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HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
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Employment does not equal integration

-A study from an immigrant perspective

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Master's thesis
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October 2018

Tiedekunta - Fakultet - Faculty Faculty of Educational Sciences		Laitos - Institution - Department Department of Educational Sciences	
Tekijä - Författare - Author Yasmin Nathalie Samaletdin			
Työn nimi - Arbetets titel - Title Employment does not equal integration – A study from an immigrant perspective			
Oppiaine - Läroämne - Subject Allmän- vuxenpedagogik			
Työn laji/ Ohjaaja - Arbetets art/Handledare - Level/Instructor Master's thesis / Pia Mikander		Aika - Datum - Month and year October 2018	Sivumäärä - Sidoantal - Number of pages 87+3
Tiivistelmä - Referat – Abstract			
<p>Migration is becoming broader and more complex by the day. After the refugee crisis in 2015, the state policies revolving integration were revised in order to better meet the needs of the situation at hand. The revision lead to a strong focus on labour market integration, and consequently a narrower understanding of integration. Previous research shows that employment is the gateway to society, but at the same time it is widely acknowledged that sensing belonging is crucial for well-being, hence also a building block for integration. However, sensing belonging is constantly challenged due to migration.</p> <p>People move to Finland due to very different reasons, and also have different needs, therefore integration needs to be inspected from a broad perspective, taking into account various factors. Questions revolving what the objectives are with integration, and what it means for the individual as well as for the society are predominant when doing research on integration. The aim of this thesis is to place the immigrant in the centre of the discussion, to gain a deeper understanding of what is perceived as meaningful for integration and furthermore to investigate what value employment has within integration for the persons involved. The data was gathered during the spring of 2018, thematic in depth interviews were made with five informants, all of whom are first generation immigrants and have experience of working life in Finland.</p> <p>The results demonstrated that integration is a manifold process, that it was subjective and had a temporal connotation. A unanimous result showed that interactions with society, sensing belonging and employment are central for what is perceived as meaningful for integration. In regards to what the value of employment is within integration, a more shattered result was seen, central experiences were that employment gives financial security, purpose and daily routines. Furthermore, the result showed that perceptions of the value of employment were often loaded with faulty expectations that were not met in real life. The main result showed that employment was not a precondition for integration, neither was employment equal to integration, furthermore a differentiation between being employed and unemployed was far too easy to make, since today a lot of the benefits that a paid job gives can be found in other settings, for example through volunteer work. Despite this, financial security which only derives from a paid job was a precondition for all informants to be able to stay in Finland, and therefore employment was of great value for integration.</p>			
Avainsanat – Nyckelord - Keywords Migration, integration, employment, sensing belonging			
Säilytyspaikka - Förvaringsställe - Where deposited University Of Helsinki – Helda, E-thesis			

Tiedekunta - Fakultet - Faculty Pedagogiska Fakulteten		Laitos - Institution - Department Institutionen för Pedagogik	
Tekijä - Författare - Author Yasmin Nathalie Samaletdin			
Työn nimi - Arbetets titel - Title Employed is not equal for integrated – A study on the perceived value of employment within integration from an immigrant perspective			
Oppiaine - Läroämne - Subject Allmän- vuxenpedagogik			
Työn laji/ Ohjaaja - Arbetets art/Handledare - Level/Instructor Pro gradu avhandling / Pia Mikander		Aika - Datum - Month and year Oktober 2018	Sivumäärä - Sidoantal - Number of pages 87+3
Tiivistelmä - Referat - Abstract			
<p>Migrationen ökar och blir samtidigt också mer komplex. Efter flyktingkrisen år 2015 blev integrationspolitiken uppdaterad för att på ett bättre sätt möta de behov som finns. Förändringen ledde till en stark fokus på arbetsmarknadsintegration och därmed en något snävare syn på integration. Tidigare forskning påvisar att sysselsättning är vägen till att bli en aktiv del av samhället. Samtidigt påvisar också forskning att delaktighet är väsentligt för välmående alltså också en grundläggande del av integration. Delaktigheten utmanas ändå ständigt i och med den ökade migrationen.</p> <p>Människor flyttar till Finland av väldigt olika skäl och med väldigt olika behov, därav borde integration ses på ur ett brett perspektiv. Frågeställningar kring vad integration betyder samt vad målet egentligen är med integration bör vara centrala, då man forskar inom detta fenomenon. Syftet med denna avhandling är att forska i uppfattningar om vad som anses betydelsefullt inom integration samt vidare vilket värde sysselsättning har inom integration, från invandrarens synvinkel. Data har samlats in under våren 2018, genom djupgående tematiska intervjuer med fem första generationens invandrare som alla har någon erfarenhet av arbetslivet i Finland.</p> <p>Resultaten påvisade att integration är en mångfacetterad process, som är subjektiv och har en temporär konnotation. Interaktion med det närliggande samhället, en känsla av delaktighet samt sysselsättning upplevdes som betydelsefullt för integration. I förhållande till vilket värde sysselsättning har för integration sågs ett något mera splittrat resultat. De mest centrala uppfattningarna var att sysselsättning ger ekonomisk trygghet, mening och dagliga rutiner. Vidare upplevde informanterna att sysselsättning ofta innehar felaktiga förväntningar, där verkligheten inte motsvarat de tankar man haft om vad ett arbete kommer att tillföra. Det mest centrala resultatet var att sysselsättning inte är en förutsättning för integration, att flera av informanterna inte upplevt delaktighet i och med sitt arbete men trots detta upplevde de sysselsättning som oerhört viktigt, eftersom det tillförde ekonomisk trygghet, som i många fall möjliggjorde det för informanten att stanna i Finland.</p>			
Avainsanat – Nyckelord - Keywords Migration, integration, sysselsättning, delaktighet			
Säilytyspaikka - Förvaringsställe - Where deposited University Of Helsinki – Helda, E-thesis			

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1. Introduction

Migration has not only become greater in numbers but the reasons for people moving are also becoming wider, which calls for broader understandings of integration. People move because of love, family, studies, work and humanitarian reasons, and so, one size does not fit all (European Migration Network, 2017). For a long time, the main reasons for migrating to Finland, was due to family ties, work and studies. However, this situation changed in 2015 when the number of asylum seekers drastically rose from approximately 3000 to over 32 000. This change in statistics initiated a revision of integration policies and practices which led to a strong focus on labour market integration (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2016). One of the most discussed areas to which integration is being mirrored today is therefore employment, it is also the most researched area within integration (Castles, Korac, Vasta, & Vertovec, 2001). But most importantly, after the number of immigrants rose markedly due to the refugee crisis in 2015, the state sees immigrants as a way of reviving the economy in Finland, as a labour force, and as an answer to the problematics that the aging population is posing on the society. So one of the central practices of the integration program for 2016-2019 is to promote labour market integration for immigrants (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2016). This suggests a somewhat narrow understanding of integration, and while labour market integration is important, a broader understanding of integration would be needed in order to thrive on the diversity that is becoming greater and greater.

