed participating in it, and most importantly, they were happy they could include ideas which they thought were important. Daily chores, such as cooking or baking, might not be the most obvious empowering activities for young girls. However, as the girls themselves chose these activities, and felt that they can use their assets in these tasks, then daily chores can definitely be empowering. The facilitating adults have to make the activities possible while making sure all can use their assets in the best possible way.

For example when we went to the camp, we planned and discussed a lot. We decided on the things together, what to do. Those kinds of things work, that's the way things should go. (G8)

However, as often is the case in PAR, the results cannot be predicted and negative cases occur (Doná 2006, 24). Participants may choose not to participate as much as they could, even if it would seem clear that it would help them to achieve their goals. Some girls did not want to take an active part in planning and realizing the camp; by the end of the project, one girl even noted that she had only participated because the other girls had pressured her. Most of the time the girls seemed to enjoy the process, including also the one who claimed to have been reluctant to join.

Cultural sensitivity in empowering PAR means that it has to be adapted to meet the needs of all participants. This is especially important when working with special groups, such as unaccompanied asylum seeker children and youth. The choices which they want to make might appear as "second order choices" for the initiating researcher, but can be empowering and important for the participants. In the case of our PAR, letting the girls decide on things which they wanted to, such as the schedule or the menu for the camp, was the kind of participation they saw relevant. It was also the kind of participation the girls were used to in their home cultures. Towards the end of our project, the girls found the courage to introduce more ideas into our PAR. The same girls who had opposed recording our sessions in the beginning wanted me to record their singing and dancing a few months later. Building a trusting relationship and an equal dialogue are the corner stones of PAR, but it takes time. As PAR usually stretches for several months, it is possible to achieve these aims.

Although the importance of child- and youth participation is widely acknowledged, the lack of resources hinders participatory projects in any kind of institutions. In our PAR, I found the limited material resources in fact beneficial for inclusion. Having to find resources from the community and recruiting volunteers from the neighborhood shows the children that there are benevolent people around them. This can give them the courage and reasons to leave the reception center, to reach out to the community. If the hectic life of the reception center makes it impossible to find the time for PAR, it is also possible to include participatory features in the currently offered activities, including the children's voices in developing activities which already exist, or acknowledging the children's opinions in deciding about practical matters in the daily life. Participatory work does not have to follow the cyclic form of PAR, but can be adapted to suit the circumstances and the available resources.

As PAR is a flexible and versatile research method, it can be used to create activities for groups of children and youth from varying backgrounds. The project is likely to be gender- and culturally sensitive, if it includes all participants as equal researchers and if the initiating researcher avoids dictating the process. The interviews with the girls of our PAR demonstrated that what they find empowering is not uniform with the definitions of empowerment in the current scientific discussion; they understood that as asylum seekers and as children, they were unable to make major, "first order" choices concerning their lives. Nevertheless, they found smaller, "second order" choices

empowering in their current situation. Also, being able to trust the professional adults in the reception center was empowering for many girls. The girls found it important that while the counselors work hard to ensure the best interest of the child, the own views of the children are also heard.

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Ethnic minority youth and youth work in Finland: everyday anti-racism engendering empowering conditions

Introduction

Multiculturalism and racism are highly current issues in Finnish society. During the last three decades, Finland has transformed from a country of emigration to a society of immigration. Increased migration since the early 1990's – due to the transnational relationships and workforce, as well as refugees and asylum seekers – has questioned the assumed homogeneity of the Finnish nation state. However, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities such as Finnish-Swedes, Roma and Sami people, Russians, Jews and Muslims have been a significant part of Finland's 'cultural landscape' for centuries. Alongside the increasing ethnic and cultural diversity, recent public debates have been loaded with nationalistic perspectives, demands for assimilation and even straightforward racism (e.g. Keskinen et al. 2009).

The proportion of foreign born people in Finland is still low, at approximately 5%, and this population is heavily concentrated in a few of the largest cities. However, the younger generation particularly faces a multicultural reality in their everyday life, because the majority of the foreign born population and their descendants are under 30 (Statistics Finland 2011). According to previous research results, racism is a major factor hampering the integration of ethnic minority youth in Finland (e.g. Rastas 2005; Perho 2010; Souto 2011). In the context of leisure, racism slackens the inter-ethnic ties of youth, hinders participation in different activities and causes feelings of exclusion (e.g. Harinen 2005). Thus, it can be claimed that in spite of the increasing public and academic attention on a new "cosmopolitan generation" (e.g. Nowicka & Rovisco 2009), racism continues to remain an everyday phenomenon in the lives of young people.

In this article we examine municipal youth work in Finland and its anti-racist practices – youth workers' stances and ways of addressing the issue of racism. Our theoretical framework is constituted of literature on everyday racism, and it is approached through the notion of empowerment. We ask what kind of anti-racist work enhances the empowerment – the ability to overcome oppressive and racialising practices – of ethnic minority youth.¹ The main aim of our study is to decipher the favourable conditions in which the empowerment of ethnic minority youth can take place. The em-

pirical data of the study consists of multi-sited observations and interviews of youth workers conducted in 2010. We will scrutinise anti-racist practices of youth work in the level of individuals and groups, separated from the institutional and structural macro-level of society. While treating anti-racism in youth work, we aim to outline the notion of empowering anti-racism in the context of working with young people.

In light of the earlier studies on racism in educative settings in Finland, it can be claimed that studying everyday racism from the perspective of the empowerment of ethnic minority youth is important. Firstly, young people's experiences of racism often remain unrecognised in schools (Souto 2011), social work (Honkatukia & Suurpää 2007; Anis 2008) and youth work (Kivijärvi & Honkasalo 2010). Secondly, highlighting racism is often considered as problematic by youth workers. It is seen as a negative issue that may aggravate conflicts between different groups (see Honkasalo, Souto & Suurpää 2007). This might mean that youth work, among other educative institutions, offers only minimal support for youth when dealing with experiences of racism (cf. Thomas 2006; Shukra 2010). Thirdly, there is research evidence indicating that youth suffering from racism are sharing their experiences with peers in a similar position rather than with parents or professional educators (Rastas 2007).