While becoming more diverse, Finland as well as many other Nordic countries is becoming more individualistic (The Family Federation of Finland, 2018), which outside from the formal measures for integration, mainly labour market integration, places a lot of responsibility on the individual, on finding the right information and support in order to be able to take part in the Finnish society. Even though integration is a two-way process in Finland, and is supposed to reach out to all immigrants as well as Finns, the right to partake in integration practices has for long only extended to those who are unemployed. During 2011 the laws were revised and nowadays extend to all who have moved to Finland (Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration, 1386/2010). But the idea of integration being mostly about employment still persists and is constantly reproduced through the existing policies (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2016). However as

mentioned before, immigration is becoming broader by the day, and not only jobseekers are crossing borders, but also students, asylum seekers, and people who are already in working life, not to mention their spouses. These immigrants are not left out of integration practices, but the information is harder to get at if you are not a jobseeker, and hence a lot of responsibility falls upon the individual to seek for the right kind of support and information (Mynttinen, 2018). The initiatives that are supported by the state and by EU often comprise employment therefore, employment has become the focus point, mainly to get immigrants into working life as quickly as possible, this is also seen as a solution to most of the problems that society faces in regards to immigration. But from this aspect integration from a more comprehensive perspective is overlooked. There are also several other factors that play a crucial part in positive integration. Some of the discussed phenomenon today are to mention a few, sensing belonging, forming of identity, community and social bonds (Ager & Strang, 2008). Employment doesn't naturally mean that people are active participants in society. A person can be employed and yet feel marginalized and secluded, or in the need of integration but not a jobseeker? So it also boils down to how integration is defined, what does integration mean, for society, for the individual? And what are the actual objectives of integration, to feel part of the society or to be employed?

Globalization is reality and while it is an amazing opportunity for society, it remains a challenge. How can frameworks be built that support the vast profiles that cross the borders, how are people going to feel at home, far away from home? How can opportunities for people to find their place and access the labour market be ensured? According to the Finnish law, integration is regarded successful when immigrants are given the tools needed to actively participate in Finnish society, support in maintaining their culture and language and when different population groups interact peacefully and equally (Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration, 1386/2010). The act on the promotion of immigrant integration which entered into force in 2011, states that integration is a continuous two-way process in which society is changing as it is becoming more diverse while immigrants acquire the skills and competences that they need in society and working life. It is also stated that integration should be promoted in everyday situations and in local communities, in addition to the official measures (Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration, 1386/2011). But how are these measures ensured, and how actively is Finland working towards changing while becoming more diverse? Fortunately, in recent research, integration is looked at from broader perspectives, entailing cohesive wellbeing of immigrants (Ihamäki & Kaljonen,

2014). This stresses the importance to ask the persons involved how they view integration, what it means for them and in which way it might be lacking. Even though it is widely researched that employment has a positive effect on integration I believe that it is of great importance, to take a deeper look into what immigrants perceive as meaningful for integration and how they view the value of employment within integration.

My work experience as an integration coordinator in a small third sector organisation, where I talk to immigrants on a daily basis and come in contact with their life situations and what problems they encounter with integration, has lead me to believe that it is in the encounters with other people that integration is made possible. When understanding increases and we are given space and time to learn from each other's experiences, we are more prone to work together. But with this said, functioning frameworks for integration are also needed, where the individual is an active part and is given latitude, and where integration is seen as a whole, as a part of one's wellbeing, this is seen far too little in the planning of integration practices today (Ihamäki & Kaljonen, 2014). And not only this we also need to take into consideration the broad profiles that are moving, it is crucial for both society and the individual.

With this thesis I want to bring forth the individual experiences of integration practices, explore what is perceived as meaningful for integration and furthermore gain an understanding of what value employment actually has within integration, from an immigrant perspective. I want to problematize the idea of employment being the sole factor for integration and open up for a more comprehensive discussion revolving integration.

2. Migration, integration and the value of employment

In this part of the thesis relevant concepts and definitions surrounding the study will be discussed. First I am going to outline the concepts and clarify the overall situation of immigration in Finland, how Finland has become significantly more diverse during the last 20 years and what implication this has had on society. After which I follow with a discussion revolving integration, the backbone of this study lies upon Ager's & Strang's (2008) attempt to build a conceptual framework for integration, on the state policies revolving integration (Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration, 1386/2010) and on Marie Jahoda's theory of ideal mental health (Jahoda, 1982).

2.2. Immigration to Finland

Immigration is characterised by the phenomenon of people moving to a host country of which they are not natives or where they do not have citizenship. These people move to settle in the host country for work, or other reasons (Statistics in Finland, 2016).

Migration has and will always be a part of human history. As immigration increases, Finland as well as other parts of the world become more diverse. In 1990 Finland, had around 38 000 people of foreign origin while in 2017 the number amounted up to 384 123 people (Statistics in Finland, 2018). As a response to this change integration practices have markedly been developed in the last decades, in a quest to better meet the needs of both the individual immigrant and the society (Ala-Kauhaluoma et al, 2018).

Immigrants cannot be viewed as a coherent group of people. People with very different cultural, language, and societal backgrounds move to Finland. Therefore, it poses problems when immigrants are considered a homogenous group (Ala-Kahaluoma et al., 2018). Being an immigrant does not say anything about the possibilities of being able to make use of practises that are meant to support integration, instead taking into consideration, why a person has moved, from where, in what age, profession, cultural understandings and social networks is important and all have an impact on the integration process (Ala-kahaluoma et al., 2018).

So the immigrant profile is incredibly broad and people move due to a wide range of reasons. As we move towards an even more globalized world, the frameworks for working life also change. Because of this, more and more people move to Finland in the hopes of work. But

this is not the only, nor the most prominent reason (Nieminen, Sutela, & Hannula, 2015). People move from very different backgrounds, according to statistics 27% of the people who have moved to Finland in 2017 have done so due to reasons correlated to family (EMN, 2018). People also move for other reasons such as studies, work, and to seek for asylum (EMN, 2018).