Conceptual framework: Disempowering everyday racism and empowering anti-racism

In this study, racism is defined as essentialising practices (speeches and acts) that solidify hierarchical differences and power-relations between ethnic or cultural groups (e.g. Werbner 1997). With the notion of everyday racism it is possible to explore the reproduction and maintenance of racism in mundane processes of interaction. Thus, everyday racism refers to oppressive and essentialising micro-level practices reflecting the hierarchical power relations and racialised positions of different ethnic or cultural groups (Essed 1991). Everyday racism is mainly produced through iterative practices, which often consist of self-evident or even unconscious routines, acts and speeches (cf. Urry 2000). Repetitive classifications of ethnic minorities and practices based on assumed cultural differences may often seem normal and acknowledged to majority people.

Everyday racism includes the idea that not only explicit acts with racist motivations or ideologies (e.g. neo-Nazi violence) can be defined as racism. It also covers more hidden and unconscious practices with racist outcomes. For example, iterative and self-evident practices of youth work may have unintended racist consequences. Defining migrant youth primarily through their assumed cultural background may hinder seeing them as competent individual actors (see Kivijärvi 2010). Therefore, racism is not seen as an individual pathology or located at the margins of society, but is defined as a potential part of all social interaction (van Dijk 1992; Gillborn 2006). Everyday racism is like a discursive reservoir that can be harnessed at any time by any actor in approving surroundings. It would lose much of its significance in situations where it did not maintain or reproduce the dominant hierarchies. For instance, degrading Russian people has a long history in Finland. Russians are often given nationalistic nicknames and defined as a threat to the national security and harmony (e.g. Suur-

pää 2002; Ronkainen 2009, 105-108). This type of everyday racism does not have any relevance outside of Finland. Therefore, the power of everyday racism is always dependent on the particular context and the prevailing group and power relations (Puuronen 2003, 194).

According to the interpretations of many youth studies in Finland, racism for ethnic minority youth is primarily everyday racism: 'small' acts and utterances essentialising minority groups and reproducing their marginal position (e.g. Rastas 2007; Souto 2011). For many young people, racism includes the message that ethnic minority youth are in the wrong place in the national(istic) world order. At a concrete level, racism is manifested in gazes, jokes, small hints or gestures of depreciation and name-calling. From the perspective of ethnic minority youth, they are defined in a hierarchical manner, particular needs of different groups are not recognised, youth cultures (e.g. hip-hoppers or skinheads) appear as statements for or against multiculturalism and media coverage present ethnic minorities in an unfavourable light.

In our interpretation, ethnic minority youth are not passive or powerless recipients of racism, but their power and agency can be limited because of it. To begin with, racism disempowers a person by limiting his/her power of self-determination. Racist acts and speeches separate people by nationality or appearance, creating images about hierarchical categories and preferable features, excluding some people outside the dominant society (Rastas 2007, 74-75). External determinations by the majority limit the minority's possibility of self-determination and power to construct new definitions (Jenkins 1997, 23-24, 49; Huttunen 2004, 138-139).²

Furthermore, everyday racism can undermine a person's sense of control: beliefs in one's own possibilities to influence and control one's life-course and surroundings. According to Branscombe, Schmitt and Harvey (1999), the undermining of a person's sense of control occurs particularly when they face hostility and interpret this attitude as being triggered by their permanent features (e.g. physical appearance), instead of more variable features (e.g. behaviour). Racism is a prime example of the first kind. Racism is usually experienced as continuous, not limited to a particular time or place. The unpredictability and all-encompassing nature of everyday racism may disempower a person by undermining their sense of control of their own life.

In addition, the way a person is perceived by surrounding people influences the way they perceive themselves (see Mead 1952, 157-158). Negative perceptions by others can have a negative impact on a person's self-esteem and limit their possibilities to act, which can be interpreted as disempowerment (Tajfel & Turner 1986).³ Furthermore, according to research undertaken in Finland, racist experiences have a negative impact on a person's psychical well-being in general (see Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. 2002, 112; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti 1997, 62).

In short, everyday racism is defined as a repetitive and cumulative cycle of disempowering practices. When racism is conceptualised as disempowerment, it is possible to examine how anti-racist work is linked to empowerment. Thus, in anti-racism it is a question of breaking the cycle by disengaging from practices that maintain and repro-

duce everyday racism. The concept of empowerment can be defined from at least two different viewpoints. On one hand, it can be defined from a micro-level perspective, involving individuals' increased ability for self-determination, sense of control, self-esteem, knowledge and skills of the surrounding environment or community. On the other hand, the concept of empowerment can be defined from the macro-level point of view, incorporating societal dimensions and power relations. (Askheim 2003, 230-231; Hokkanen 2009, 330-331.)

In this study, we will focus on the former type of micro-level empowerment. Our aim is not to describe individual empowerment processes or establish a specific criterion for empowerment, like in many studies on empowerment, but to describe anti-racist practices that create favourable conditions for the empowerment of ethnic minority youth. Even though empowerment is often seen as an individual process, it is affected by surrounding people and conditions which mean that empowerment should always be examined in its social context (Siitonen 1999, 118, 189). According to Adams (2003, 6-54), professional practices that enable empowerment are based on a combination of critical understanding, consciousness-raising, challenging disempowering routines and language, clear strategies for addressing inequality, and activating individuals' self-empowerment. These are also the criteria that we take into account in our analysis.