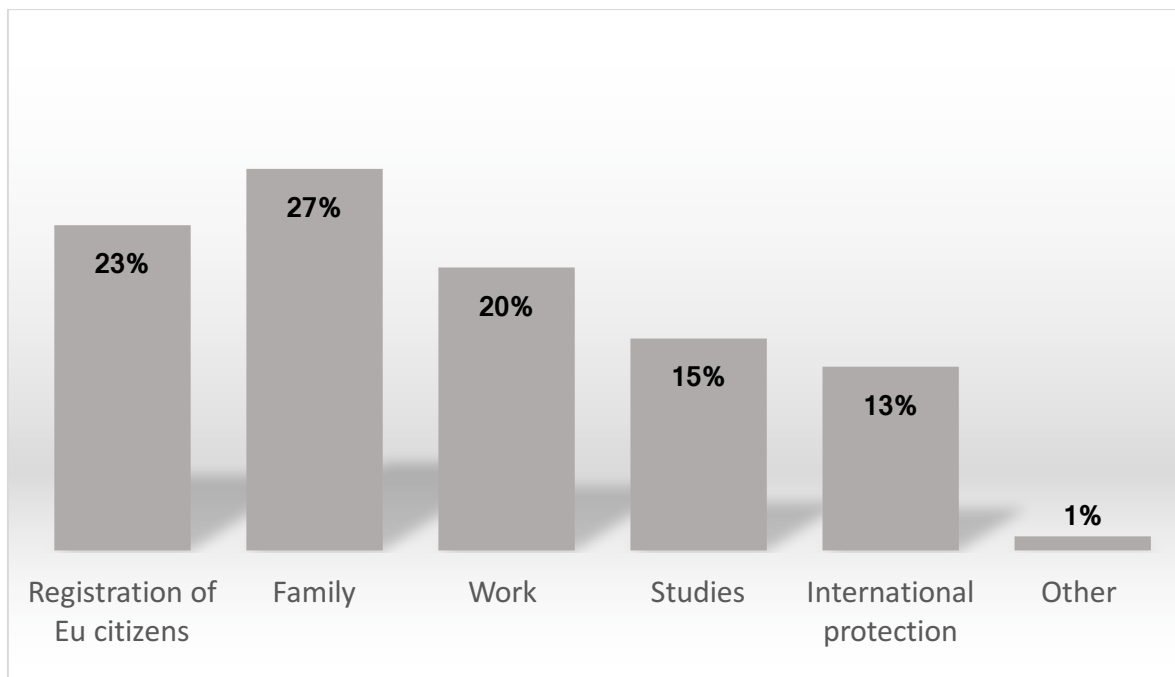


Figure 1. Registrations of EU-citizens and reasons for granting residence permits for third world country residents.

Source: Finnish Immigration Service 2018

We have seen a big rise in immigration statistics in the last 10 years. This is due to several reasons, for example wars and conflict in the Middle East and Northern Africa. But also because of better opportunities in work, people from Estonia and Russia emigrate to Finland. The idea of Finland being viewed as a well fare state, has been considered one reason for people moving here, but more importantly it opens a political debate. Especially when mirroring this to the aging population structure in Finland, since there are currently more deaths than births (Yijälä, 2016). As well as in years before, Finland's population increase is solely due to immigration (European Migration Network, 2018). Also both highly educated and illiterate immigrants move to Finland, this further explains and stresses the heterogeneity of immigrants (Nieminen et al., 2015). So the ongoing population change and the broad profiles of people who move here are posing challenges on society as well as on integration practices, Finland needs immigrants and therefore well thought of measures that

take into account immigrants wellbeing and integration as a whole, and also acknowledge the vast profiles and different needs that these people have, need to be developed.

2.3. Towards a more diverse society

Immigration can be inspected through many different lenses. History has steered the way people use current definitions. Therefore, how certain phenomena are discussed becomes important, this is how people construct an idea of us and others. Words can be either inclusive or exclusive and especially when discussing meetings between people from different backgrounds, it is essential to give thought to how frames are being built around these politically loaded concept.

Immigrant is a term which, has a somewhat a negative connotation in our society. The term underlines difference and borders, which can become problematic. Not only because people who are in the immigrant position per definition might not actually see themselves as immigrants but also because people construct difference through this notion (Nieminen, 2011; Wrede 2010). For example, successful people are seldom defined as immigrants (Mikander & Holm, 2014)

In research the term immigrant is used for someone who is born abroad (Rapo, 2011). While in Finnish statistics the term of foreign origin is often used. This term is characterized by someone whose both or only parent is born abroad. In addition to the term immigrant, terms like migrant, asylum seeker, refugee, remigrant, foreigner or foreign-born are used. In statistics as well as in everyday life these definitions create discussion and political debate, first because we misinterpret and might not know what group of people we are referring to when we are discussing for example immigrants, but also because statistics are dependent upon these definitions and categorizations (Rapo, 2011). To be able to do research categorizations need to be made (Rapo, 2011). And also I need to define what I mean by which definition the discussion around concepts is essential. In this thesis, I will use the term immigrant of a person who is born in a foreign country and does not speak Finnish or Swedish as their mother tongue. I use this term, while being aware that immigrants are a heterogeneous group of people. Immigration and integration, are the backbones of my study to which my informants' experiences are being mirrored. As Wrede (2010) suggests the term is not problem free, since we tend to categorize people through the term. Being an immigrant

is not something anyone is born with, rather it is used to mark differences in society (Wrede, 2010). Consequently, awareness of how terms are being used and in what situation is important. Immigration is a constantly changing phenomenon in Finland, for this reason the terminology around it is not made permanent. For example, Rapo (2011) discusses that especially in statistics the diversity of the different terms might become problematic, since there are so many and they are not made definitive.

2.3.1. Subcategories

Even though there are straight forward frameworks for different definitions, in everyday life we tend to use them without giving too much thought to the legal definitions. While the terms refugee and asylum seeker have a stricter definition the term immigrant or migrant is broadly defined as a person who crosses national borders, consequently this term includes people who have moved due to several different reasons, for example work related, studies or love (Statistics in Finland, 2016). All the terms have a temporal connotation and categorizations change over time and situations. The difference between the terms can be somewhat blurry. An asylum seeker refers to a person who has not yet received a permit to stay, who is in the process of seeking asylum. While the term refugee is often used for a pretty broad spectrum of people who have moved, we might talk of refugees in many different contexts. Despite this there is a specific definition, UNCHR (The UN Refugee Agency) describes a refugee as:

“Refugees are fleeing conflict or persecution. They are defined and protected in international law, and must not be expelled or returned to situations where their life and freedom is at risk” (UNCHR, 2016)

The term refugee refers to a person who is displaced and has been forced to migrate and cannot return home safely. Until a formal claim for asylum is made and the person is granted the status of refugee contracting the UNCHR he or she is formally an asylum seeker (Weis, 1961).

2.4. Integration

Integration is an interdisciplinary and at times a tumultuous concept, it is a word used by many but understood differently by most. It is a concept that has a lot of closely related concepts such as inclusion, acculturation and adaptation, to mention a few. It is a contextual and often contested concept (Robinson, 1998). It is a heated topic, both within politics, friends and family. And unfortunately, in the public discourse a lot of societal challenges are traced back to integration, or the lack of it. It is often something that separates thoughts and creates debates. It is generally accepted that there is no normative definition for the concept of integration, it is continuously controversial. Despite this integration is both a stated policy goal as well as a desired outcome of several initiatives and projects revolving migration (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2018).

Today according to Finnish policies, integration is seen as something that changes both immigrants and the host country, as a two-way process. Despite being a fairly new phenomenon we can trace it back to older theories revolving integration. Integration is discussed through many different terms both in research and in society. Rubin, Watt and Ramelli (2012) state that integration is a structured process in which people from different backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities engage in a dialogue with each other in order to achieve peaceful social relations. Often referred to in research on integration is John W. Berry's theory on acculturation (1997). Berry (1997) uses the concept of acculturation to describe the phenomenon of cultural meetings. More specifically the term acculturation refers to the individual's and the society's behavioural processes in an altered cultural context. Berry (1997) holds that cultures seldom are equal, co-existing equally is in Berry's (1997) opinion problematic, consequently one culture will most likely come to be stronger than the other one. Integration is often referred to as a type of acculturation strategy in which immigrants have succeeded in maintaining their cultural identity but still are able to construct a network and contact with the host country (Berry, 1997). Alterations in culture happen on both individual and societal levels, changes also differ on individual level, people react in different ways and with different strategies within acculturation. Berry (1997) suggests that there are four different stages of acculturation: When immigrants are separated from their original cultural identity and strive to take part only in the new culture it is referred to as assimilation. The second strategy is separation whereby an ethnic group wants to maintain their cultural identity and avoids contact with other groups. Marginalization is the third strategy and here the interest and chances for maintaining ones' own culture is low, also the

interest in interaction with other groups is low. The fourth stage is when a person is able to keep their own cultural identity while keeping interacting with other cultures and groups, this is referred to as integration (Berry, 1997). Within integration the society strives after cultural diversity and interaction between and amongst groups is mutual.

Berry suggests four different stages to describe integration. Integration is in his terms successful when a minority is able to interact and sense belonging with the surrounding society but at the same time maintain relations and feel involved in their own ethnic group (Berry, 1997). If a person is unable to sense belonging to both the majority and the ethnic group, it is defined as marginalization. If then again the person is not able to value his or her own ethnic group but is able to form bonds with the majority, Berry (1997) describes it as assimilation. The fourth and last stage of his integration model is called separation, where the ethnic group only senses belonging amongst the group but not with the surrounding society (Berry, 1997).

But who is to define what integration really means? Integration is a power play on many levels, and one could ask, who is to integrate who and with whom? What are the actual objectives of integration? Integration derives from the latin word integer, which refers to being whole or complete (Merriam Webster, 2018). According to Pyykkönen (2007) integration thus means to become whole, to unite. Within the politics of migration and minorities, integration is a state or process where members of minorities are in continuous interaction with the members of the majority, while retaining their own cultural identity, this is also strengthened by Berry's (1997) theory on acculturation (Mäkikalli, Siivonen & Forsander, 2000). So the ideal state of integration would encompass equal interactions between the minority and the majority, exchanges of thoughts, values and habits, learning from each other. But in reality as Berry (1997) also states, cultures are not equal settings. Pyykkönen (2007) continues in like manner and argues that in practice, integration is more about the minority becoming a part of the majority than about equal interactions and reciprocity. Again the question of power rises. So immigrants are to learn the language and embrace norms and values of the majority around them, in order to become integrated. These structures are built in accordance with the majority and for immigrants to be active participants of society, they need to take part in the same processes of socialization and institutional activities as members of the majority (Pyykkönen, 2007). This lessens

immigrant's autonomy and weakens the possibility to retain their own cultural heritage, while it poses a question of how active immigrants can be in their own integration process. In research on immigration, integration is often divided into structural integration and social integration. In relation to society, integration is thus both structural and social. Structural integration encompasses formal integration, for example gaining access to the labour market or education. Whilst social integration is more loosely defined, it encompasses social relations, networks and feelings of belonging (Ekholm, 1994). Since the latter is much more difficult to measure, labour market integration often comes to be the measurement for successful integration. The latter also entails attitudes of the majority towards minorities, and is more contextual and dynamic (Pyykkönen, 2007), hence also more difficult to touch upon.

2.4.1. Social integration

As mentioned before, integration is a broad concept, that encompasses both structural and social integration. In the following chapter I discuss social integration as a part of integration as a whole. I want to challenge the discussion where employment is often seen as the most prominent factor for integration, and open up for a broader understanding of integration. Social integration refers to daily interactions between people, attitudes, social networks, feelings of belonging and communities (Lockwood, 1964). Even though the general discourse often points at employment as the most prominent factor for integration, studies show that social relationships and feelings of acceptance are needed for integration (Nieminen et al., 2015; Ihamäki & Kaljonen, 2014; Liebkind, 1994; Soon, Bishop & Drew; Rubin, Watt & Remelli, 2012).

Karmela Liebkind (1994) holds that social integration means that immigrants have the possibility to experience themselves as equal citizens, with rights and obligations. Feelings of inclusion are supported by both immigrants and the surrounding community's attitudes and activities (See e.g. Liebkind, 1994 & Pyykkönen, 2007). Social integration is formed communally; the notion supports the idea of an individual feeling a part of something bigger. Whether this be a neighbourhood, or a community built on common interests or a nationality. In communities' people are given the opportunity to take on different roles, interact with others and construct a social identity and sense belonging. Communities open up possibilities where people can identify with something that is of importance for them. Research shows that sense of belonging affects wellbeing and hence has a positive impact

on integration (Soon, Bishop and Drew, 1999). But social integration has several other important benefits for immigrants (Rubin et al., 2012). It works as a facilitator for intergroup contact and consequently improves the relations between majorities and minorities. It is said to help immigrants access their social capital in the new country of residence and consequently support the overall success of integration. Successful social integration is said to reduce health risks such as psychological distress and risk of suicide which are often heightened amongst immigrants with refugee background (Rubin et al., 2012).

2.4.2. Structural integration

Structural integration, as the name suggests, refers to a process where a person becomes part of the society through actively participating and interacting in the structures of society, for example through gaining access the labour market or education (Lockwood, 1964). The Finnish integration policies is based on the assumption that the activation, i.e. employment of immigrants is essential for integration (Davydova, 2012). So, labour market integration is said to be the answer to better integration. It is also the most researched area within integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). In 2014 the employment rate was 10% weaker amongst foreign-born than Finns. But amongst people who had lived here for over ten years the gap is significantly lower. So the difference declines over time, but can still be seen (Nieminen et al., 2015). In December 2017 the TE-offices, the public employment and business services in Finland, where you register in case you become unemployed, have had 30 150 foreign born jobseeker clients and about 14 000 working job seekers, which points to the prevalence of part time jobs amongst immigrants. The activity rate amongst immigrants is higher than amongst natives, so immigrants participate in labour market measures more actively than natives (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2018). But still, the question of how to get immigrants into working life faster remains and is one of the biggest concerns of politics today (Amnesty International, 2016). But whether that is the most prominent issue of integration today can be discussed. It is also important to state that not all immigrants are capable to work or working age, neither do all immigrants in working life necessarily feel integrated in society. So again, the question of how integration is defined becomes essential.

The employment rate is almost the same between foreign-born men and natives whilst the gap is compellingly higher between women. Women have a harder time to access the labour market. This is due to weak employability and can be linked to cultural differences, like

early additions to the family (Nieminen et al., 2015). Could we ask ourselves if there would be faster gateways to employment and thus integrations if some other basic foundations like sense of belonging would be in place? People who move due to work or studies have had a better employment rate in 2014 than natives, whilst immigrants with refugee background from third world countries, Africa and the Middle-East are those who have the weakest position on the labour market (Nieminen et al., 2015, p.75). But this is also a far too simple separation to be made, immigrants are a heterogenic group of people, with different backgrounds different needs and aspirations for the future.

2.4.3. The framework of Finnish integration policies

The Finnish law of integration came into practice 1.9.2011 and is a response to the rapidly changing society where diversity has increased markedly. The law is constructed to support immigrants in enabling them to become active agents of the Finnish society. The objective is to promote equality and positive interactions amongst different ethnic groups. The aim of successful integration is as mentioned before to give the tools to enable the immigrant to actively take part in society whilst promoting and supporting the person to maintain his or her own language and culture (The act on the promotion of immigrant integration, 30.12.2010/1386: 1 §, 3 §, 20 §.)