Finnish youth work as a platform for fieldwork

The data of the study have been collected in the field of Finnish youth work. Youth work in general is an activity promoting non-formal learning and helping in different transitions and preventing problems young people are facing. Youth work is often described as an 'amoeba-like' profession, which is on one hand able to handle a wide variety of questions considering the lives of contemporary youth and on the other hand haunted by a constant search for identity (Coussée 2009; Davies 2010). A common factor for most youth work is that it is executed during young people's free time. In Finland youth work is primarily provided by municipalities, but parishes and NGOs also have a significant role in organising youth work (e.g. confirmation schools and various leisure pursuits). In this study only municipal youth work is examined.

Currently, municipal youth work utilises various methods and working environments. However, youth clubs are still the main venues of municipal youth work offering young people a place to spend time, meet peers and a platform for informal learning. Other forms and methods of municipal youth work are more targeted and outreach work, online work, workshops for vocational learning, information and counselling and participatory work (e.g. youth councils). According to the Finnish Youth Act (72/2006), all of these are supposed to promote the well-being and growth of young people towards 'active citizenship' and adulthood.

Together with social work, child welfare and school, youth work is one of the main occupational groups dealing with questions related to the life of the young generation. Particularly social work and youth work play a significant role in the fields of everyday life (outside of formal learning) of young people. The two professions have many

commonalities and common goals. These goals are ensuring the well-being and proper living conditions of children and youth (see Pohjola 2009, 40). Both social work and youth work cherish values like solidarity, equality and demur of marginalisation. Both are also familiar with the tension between supporting and controlling youth. Moreover, the current trend in Finland seems to be that social work and youth work are converging. Various political-normative strategies steer youth workers and social workers towards 'cross-professional cooperation' and it seems that youth workers are taking more formal roles with remedial stances typical of social workers (e.g. Kiilakoski, Kivijärvi & Honkasalo 2011, 19).

In spite of the similarities and increasingly porous professional boundaries, youth work and social work differ on many levels. The main difference is that legislation defines youth work as non-formal guidance while social work has more controlling elements (Raitakari & Vironkangas 2009, 8-9). Consequently, social work and youth work differ on a practical level as well. The traditional ethos of youth work steers its focus towards group level interactions of young people. The essential aim of youth work is to create supportive peer groups to enhance the participation and empowerment of young people. The focus of youth work is on a preventive stance and working with peer groups, while the common interest of social work is more on interventions in the behaviour of individual young people and their family members (e.g. Pohjola 2009, 34-35).

Data and analysis

The data of the study have been collected as a part of 'a developmental project of multicultural youth work' (2009-2011). The project was funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and coordinated by 'a Developmental Network of Urban Youth Work'. The network covers Finnish cities with more than 40,000 inhabitants (there were 24 cities large enough at the time of the project). Thirteen cities and their youth departments voluntarily joined the project which aimed to develop the 'multicultural readiness' of urban youth work. Thus, the project was oriented in action research: the role of the researchers⁴ was to cooperate with youth departments and assist in their concrete developmental work.

The scope and the actual contents of the sub-projects varied according to the interests of different youth departments. Some focused on transforming particular methods in one youth club, while some invested in organisation-wide projects, for instance, in the form of strategic work. Furthermore, while some dealt with issues such as multilingual information delivery or cross-professional cooperation, some focused on developing anti-racist practices. In addition to individual sub-projects, various seminars were organised which gathered youth workers from different youth departments together. Four of these seminars, conducted in autumn 2010, dealt with the issue of racism in youth work.

The comprehensive results and methodological premises of the multifaceted project have been reported elsewhere (see Honkasalo & Kivijärvi 2011). In this paper we focus solely on the data on racism and anti-racism. Thus, our primary data include

12 (group and individual) semi-structured interviews⁵ of youth workers in five different cities. In these cities anti-racist methods and stances of youth work were pondered. The interviews were conducted in the premises of local youth services (e.g. youth clubs or offices) and lasted from approximately from one to two hours. Furthermore, observations from five seminars (in five different cities) are utilised. Three of these seminars included panel discussions dealing with the issues of racism and anti-racism from the perspectives of young people. Altogether, the panels had 17 ethnic minority youth (and regular users of municipal youth services) as discussants. As a secondary data, we will utilise numerous informal conversations with ethnic minority youth and youth workers. Moreover, two questionnaires (n=20; n=38) conducted by youth services in youth club premises about young peoples' perspectives on racism are used as a background data.

Given the relatively high number of research settings and the short field period (year 2010), the ability to commit to in-depth research is limited. Therefore, accurate descriptions of individual trajectories and empowering processes during the development of anti-racist practices are not possible. Our 'cross-sectional' approach means that we are able to examine anti-racism in various environments, but we have to settle with describing only the favourable conditions enabling the empowerment of ethnic minority youth. We are not able to analyse the longitudinal processes of individual empowerment. Moreover, because of the nature of our data, we are not able to explore 'real life' interaction or 'authentic' encounters between young people and youth workers. In our analysis we are only able to decipher the discursive accounts of informants (sayings), not to describe corporeal anti-racist practises (doings).

In our qualitative analysis, we scrutinise the interpretations of youth workers and ethnic minority youth. Our primary focus is on youth workers' capabilities and possibilities in responding to the volitions of ethnic minority youth. The assumption inherent in our analysis is that ethnic minority youth possess distinct experiential knowledge about everyday racism and are thus able to (at least implicitly) depict empowering anti-racist conditions. Thus, throughout our analysis, we parallel and contrast the interpretations of youth workers and ethnic minority youth. We focus our attention on sections in the data (in interview transcriptions and field notes) in which anti-racism is discussed. We classify qualitatively different themes in the data rather than conduct quantitatively oriented content analysis (e.g. Krippendorff 1980). The themes that we have taken up from the data are preventive and interventive stances on anti-racism. In the next sub-chapter, however, we briefly describe disempowering conditions in our data, but the rest of our analysis revolves around preventive and interventive anti-racism affecting on empowerment of ethnic minority youth.

Disempowering practices

In many of the earlier studies on everyday racism, educational institutes are criticised for not being able to recognise, prevent or intervene in racism (e.g. Gillborn 1995; Anis 2008; Souto 2011). Even though the subprojects under scrutiny focused on anti-racism in youth work, the above critique seems to apply at some points in

our data as well. In the following, deficient anti-racist practices in the data that create conditions of disempowerment of particularly ethnic minority youth are described.

According to almost all youth workers in the data, anti-racism is a self-evident content of professional youth work. In some cases, it is so self-evident that even discussing it becomes questioned. However, a silence followed when enquiring about an accurate definition of racism and how youth workers should deal with it.

One of the discussants states that intervening (in racism) is self-evident to youth workers. It seems that, at the same time, he is questioning the point of the whole seminar. In spite of the statement, every youth worker present (altogether 30) is having trouble when we are trying to decide the best ways of intervening. Either this tells about the tacit knowledge inherent in youth work or that the best ways of dealing with racism are not so self-evident after all. (Field notes, seminar of youth workers)

The inability to determine the forms of concrete anti-racist practices probably hampers the ability of youth workers to support the empowerment of ethnic minority youth. Thus, a significant obstacle confronting the development of anti-racist practices is not always 'political will', but rather a lack of knowledge and an inadequate understanding of ethnic minority youths perspectives (cf. Robinson 2001). For many youth workers, preventing and ways of intervening in everyday racism are anything but self-evident. In the following, we analyse four distinctive and somewhat common youth work practices that are in conflict with the perspectives of many ethnic minority youth and may thus contain disempowering elements.

Firstly, racism is occasionally exclusively seen as an *extreme phenomenon*. In the data, this type of stand is not as common as in some of the earlier studies (e.g. Kivijärvi & Honkasalo 2010). However, defining racism as an extreme issue means that it is equalised with the violence of right-wing youth cultures such as neo-Nazis or skinheads. Thus, 'real' racism would require ideological commitments and explicit motivations (cf. Anthias & Lloyd 2002). In this view, racism becomes individualised as a problem of marginal and misguided youth. This type of stance prevents youth workers from seeing racism as a more mundane phenomenon and allows them to localise racism outside of their own domain. Everyday racism remains unrecognised.

Youth seem to be unanimous: adults do not recognise racism. Moreover, they state that even if racism was noticed, adults do not do anything. The critique is mainly directed towards teachers, but youth clubs are also mentioned as places where racism exists without youth workers noticing. (Field notes, panel discussion of ethnic minority youth)

Secondly, racism is occasionally seen as an *inherent feature of human beings*. This type of socio-biological explanation defines racism, or xenophobia, as a natural phenomenon. In the speech of youth workers this is often manifested in utterances such as 'it has always been like that' or 'it is only human that you are suspicious (towards multiculturalism) if you don't know anything about the matter' (Group inter-

views with youth workers). This standpoint easily leads into fatalism: nothing can be done and anti-racist practices appear futile (Souto 2011, 135).

Thirdly, racism may be *neutralised* by denying or downplaying the significance of it (e.g. van Dijk 1992). Racism is the '...same as bullying. They (all children) are teased already in kindergarten' (Group interview with youth workers). Therefore, racism can be 'directed towards anyone' (Interview with a youth worker). In some cases even explicitly racist language towards ethnic minority youth can be defined as normal or just a joke. Differences, groups and power-relations are pushed to the background. Thus, the neutralising of racism often means harnessing 'a colour and power evasive discourse' (see Frankenberg 1993); the ethnicity of youth is not recognised or is consciously ignored. Conflicts that may have a racist foundation are reduced to quarrels between individuals caused by different world views, taste of music or break ups in intimate relationships. Neutralising racism probably hinders the possibilities of ethnic minority youth sharing their experiences in such surroundings. Moreover, neutralising racism often includes a stance according to which more positive issues should be emphasised and a fear that highlighting racism would cause more problems. On the other hand, it might be that ethnic majority workers are uncertain about their competencies in anti-racist work (Thomas 2006, 45).

Opposing racism is somehow so self-evident and it is loaded with negativity. Therefore, I would use notions like supporting cultural identities of youth and intercultural dialogue. Through those perspectives, if they succeed, nobody will be racist. (Group interview with youth workers)

A fourth practice of youth work that very likely creates conditions of disempowerment is emphasising the problematic attitudes of minorities. By this youth workers often refer to racism towards majority youth or racism between different minorities: 'Finnish youth are not very racist compared to immigrant youth' (Group interview with youth workers). Without denying the interpretation of youth workers above, it can be stated that majority-minority racism reproducing societal power relations is the most hurtful and has the most persistent repercussions from the perspective of ethnic minority youth (Kivijärvi & Honkasalo 2010). Furthermore, many youth workers stress that ethnic minority youth accuse them of racism without a relevant reason. This often implies that the notion of racism is exploited by ethnic minority youth. According to some of the youth workers, the notion of racism is harnessed during occasions when ethnic minority youth want special treatment or when they are not satisfied with the current situation. At times, this is evidently the case. Again however, from the perspective of the empowerment of ethnic minority youth, it would be more fruitful to ponder where these accusations stem from. When particularly asked, youth workers have not always discussed the issue with youth.

A1: We have certain rules and when a youth worker says that this is the way to do it... No matter where, either on camps or in international encounters, (ethnic minority) youth might say that 'you are racist'. They say it even if you don't do anything. [...] They kind of exploit it to get what they want.

A2: They do it very often.

A3: Yeah.

A4: That's true.

A2: It rather goes this way around.

A1: It happens a lot. They have learned to exploit it pretty well. When something is forbidden, for instance the abuse of alcohol in our premises. If it happens to be a migrant youth (s)he can always say that 'you are just discriminating against me because you are racist'. Even though the rule concerns everybody.

Q: Well, do you know where these accusations stem from? Do you see something in the background?