2.4.4. The conceptual framework of integration

As mentioned before employment is one of the chore areas to which the success of integration has been measured (Castles et al. 2001). Several studies conclude that gaining employment is the most prominent reason for successful integration. Through this analytical discussion on integration, I want to discuss employment but also bring forth other factors that are researched to have an impact on the success of integration. My understanding of integration goes further than the spectrum of employment. Therefore, I have chosen to make use of a theory based on broad qualitative research on integration, that examines many different domains that are researched to have an impact on integration. Ager and Strang (2008) have created a framework revolving integration. The theory suggests ten domains that help us understand, discuss and analyse perceptions of integration. I am going to use

this framework as a support in analysing and mirroring how immigrants perceive their integration process to bigger societal frameworks.

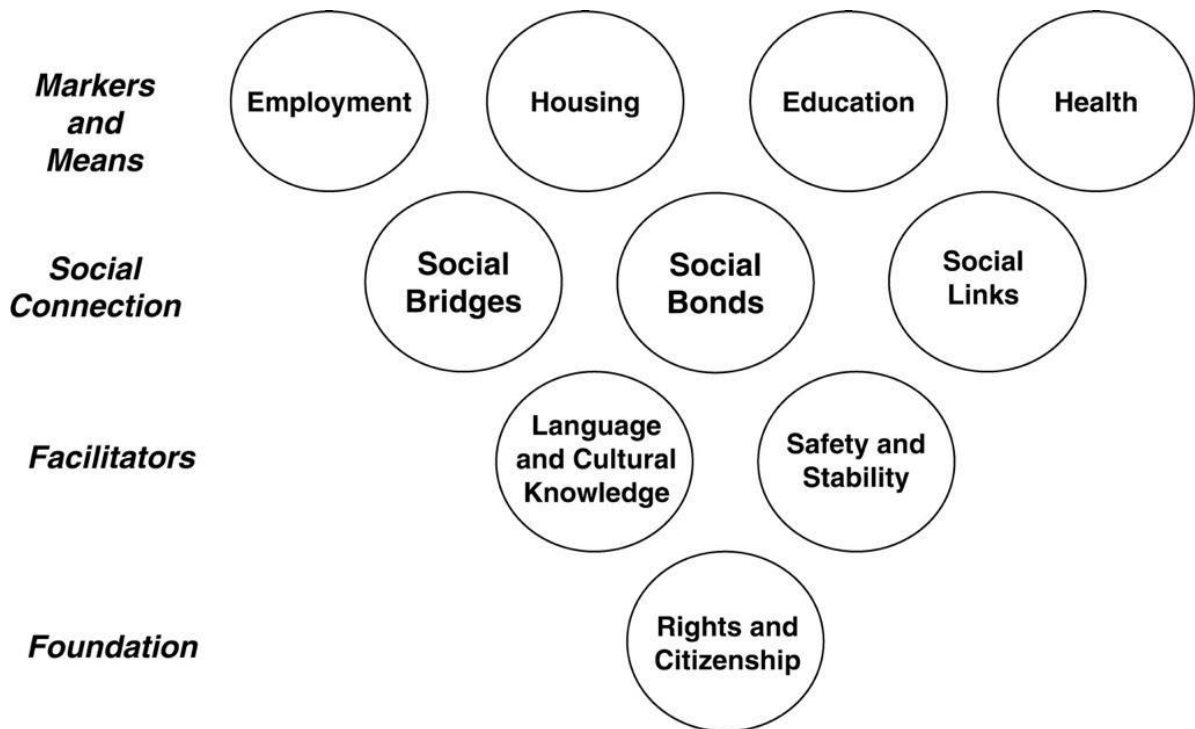


Figure 2

The framework is built of four different indicators that are researched to have an impact on integration. Starting off with markers and means as the first indicator of successful integration, it comprises four domains; employment, housing, education and health. Ager and Strang (2008) hold that these are not only outcomes of integration, but they also serve as a means to that end. Meaning that these domains support the achievement in other areas (Ager & Strang, 2008). The first indicators are named markers, because the success in these domains are an indication of positive integration, and means because the success is likely to have an impact on the wider integration process. The markers and means represent the “public face” of integration, the factors often discussed and researched (Castles et al. 2001) but they do not increase our understanding of how integration is perceived by the people who are in the process of it. Therefore, the next indicator, named social connections has emerged from research within social capital and the importance it has within integration. Relationships are key to both the definition and achievement of integration, and has therefore found its’ natural place in the framework. The second indicator has three different domains;

social bridges which are connections within a community, social bridges which are connections with members of other communities and lastly social links which refers to connections with institutions and government services. All of these social relationships play an important role in integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). The next indicator goes under the heading of facilitators and has two domains: language and cultural knowledge and safety and stability. These represent key factors that facilitate the integration process. Gaining cultural competences is researched to be an important factor to effectively integrate into the broader society, this is also a policy in the Finnish integration law. This could for example be language, but also broader competences such as sufficient information and knowledge regarding local procedures and customs. This domain does not only reach to the immigrant's knowledge of the host country but also comprises native's knowledge about immigrant's culture (Ager & Strang, 2008). The other domain within this indicator is Safety and stability, and is part of an even wider spectrum of integration, where you look at phenomenon like racism, permanence, continuity which are crucial for being able to build relationships and hence an important factor for integration. The last indicator in the framework is called foundation under which there is a domain called rights and citizenship. This is the basis upon which expectations and obligations for the process of integration are being established. This comprises phenomenon such as entitlements and rights and is an often discussed topic within integration studies. And also, an intrinsic part of the integration policies, where it is stated that it is both the society's obligation to give immigrants sufficient knowledge and tools that are needed to flourish in a new country as it is the individual's responsibility to make use of these tools (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2018).

This framework does not seek to give a "carved into stone" kind of theory for integration, but it is built in order to make it easier to see patterns and analyse the relationships between the different domains. The framework is not built as a hierarchy, i.e. it is not stated that employment is needed in order to be able to build social connections, hence no indicator is proposed to be more important than another, but rather the framework shows how they can be intertwined. The framework can be read from bottom to top, or top to bottom, or in any random order. You can explore different pathways through the framework. This helps me when analysing my material, and making sense of the individual process of integration, the causal reactions and relationships between different factors that are researched to have an impact on integration. This framework is going to be the backbone of my study.

2.5. Migration as a challenge for belonging

One of the biggest reported challenges of successful integration is to find a Finnish network. Immigrants often spend time with people that share the same ethnic background, because they are finding it problematic to come in contact with natives. On the other hand, studies show that people who move with family and surround themselves with people from their own background are positively affected by this in terms of wellbeing. It is said that family creates a balance between working life and spare time and highlights a more holistic integration process (Vitasovic, 2012). Also, the support from a significant other might help in relieving possible psychological distress from moving. Within integration this is important since mental strain as a result of psychological distress is seen as a disturbance in the integration process (see e.g. Berry, 1997). Psychological well-being predicts better performance and work efficiency, this again might be seen as relevant for an immigrant's career development and thus also a long term solution for economic adaptation (Yijälä, 2016). Empirical evidence points to the fact that a native spouse promotes economic adaptation, which as mentioned earlier is a relevant dimension of integration (Yijälä, 2016). Despite this it is evident that, an immigrant's willingness towards contacting the native population, and the native population's attitudes towards immigrant's, is a prediction of the positioning in society (see e.g. Liebkind, Jasinskaja-Lahti, Mähönen, 2012). Several studies conclude that bonds made with natives contribute to the integration process. A simple reason for this is that immigrants through their relationship with natives encounter sources for relevant information as the immigrant gets to know the new environment. Contacts with natives also support language training, which has a positive effect on integration. A more profound reason is that people, through encounters with others find common ground, which might result in more understanding between different groups and furthermore in a sense of community (Yijälä, 2016).