A2: I have no idea. (Group interview with youth workers)

Our claim is that the above practices of youth work easily lead to the disempowerment of ethnic minority youth. These stances hinder youth workers from recognising, preventing and intervening in everyday racism. Basically because of the insufficient recognition, the experiences of ethnic minority youth cannot be addressed in a profound way. Everyday experiences of racism are either not addressed at all or are dealt with from a majority perspective. To some extent, this might help to explain why, according to research literature in Finland, experiences of racism are often discussed in 'communities of difference' (see Vestel 2004) – in peer networks of ethnic minority youth (e.g. Rastas 2007; Souto 2011; see also Back 1996). Moreover, dealing with racism in the fields of majority society often means obmutescence or in some cases even vengeance with a force (Kivijärvi & Honkasalo 2010). Particularly for some ethnic minority boys, resorting to violence or intimidating appearances seem to be common ways of responding to experiences of racism and exclusions (Honkatukia & Suurpää 2007; Souto 2011). More constructive ways of dealing with everyday racism are rarely available. Thus, it can be claimed that only peer circles or minority communities offer empowering anti-racism for ethnic minority youth.

Even though ethnic minority youth seek and receive peer support against experiences of racism from minority communities, they are also often short of answers when considering anti-racist practices: 'Young people state that intervening (in racism) is important. However, when asked about the best ways of intervening, a silence follows' (Field notes, panel discussion of ethnic minority youth). In the light of earlier literature it can be claimed that all-encompassing everyday racism and lack of adult interventions are causing feelings of impassiveness – an ethos of survival of the fittest or disbelief in anti-racism in general. In the following, however, we will immerse ourselves into perspectives of ethnic minority youth and youth workers and aim to disentangle practices of preventive and interventive anti-racism that create favourable conditions for empowerment.

Anti-racism and preventive practices

In this sub-chapter we aim to describe youth work practices and stances that prevent everyday racism. From this perspective, the main task of youth work is to create leisure spaces or peer groups where the issue of everyday racism can be brought forth and discussed in a reciprocal way. Preventive stances on anti-racism are furt-

her divided into direct and indirect practises. The former refers to concrete acts and methods while the latter is associated in more in-depth perspectives on youth work.

Direct practises

According to most of the ethnic minority youth in our data, racism is an issue that should be openly discussed. None of the youth in the data claimed that the issue of racism should be bypassed. This desire of youth was aptly manifested in an audition of four minority youth during a seminar at one youth department. The occasion, which was initially about cultural differences, turned into a detailed description about experiences of everyday racism. In the receptive surroundings of adult youth workers, cultural differences were secondary or even irrelevant and experiences of racism were brought forth. Thus, young people seem to be eager to discuss racism if a chance is given.

This eagerness can be illustrated by a group of minority youth put together by a local youth worker in a city in Northern Finland. At first, the aim of the group was to attend a local school on one occasion and discuss topics such as racism and discrimination with pupils and teachers. According to the youth worker, each of the six group members was quite nervous before the event. However, the discussion was a success and it was emotional as well. Some of the pupils seemed to be very touched by the experiences of the minority youth and approached them in an empathetic manner. Afterwards, all of the six youth emphasised their positive feeling and their willingness to participate in these types of occasions in the future as well. Another example is the same type of group in a city in Western Finland. After the discussion, two of the girls involved stated that 'for once we were able to talk about these issues'. At least for these young people, open discussions about experiences of racism and racism in general seemed to have empowering implications. From the perspective of empowerment, including ethnic minority youth in the process of defining racism is crucial. Through dialogue the phenomenon and individual experiences become recognised, which gives individuals the feeling that his/her experiences are valuable (e.g. Rose 2003).

The above stand of ethnic minority youth is in contradiction to the perspectives of some of the youth workers who stress more 'comfortable' notions such as tolerance and multiculturalism. From a critical perspective, these types of notions might emphasise 'cultural exhibitions' and happenings in which minority representatives are forced to take responsibility for presenting their cultural habits and artefacts to majority representatives in a 'neutral' position. The notion of anti-racism in turn places the responsibility on the shoulders of the majority as well. In the data, a person responsible for 'multicultural youth work' in one youth department complained that many youth workers withdraw from conversations about racism and discrimination. In the end, according to her, it was all up to her whether these 'uncomfortable' issues were discussed with youth or not. In a similar vein, according to some youth workers, anti-racism often starts from explicit discussions in work communities.

I think it is good that we are discussing it (racism). Even though some say it is a negative issue... These issues should not be avoided. If some of our co-

workers have said that they do not want immigrants as colleagues. Like 'ew, terrible'. Then I have said straight to their face that 'that's racism'. In my opinion, we should be explicit about it, no matter how uncomfortable it might feel. If this is not done, it will go on forever. It is very difficult to tell a fellow worker if somebody is prejudiced. I have just forced myself to do it. (Group interview with youth workers)

Our claim is that anti-racism enabling the empowerment of ethnic minority youth requires that the issue of everyday racism as a particular phenomenon is brought forth and opportunities for discussing the experiences of it are systematically provided. Critical understanding and awareness of oppressive practices help to understand the current situation, and to develop ways of addressing these issues in the future. Acknowledgment of the current situation is considered as a key element of empowerment (Adams 2003, 7-12). Anne-Mari Souto (2011, 199), a scholar of racism, aptly asks: if the existence of racism is downplayed or even denied by authorities or professional educators, how is it possible for young people suffering from it to speak up? Preventive anti-racist practices allow the recognition of the phenomenon, encourage ethnic minority youth to share their experiences and lead to reciprocal responsibility in dealing with racism.

Indirect practises

According to our data, anti-racism enabling empowerment requires making the viewpoints of ethnic minority youth on racism visible and respecting them (*cf.* Gillborn 2006, 11; see also Gilroy 1987). This means an attempt to create suitable environments for reciprocal communication between ethnic minority youth and youth workers. As mentioned above, the notion of everyday racism includes the idea that the bulk of racist practices are hidden and even unconscious and thus taken more or less for granted by the dominant majority. Moreover, the claim of many ethnic minority youth is that adult educators do not recognise the everyday racism they are experiencing (Rastas 2007). Therefore, anti-racist practices that challenge the 'common sense' assumptions by articulating minority perspectives enable the empowerment of ethnic minority youth and perhaps youth workers as well (*cf.* Sapin 2009, 110). Dialogue with ethnic minority youth probably gives youth workers concrete instruments in dealing with everyday racism. For instance, in the interview accounts of youth workers, this type of intergenerational and interethnic dialogue about accusations of racism has resulted in a more reciprocal understanding of the issue.

Q: Have you ever asked about it? Why they accuse you of racism.

A: I guess so. I think that it is because they have experienced it (racism) at some point. And we have a lot of people who have migrated from the other side of the globe. [...] They might have undergone a lot (of racism). When you come from far away to a totally different circumstance and you don't understand why you are treated the way you are... (Group interview with youth workers)

These types of everyday enquiries about the perspectives of ethnic minority youth have been an efficient way of discussing racism and other significant aspects of their lives. According to many youth workers, discussions about accusations of racism have led to a more reciprocal understanding of each other's perspectives. Considering ethnic minority youth, this reciprocity is manifested in more trusting relationships with youth workers, and in the end, has often led to the termination of accusations and conflict-driven interactions. In addition to everyday enquiries and different panel discussions, many youth departments have conducted anonymous questionnaires in which experiences of racism and discrimination have been asked. These types of methods can raise awareness and understanding of racism and the experienced reality of ethnic minority youth.

Occasionally, increased awareness of the perspectives of the 'other' have enabled challenging the neutrality and ahistoricism of youth work practices and routines in the data (cf. Modood 1997; Gilroy 2004; Gillborn 2006). This means, at a general level, a standpoint that recognises that Finnish youth work and its practices are locally constructed and have a highly national history. According to the accounts of ethnic minority youth, municipal youth work sometimes includes historically embedded and taken for granted practices that may have racist consequences. The most common examples of these practices are monolingual information delivery, strict age limits, offering only (masculine) 'Finnish' activities (e.g. ice hockey on a game console or training rooms for rock bands) and essentialising ethnic minorities. This 'Finnishness' (and masculinity) of municipal youth work easily results in quite homogenous peer groups (majority boys) in which issues such as racism are probably not discussed in depth.

As a counter strategy against assumed cultural neutrality and ahistoricism, some youth departments have organised workshops on the 'Finnishness' of youth work's practices and routines. As a result, cultural neutrality was found as an impossible goal. Thus, many youth workers claimed that it is important to be aware of the cultural and historical basis of Finnish youth work and be able to challenge it and depict the national traditions of youth work to ethnic minority youth and their parents. In the workshops, the identified Finnish elements of youth work were monolingualism, lack of positive discrimination, strict timetables and a problem-oriented approach to youth in general and ethnic minority youth in particular. On the other hand, this type of in-depth deciphering of youth work and contextualising of racism felt frustrating to some of the youth workers who claimed that the definition of racism expands too far (cf. O'Brien 2000). Therefore, more practical methods in mundane surroundings, such as organising youth events where expressions of minority identities are encouraged and dominant perspectives can be challenged, are probably more easily accepted when preventing everyday racism and aiming towards empowering implications (cf. Paat & Pellebon 2012, 138).

A3: It was impressive when we arranged this event together with the vocational school in our facilities...

A2: That's true.

A3: Young people, migrant youth who were studying at the vocational

school at the time. They hosted this party for us Finnish people. It was about how they see Finland. It was the 90th Independence Day at the time. It was very impressive. I remember many things. Youth were interviewed and they expressed their thoughts. And they told about their education and language skills. Since then I have used those opinions in many working groups related to multiculturalism. I got so much out of it. (Group interview with youth workers)

In addition to creating empowering conditions for ethnic minority youth, it can be claimed that preventive and particularly indirect anti-racist practices may have empowering implications for youth workers as well – if empowerment is referring to reciprocity between majority and minority perspectives and an ability to have a more holistic picture of one's working environment. Promoting interethnic and intergenerational dialogue and challenging the neutrality and ahistoricism of youth work may enable some youth workers to discover new working methods and perspectives.

Anti-racism and interventive practices

On many occasions, because of the lack of preventive practices, or in spite of them, youth workers face racist incidents. In this sub-chapter, interventive anti-racist practices are scrutinised. As in the previous sub-chapter, we have made an analytical distinction between *direct* and *indirect* practises. The former refers to immediate actions in acute situations and the latter to more long-term strategies.

Direct practises

In the light of the data, it is evident that ethnic minority youth want youth workers to actively intervene in racism. None of the youth in the data insist otherwise. However, as stated above, few young people are able to give explicit instructions to adult educators about the best ways of intervening. In any case, according to youth, immediate intervention in racist incidents is desirable.

Young people describe their world as a rather wretched place: racism and bullying are common. One of the youth workers asks if there is anything that adults can do: 'How can a youth worker intervene in racism?' Young people state that every racist incident should be taken seriously and intervention should be done without delay; youth workers should not 'wait till next week' (Field notes, panel discussion of ethnic minority youth.)

Few youth workers disagree with the above stand: '[...] of course, you should intervene immediately. Right on the spot' (Group interview with youth workers). In addition to *instant actions*, what seems to be essential is that the *interventive practices are systematic* as well. According to our interpretation, systematic intervention guarantees to ethnic minority youth that they will be constantly supported and their needs recognised. Systematic interventive practices thus enhance trust between youth workers and ethnic minority youth. Moreover, systematic practices have eventually reduced the need for interventions. In the following, the trust of ethnic minority youth is gained through common rules and persistence.

Q: Have you always done things like this or have you invested in it [interventions in racism] in some particular way recently?

A: Yes, I would say... In fact we have in principle done things like before. Our principles are the same, but we have organised ourselves [colleagues] better considering the issue.

Q: Okay.