Social networks also contribute with other relevant aspects. Today, people are often employed through contacts. Therefore, it is also desired for immigrants to build up their own networks in order to not become excluded from the labour market (Ahmad, 2005). Studies show that social networks are strongly linked to trust. According to Niemelä (2009) an individual is through trust able to become an active agent in society. Trust is also said to contribute positively to job-hunting and can therefore also be viewed as an important factor for successful integration (Niemelä, 2009). It is said that an immigrant usually gets his or

her first job through contacts after which he or she can affect the employment situation more (Pehkonen, 2006).

Ahmad (2005) has studied what effects networks have when immigrants are searching for jobs. Ahmad (2005) argues that a newcomer's ethnic background, family and relatives are resources that one can resort to and through which a jobseeker can better ones social and economic position in the new country of residence. The study concludes that social networks also contribute to better positions in the labour market, whereas it would be important for immigrants to build networks over ethnic borders (Ahmad, 2005).

The idea of belonging is constantly challenged by immigration. Sense of belonging and mutual understanding could be understood as one of the solutions to more effective integration (Orton, 2012). According to Orton (2012) positive interactions and empowerment are building blocks for a sense of belonging and a shared identity. In this context belonging, identity, interaction and empowerment become intertwined, all dependent on each other in one way or another. Valentine and Sporton (2009) conform to this by stating that identity is a fluid concept that is continuously reshaped through our actions with 'others'.

One could therefore argue that our identities rely upon our positions in society, and therefore also to which extent we feel belonging. Having multiple identities and sensing 'difference' can complicate the core of who we believe we are. Martin (in Yuval-Davis, 2004) argues that it is in the narratives of creating selves and others that we constitute identity. Comparably Lawler (2008) focuses on the notion of sameness and differences in the creation of identity. Hall (1996) suggests that identities are more likely to be a product of marking differences and exclusion than they are of sameness. The concept of difference thus becomes central to building identity. This points to the current political situation and the construction of identities as insiders and outsiders, as a way of building up boundaries. This is where the immigrants become the 'others'. Which generates challenges in creating a sense of belonging or building community over cultural differences. This notion has its roots in a sense of otherness that Said (1978) discussed as a European identity that prospered through contrasting itself from the orient, which was seen as inferior. Hall (1996) also draws upon the west and the east to explain how national identities have been constructed through the history of time and what consequences this might have for the notions and constructions of

identities today. Ager and Strang (2008) also bring forth the discussion revolving national identity in connection to citizenship and rights and successful integration and hold that national identities incorporates certain values which directly influence how we approach integration. For example, in Germany citizenship is strongly linked to blood ties, not being born in Germany which affects how we view culture and identity, and points to high cultural assimilation, which has its' implications on structures of integration (ibid.).

Identity becomes complex for immigrants because of their lives often being characterized by marginalisation (Krulfeld & Camino, 1994). Immigrants tend to be in an in between state, balancing between their old lives, identities and fitting into the new society. Trying to become integrated without losing the sense of security from their background. This can create confusion and even loss of identity, particularly among young refugees who travel without their family(Krulfeld & Camino, 1994). This can also be traced back to the discussion of different types of acculturation as Berry (1997) pointed out.

Due to the recent refugee crisis, the ideas of belonging and identity are being challenged, not only because of migration but also because the fundamentals of ones' identity are being shaken. Family is left behind, educational background might not be of significance and furthermore language becomes a barrier and thus a hinder for integration.

Abraham Maslow (1943) states that one of the key motivations for humans is the feeling of belonging to something bigger. In the field of immigration, sense of belonging is both motivating and important. It is even said that belonging is not a pure aspiration of humans but a need that we all have (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). When it comes to integration sense of belonging can go a long way in helping the individual become part of the society.

One can conclude that sense of belonging is a complex notion (Nieminen, 2016). It is a concept that is linked to identity and interaction, and does not work strictly on its own. Several factors of social life and being, affect sense of belonging to a community or group. I am going to use these concepts as tools to approach how immigrants view their integration process and what kind of factors are perceived as meaningful for successful integration.

2.6. Language as a challenge for integration

Language is considered an essential part of the integration process. Knowing one of the two official languages is of assistance in everyday life as well as a factor for gaining employment and or education (Forsander, 2002). Language skills can therefore be seen as one of the core conditions for successful integration. According to Forsander (2002) education and work experience do not hold value until the language proficiency is good enough to be able to express education and experience through language. In today's society, the frameworks might look a bit different, often the English language is universal and in most organizational settings English is the most common language. Therefore, it can be suggested that the need and importance of learning either Finnish or Swedish straight away, is dependent on what you want to achieve. Expatriates who move here for longer periods of time might never learn the Finnish or Swedish language, and one can question why this is not seen as such a big problem? Despite this language has an important role in constructing one's identity. It is a tool for communication and a cognitive ability which underlines the importance of language within integration and notions of belonging (Ochs, 1993).

There are several challenges in learning a new language. The most apparent is that immigrants at an early stage of the integration process might not have a big Finnish network which leads to the lack of using the language in practice. Often limited to the spouses' family and friends, or neighbouring hello's or authorities, the contact that immigrants have with natives consequentially becomes somewhat narrow and thus complicates learning the language (Forsander 2002). Another challenge is that especially the Finnish language is unlike other languages and therefore an immigrant might find it difficult to grasp (Forsander, 2002). Even though one might be able to make it in the Finnish society without actually learning one of the official languages, a lot of employers today, especially in positions requiring a higher education, require a good level of Finnish, this can become a hinder for labour market integration (Forsander, 2002).

2.7. The value of employment

Since integration is often mirrored to employment or the lack of it, I find it necessary to take a deeper look into employment and the value of it. This in order to be able to examine what value being employed has for the individual and furthermore how this can be seen in the context of integration.

The first research on unemployment that gained broad publicity was the work of Marie Jahoda in the 1930's (Jahoda, 1982). In Marienthal, a small Austrian village, a lot of its' residents had become unemployed since the local factory shut down. Jahoda (1982) aimed at explaining employment and unemployment, what benefits being in working life had, and what happened when people were left outside working life. For example, Jahoda (1982) touched upon areas like time structure, the importance of sensing purposefulness and being part of something greater, a community. In the 1930's unemployment led to misery, due to lacking societal structures and support systems. During the 70's further interest for researching unemployment rose due to the oil crisis. During this time it came to be seen as a societal problem. So, Jahoda (1982) posed the question of why unemployment was still causing people misery despite the fact that societal support was increasing. Later on, on the basis of her fieldwork, Jahoda (1982) developed a theory on ideal mental health also called the deprivation theory, which encompassed five different categories that were so called hidden benefits of employment that affected well-being. These are:

1. A Time structure during the waking day
2. Social contacts outside the chore family and shared interests with these
3. Collective purposes and achievements that transcend those of an individual
4. Social status and a clarified social identity
5. And regular activity

These categories of experience answer to the needs of most people who try and make sense out of their existence. Furthermore, Jahoda (1982) stated that modern employment is not the only structure in industrialized societies that is able to meet these needs, but the only one that ensured economical safety at the same time, therefore also the most dominant one (Jahoda, 1982).