A: And we have held our grip... in the sense that we must always... This intervention is a good word. Every time you have to intervene. And when the new day comes, new night comes you have to reclaim your position again and again. [...] It is about persistence. From one day to another. (Youth worker interview)

Concrete guidelines and methods of intervening have been found to be useful in creating an environment where intervention becomes easy and mutual trust between youth workers and ethnic minority youth can gain ground. Obviously, reciprocal construction of these guidelines with young people increases the commitment of youth into the shared norms of interaction. Commonly settled methods of interventions indicate high commitment to the common shared values of anti-racism, because the guidelines are settled by the people using them, not by exterior professionals (see Siitonen 1999).

However, guidelines from public authorities have also made the interventive actions easier. A youth department in Eastern Finland ordered 'discrimination-free zone' signs from the Ministry of the Interior (supported by a campaign funded by the EU) in all of its premises. According to one of the youth workers, the guidelines helped with stepping out of one's comfort zone and increasing the readiness for interventions: 'When I ordered those signs it [intervention] was really easy because it included those things in which we should commit ourselves to. [...] It was easy to plead on it... like hey, we have that sign up there, remember?'

So far it has been argued that empowering interventive anti-racism includes instant and systematic acts built on reciprocity between youth workers and ethnic minority youth. However, this says little about the quality of the interventions. In the above citation one of the young people stated that racism should be taken 'seriously'. In the data this means that experiences of racism are not denied or underestimated and support for the victim is unconditional. According to the data, underestimating or even denying that experiences happen can occur in two ways. Firstly, intervention in a racist incident may be too weak, focusing only on shallow support for the victim and not on the surrounding conditions. A concrete example of this type of weak intervention is a youth worker saying 'don't care' while (s)he could take the issue more seriously and show stronger support by stating, 'I care' (cf. Rastas 2007, 126-127; Souto 2011, 155-156). The former utterance hints that experiences of racism should be bypassed, while the latter offers emotional support for the youth. The hope of many ethnic minority youth seems to be that youth workers would engage themselves in discussions about racism, thereby demonstrating that the issue is significant.

Secondly, underestimation or denial of experience happens by focusing primarily on the motives of the perpetrator. From the perspective of the target of the insult, motives are rarely significant – the exclusive act and its consequences matter the most (cf. van Dijk 1992). In some parts of the data, youth workers seemed keen on investigating whether, for instance, the word ‘nigger’ was meant to be racist or not. According to ethnic minority youth, the word is insulting in itself, essentialising brown or black skinned youth as inferior to ‘Finnish’ youth and suffocating the voices of minorities. Thus, exploring the motives might seem to be downplaying the significance of everyday racism or even taking the side of the perpetrator. *Stronger support and taking the position of the victim* is expected by ethnic minority youth.

Indirect practises

The immediate intervention and strong support described above contain a rather individualistic perspective and leave the surrounding group of youth intact. However, from the accounts of ethnic minority youth, it can be interpreted that the primary target of empowering anti-racist interventions should be peer groups, not individual actors. The ‘effectiveness’ of everyday racism is dependent on the support of the surrounding community. Thus, taking only individuals (an abuser and a victim of racist discourse) as a target of anti-racist practices would probably have little effect on the group in which racist insults can be manifested. Moreover, purely individual interventions may even emphasise the marginal position of the victim.

Youth are afraid that adult interventions might place the victim in an even more vulnerable position. Young people claim that they [as minority representatives] do not want to be in the spotlight. On the other hand, they assert that intervention is nonetheless important. According to youth, the most essential thing is how the intervention is done. When youth workers are enquiring about the best ways of intervening, young people remain silent for a moment. After a while a boy states that an intervention should not only cover the opposite sides of the conflict. He goes on to assert that the problem should be discussed within the whole youth club community. (Field notes, panel discussion of ethnic minority youth)

Our claim is that anti-racist interventions that enhance empowerment require *aiming towards peer groups* in which racist speech and acts are not supported and where interventive practices are executed by the young people as well. In a youth club in Southern Finland this type of ‘communal intervention’ was emphasised when developing anti-racist practices. Communal intervention seemed to have two essential qualifications. The first precondition has already been described above: intervention takes place on a group level and does not put either the perpetrator or the victim into the spotlight. Interventive practices are not supposed to be incriminating, which might aggravate already existing juxtapositions: ‘of course, blaming people is not a good way’ (Youth worker interview) (Sapin 2009, 118). The critique is focused on the racist acts or utterances, not on individual persons. Racism is dealt with the whole group. Moreover, in spite of the awareness of the marginal and racialised position of many ethnic minority youth in Finnish society, in mundane interactions with multi-ethnic youth groups these particularities need not necessarily be highlighted (cf. O’Brien 2000).

Q: How to intervene in racism without causing even more conflicts?

H: Well, it depends on the situation [...] If it looks like the victim does not want to make it a big deal...

Q: Or do you feel that young people do not want to emphasise...

H: Yes. We have had these occasions... You just have to have some discretion. It might be that the victim feels even more uneasy with the whole issue [if explicitly intervened]. But in spite of that I would not let it go. The right kind of presence often does the trick. You should go and sit on the couch and talk with the kids... I do not think that blaming the guilty one and highlighting the position of the victim is the right thing to do. Maybe you should have more sophisticated tactics. (Youth worker interview)

Secondly, intervention in racism can be executed in a 'positive' manner – with the help of humour and by contesting the arguments of youth in a sensitive way: Are you serious, every asylum seeker gets a Lexus and a luxury apartment from the state? Why do you think people consider immigrants as criminals? In the words of a youth worker interviewed, '[...] you can always wonder together with the youth. You can ask if (s)he knows what s(he) is talking about.' Obviously, these types of practices require that youth workers themselves are able to debate on these questions. Thus, for instance, basic understanding about the material living conditions of asylum seekers or research knowledge about ethnic minorities in general is beneficial. These types of sensitive and even humoristic interventions have in many cases resulted in challenging racist discourses and enabled a stronger self-determination for ethnic minority youth. In addition to 'factual knowledge', experimental knowledge has also been utilised in the data. The presence of ethnic minority youth, youth workers with immigrant backgrounds or guests, for instance, from nearby asylum reception centres actively contest racist and prejudiced assumptions and provide platforms for reciprocal knowledge formation and a stronger participatory role for minority youth.

Conclusions: Empowering anti-racist conditions in youth work

In the beginning of our paper we discussed practices and stances of youth work that hinder youth workers from recognising everyday racism, preventing it or intervening in it. These practices are 1) seeing racism exclusively as an extreme phenomenon executed by marginal groups, which do not concern mundane youth work, 2) defining racism as an inherent (biological) feature of human beings that has to be tolerated, 3) neutralising the distinct significance of racism by paralleling it with any type of bullying or 'just having a laugh' and 4) emphasising the problematic attitudes of ethnic minority youth, which does not correspond to the perspectives of youth themselves or recognise societal power relations. We define these practices as disempowering because they undermine young people's experiences of everyday racism and the existence of the phenomenon in general. The practices above can also lead to conflict-driven interaction patterns between ethnic minority youth and youth workers.

In Table 1 below we present the condensed results of our study about how the disempowering conditions might be overcome:

Anti-racist practices enhancing empowering conditions for ethnic minority youth (Table 1)

	Direct practices	Indirect practices
Preventive practices	-Bringing forth the issue of racism -Providing opportunities for discussing the experiences of racism	-Promoting interethnic and intergenerational dialogue (making minority perspectives visible) -Recognising and challenging the neutrality and ahistoricism of youth work
Interventive practices	-Immediate and systematic interventive practices -Emotional support and legitimization of experiences	-Dealing with racism within groups -Positive intervention (knowledge-based dialogue)

The table illustrates anti-racist practices that create favourable conditions in which the empowerment of ethnic minority youth can take place. We have divided both preventive and interventive anti-racism into direct and indirect practices. The direct practises are associated more with 'tactics': concrete actions and operating in acute situations. The indirect practises refer to more long-term 'strategies' in which reciprocal knowledge is built and working methods and perspectives are developed. The division between preventive/interventive and direct/indirect anti-racist practices is somewhat analytical. In everyday youth work these dimensions probably intersect in many ways. However, regardless of their position in the fourfold table, we argue that all of the above practises enable youth workers to engender majority orchestrated platforms in which racism can be treated in constructive ways.

Despite our applied results, the methodological limitations of the study need to be addressed. Firstly, because of the lack of longitudinal data, we are not able to evaluate the empowerment processes of individuals or establish the criteria of empowered individuals. In other words, we are not able to show any causal relations between anti-racist practices and empowerment. Secondly, because of the lack of 'real life data', we are not able to evaluate how these practices actually function in everyday life. Finally, our paper discusses empowerment from a micro-level perspective. The empowerment of a particular young person, for instance, in the premises of a youth club, does not mean empowerment in the fields of the whole society. In spite of the anti-racist stances and practices of youth work, societal power relations and everyday racism continue to exist. Our study only indicates connections between anti-racism and conditions that enable the empowerment of ethnic minority youth.

Considering all the methodological limitations, the aim of this paper is to function as a stepping stone towards more sophisticated analyses on empowering anti-racism. The fourfold table above needs to be further tested and updated with multifaceted longitudinal data conducted in the contexts of mundane encounters between young people and youth educators. In any case, studying empowering anti-racism is highly

important when considering the social integration of ethnic minority youth and societal cohesion in general. Affiliations between ethnic minorities and the Finnish majority seem to be fragile (e.g. Kivijärvi & Harinen 2009) and everyday racism very likely hampers these ties even more. According to both quantitative (e.g. Myllyniemi 2008, 72-73) and qualitative (e.g. Törrönen & Vornanen 2002) studies, peer relations is the most important factor affecting the overall experienced well-being of young people. Finally, addressing racism in the fields of the whole society (instead of only among minorities) is crucial when aiming to create solidarity across group boundaries.

Notes

¹ The notion of ethnic minority youth refers to young people who themselves or whose father or mother were born outside of Finland. Moreover, the notion also covers the 'older' minorities such as Roma and Sami people.

² The agency of ethnic minority youth in the boundaries set by the dominant society and everyday racism has been described abundantly in the research literature. For instance, many ethnic minority youth define themselves as 'foreigners'. It is used as a way to distinguish oneself from the repressive category of 'Finnishness' (e.g. Haikkola 2011). 'Foreign' youth often define themselves as open-minded and cosmopolitan. In this type of self-definition, it is a question of active disengagement rather than repressive exclusion.

³ The negative determination (stigma) of certain groups is not absolute or static. It can be influential only in certain situations and in certain interactions (Goffman 1963).

⁴ In addition to one of the authors (Kivijärvi), also Veronika Honkasalo worked as a researcher in the project.

⁵ Altogether the number of interviewees is 32. This is due to the fact that most of the interviews (7) were done in pairs or with a group.

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EMPOWERING

SOCIAL WORK: RESEARCH & PRACTICE

The concept of empowerment has a central role in modern social work. By shifting to empowering practices, we give the silent voices in our society a better chance of being heard. Through the process of becoming empowered, people gain control of their lives and find ways to take more active roles in society.

EMPOWERING SOCIAL WORK: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE explores empowerment and disempowerment in the light of theoretical constructs linked to social work and social policy, in relation to immigration, well-being and reciprocity. Case studies are used to illustrate empowering and preventive practice in a variety of situations: in child protection, multicultural work, family work, and in working with children and adolescents.

Written by experts from Finnish and Russian Universities, the chapters in this book also cover topics such as multiculturalism and racism in these two countries. Understanding these issues can help professionals to find new ways of engendering mutual trust in client-worker relationships, thus improving the clients' opportunities to make decisions concerning their own lives. This book will inspire researchers, students, and social work practitioners alike.

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