The first category comprises notions of a *time structure* during the waking day. This refers to routines that having a job gives you and that unemployed according to the theory are deprived of (Jahoda in Edwards & Hansson, 1992). Our society is built on the assumption of a structure of the waking part of the day, this can in a sense be seen as a requirement active participants of the society. A structured day is constructed through school and prepares children for the future where almost all paid jobs in require to be able to follow a timetable. Jahoda (in Edwards & Hansson, 1992) holds that losing a structured day through unemployment might have negative impacts on individuals, in terms of losing a sense of time and the difference between leisure and work.

The second category comprises *social contacts* outside the chore family and shared values with these. Through employment, one is usually forced to have social contacts with other people. Jahoda (in Edwards & Hansson, 1992) explains how the social contacts of unemployed reduce, firstly because it doesn't come naturally through employment but also because unemployed might sense a feeling of shame because of their situation, which lessens their will to contact other people. This might affect wellbeing, and make it harder to reach out to people. Jahoda (in Edwards & Hansson, 1992) stresses that social contacts through family do not hold the same value as contacts with colleagues or people outside the chore family, social contacts through work are less emotional and therefore important in order to be able to reason.

The third category comprises *collective purpose* that transcend those of an individual. The research made by Jahoda in the 1930's shows that unemployed sensed futility in regards to their everyday life. Not having a collective purpose that would drive them towards a goal, led to feelings of uselessness. Jahoda (in Edwards & Hansson, 1992) held that the everyday matter of not coming home from work but coming home from doing nothing in particular had an impact on being able to sense purpose in life. Individuals need to partake in a collective effort in order to sense individual value, this Jahoda (in Edwards & Hansson, 1992) held that unemployed were deprived of this.

The fourth category comprises *social status and a social identity*. According to Jahoda (in Edwards & Hansson, 1992) it is part of the modern industrial society that employment has an impact on social status. She holds that different occupations have different statuses, and that people often see social status and social identity as something intertwined, even though

she (in Edwards & Hansson, 1992) separates between them. People tend to use social statuses linked to certain professions as a way of explaining themselves and their identity. People who are not in working life might therefore sense a loss of identity, since their social status is no longer connected to a profession (Jahoda in Edwards & Hansson, 1992).

The fifth and last category of the deprivation model comprises regular activity. Jahoda holds that differences in being unemployed and employed are significant in terms of regular activity. She explains how this becomes especially visible within professions where people are not being able to perform similar activities once outside the labour force (Jahoda in Edwards & Hansson, 1992).

The theory is nowadays seen as classic. According to Jahoda (1982) being unemployed causes psychosocial distress and psychological problems. In other words, unemployment poses problems because work does not offer the unemployed a possibility to structure their time, regular and shared efforts with colleagues, a strengthened social status or identity and or regular activity (Waters & Moore, 2002). Jahoda (1982) holds that unemployed are deprived of all five categories.

Especially when long term, unemployment can affect a person's mental health. But the risks are significantly lower if free time is filled with purposeful activities. Social connections, volunteering or feeling part of a community can therefore play an important role when unemployed, and ease the psychosocial distress (Waters & Moore, 2002). Therefore, making the separation between unemployed and employed can in the case of integration be too simplified. Finding purposeful activities can be difficult when you are left outside of the structures that usually provide you with them. So unemployed are expected to be active even though the resources for that are minimal (Waters & Moore, 2002). So today we often come to discuss the dichotomy of passive and active, which in itself already poses problems, and simplifies the broad phenomenon of mental health and unemployment. The same problems exist for immigrants, and as mentioned before a lot of the responsibility is put on the individual, despite the fact that the people involved don't have sufficient information or knowledge of where to find support. Especially immigrants who are in transition periods, or left outside the formal systems of integration, might find themselves in challenging positions. Therefore, today a lot of initiatives aim at activating these people. Through activating unemployed, society aspires to prevent marginalization and increase wellbeing.

Since Jahoda (1982) has a broad understanding of the value of work and the effects it has on the individual and also touches upon areas that are of importance and interest for this specific study I find her theory useful for both planning of study and analysing of my data.

3. Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to explore different perceptions that immigrants have of integration and what they perceive as meaningful within that discussion. Furthermore, the aim is to increase the understanding of what value employment actually has within integration, from an immigrant perspective. I want to give immigrants a voice in the integration discussion through exploring how they value employment and what they feel it brings to them as individuals. Furthermore, I want to problematize the general discussion where employment is often seen as the most prominent factor for integration and wellbeing.

1. What is perceived as meaningful for integration by the respondents?
2. How do the respondents perceive the value of employment within integration?

4. Methods

Doing research entails making choices throughout the process. These choices are almost always problematic (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2015). In the following chapter I will outline the methods used in the study. I will discuss choices that have been made before, during and after the gathering of data and argue for why these are relevant. I will start off by giving an overview of the process of the study, after which I will discuss what research practices I have followed and why. Followed by a presentation of how I have gathered my data and how the data has been analysed. Lastly ethical considerations and reliability will be discussed. My preconception lies on the notion of social constructivism, where people construct their reality in interplay with others (Wenneberg, 2001).

4.2. The research process

To start off with I worked with framing my research area and the questions into a meaningful context. My interest for the phenomenon of integration, has already for a long time been present. Starting off with studies in adult education to crystallizing them during my exchange period where I studied anthropology of education and globalization, to later on actually working with integration and trying to build bridges between immigrant's and natives. The area of interest was always clear, but as mentioned before, integration is not as easily understood and hence it took a while to frame the idea of what I wanted to study. It is said that a good question is already half the answer, therefore I took my time mapping what I sought to answer with this study (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2015). Before knowing that much of the grass root level of the field, I was mostly interested in labour market integration. But after working for several years with the target group, I started sensing a frustration around this topic. I saw a public discourse that always pointed to employment or the lack of it, how many societal problems often came to be appointed to the employment of immigrants. Therefore, slowly but surely I came to feel that I needed to challenge this, the way society was built, the way we looked at integration, the way I understood the meaning of integration. So my interest shifted towards the social aspect of integration. In my work as an integration coordinator in a small third sector organization that works with children, youth and immigrants, as well as with the thesis, this shift meant a lot of new readings and literature reviews. Coming to find that there was a research gap in qualitative research on the perceptions of what value employment actually has for the individual, from the immigrant's point of view. This and the frustration I was sensing from the target group, and later on my

own frustration of trying to emphasize the importance of social integration for wellbeing, led me to the final theme of this study. I remember that I encountered people who were employed, but did not feel at home, did not feel integrated. This really was a turning point for me both professionally and personally. So, through exploring what value employment has for the individual I wanted to open up a more comprehensive discussion revolving integration.

I continued outlining the phenomenon, through reviewing literature, both from a Finnish and an international context. The amount of research that is made on immigration and integration is extensive, and at times it felt overwhelming. What I came to realize though was that there was a gap, where employment was seldom looked at critically through the immigrant's perspective. Hence I wanted to discuss this, and pose questions of what if, what if employment does not give you a greater network, what if employment does not give you security? I felt like I needed to look at the perceptions of what value employment has and if reality then conforms to these perceptions. The theoretical framework was built through examining previous research, reading books and online journals, and a review of state policies. I was sure that I wanted to make use of oral history as a method, but after a pilot interview and getting to know the field better, I soon came to notice that this only made me more confused, since the information gathered was so extensive. So I decided to make use of a phenomenographic approach, where the idea is to look at different perceptions of the same phenomenon, often through semi structured interviews, this enabled me to focus more but still left a lot of space for open discussions. Since the idea with this study is to discuss the fact that one size does not fit all, and that individual experiences are in fact individual, I found it natural to resort to a phenomenographic approach, where differences in expressions rather than trying to find a unifying meaning is seen as essential. I will discuss my approach more in depth later on.

The data was gathered through conducting semi structured interviews with six immigrants. All informants were able to choose where they wanted to meet, some suggested their home, while others wanted to meet in the library where I had booked a room. The sample was picked randomly, I sent out a research call through the newsletter of the organization I work for, to reach the right target group. After which I waited for them to contact me. Interviews lasted between 1,5h-2h each and were all recorded and transcribed afterwards, this enabled

me to focus on the person I had in front of me, and made it easier to build rapport. I will discuss the gathering of data more closely later on.

After the transcription, the data was analysed, using the theoretical guidelines for analysing phenomenographic data. This supported me along the process. Lastly a presentation of results was gathered through the analysis and mirrored towards previous research and the theoretical framework.

4.3. A qualitative research practice

Phenomenon can always be studied from various perspectives, people pose questions and interpret things with their understanding. In other words, the same thing can be described in many different ways (Hirsjärvi et al., 2015). This is how we can explain the difference between qualitative and quantitative research. While quantitative research aims at answering questions like how much or how often, qualitative research is characterized by questions that relate to how something is understood and perceived (Hirsjärvi et al., 2015). As Hirsjärvi et al. (2015) puts it the premise for qualitative research is the description of the actual life, this thought encompasses the notion that reality is manifold. This research seeks to understand different perceptions that immigrants have of integration, thus I find it natural to resort to a qualitative research approach. Until the 1960's there was a dominating thought revolving educational sciences where research was seen as something objective, where the researcher with observations could describe an objective truth from which theories and generalisations could be formed. Later on, more and more researchers came to question this type of science, the thought of describing the truth became problematic (Fejes & Thornberg, 2011). It is from critique towards the objective that certain dimensions of the qualitative approach started to rise. It is impossible to strive after complete objectivity, a researcher always works with preconceptions and values, this forms how people interpret and see certain phenomenon (Hirsjärvi et al., 2015). The researcher works closely with the data to interpret and aims at getting a deep understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, qualitative research often comprises smaller samples, since the idea is not to generalize but to gain understanding, generally it is understood that the aim with qualitative research is to unfold or reveal, rather than to strengthen already existing truths (Hirsjärvi et al., 2015). With this research I hope to open up broader discussions revolving integration.

Qualitative research cannot be described as a one type of project, it is a broad concept and there are several different approaches within this practice, therefore it is also important to view it as such. (See e.g. Bogdan & Biklen, 2007 & Hirsjärvi et al., 2015). It is difficult to separate between methodology, ontology and epistemology, all of which are in one way linked or intertwined. Dey (1995, in Hirsjärvi et al., 2015) seeks to describe a unifying characteristics for qualitative research. What unites qualitative research is that they stress the meaningful character of social phenomenon and the need to take this into consideration when describing, interpreting or explaining communication, culture or social activity (Dey 1995, in Hirsjärvi et al., 2015). A few of the features that Hirsjärvi et al. (2015) describe as typical for qualitative research are that comprehensive information is gathered in natural, real situations, people are favoured as the source of information, qualitative measures are used as a method for conducting the research and therefore it is not a hypothesis that is aimed to test that is the chore but rather to examine the manifold data with regards to detail, they continue by stating that the research plan is supposed to be flexible and altered when needed. Furthermore, situations are regarded as unique and the data is analysed according to this principle (Hirsjärvi et al., 2015). Throughout the process of this study these features have been kept in mind, the research has processed in a natural way and methods have been altered when different problematics have occurred. Through a qualitative approach people can study a phenomenon through the lives of another by asking questions (Patton, 2002), therefore in this study where I aim at gaining an understanding of integration through the immigrant's perspective, the choice, unambiguously, falls on a qualitative method.

4.4. A phenomenographical approach to methods

Phenomenography is a qualitative research methodology that sets out to interpret how a phenomenon is perceived, understood and thought of. It is developed to analyse data from individuals mostly through semi-structured interviews and focuses on the differences perceived by individuals regarding the revolving world (See e.g. Uljens, 1989 and Fejes & Thornberg, 2011). Phenomenography has its' roots in educational sciences (Uljens, 1989). And is used mostly in research on education, more specifically when the researcher is interested in how people perceive phenomenon around them (Uljens, 1989). The ontological assumption revolving phenomenography is subjectivist, the world exists and people in it

construct it and understand it in different ways, as mentioned before the objective with phenomenographic research is knowledge and experience, therefore the ontology is also an epistemological assumption (Hirsjärvi et al., 2015).

It is said that the phenomenon studied has to guide which research method is to be used (Fejes & Thornberg, 2011). One needs to be consequent and be able to defend the choices made (Seale & Gobo & Gubrium & Silverman, 2007). Seale et al. (2007) on the other hand stress the importance of pragmatism in research. They hold that that it is not fruitful for the researcher to simply decide upon an approach and biblically abide to it throughout the study. Fejes & Thornberg (2007) claim that researching starts with a phenomenon, after which reflection upon how you want to study that phenomenon has to occur, this will then lead to a certain approach which you will follow throughout the research. After which the aim of the study might change and the questions asked will be guided by the approach. According to my understanding a specific research approach or method is present to guide us through studying a phenomenon by laying down some frameworks on how to study, but is not supposed to lock us into a narrow understanding of methods.

In order for me to gain an understanding of how integration is perceived by immigrant's, I feel it necessary to take a look at the phenomenon revolving their current situation and to understand what kind of support they are given and most importantly how this experience is perceived by them. I want to focus on the individual, and let their voices be heard. This points to a phenomenographic approach (Fejes & Thornberg, 2011). Seale et al. (2007) stress the fact that principles of research must always stand in relation to practice. Everything needs to be discussed in relation to the empirical world with research practices at the centre (Seale et al., 2007).

4.5. Thematic interviews

The method for gathering data should always be coherent with the phenomenon studied. When framing the research area, it is important to consider what the research sets out to answer, this will then naturally lead to certain approaches within research, after which considerations of which method is appropriate within that approach become relevant (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The decision to use thematic interviews is motivated by the qualitative and furthermore by the phenomneographic nature of the study (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). According to Marton (1986 in Niikko, 2003) the most used method for acquiring

phenomenographical data is through an interview. In the interview the description of a person's relationship with and the experiences of the surrounding world is shed light on (Niikko, 2003). Since my aim is to bring forth the perceptions of integration and what value employment has in this process, I need to gain access to the persons who have experienced that phenomenon. Since the phenomenon in itself is characterized by perceptions the natural way to study it is through phenomenography and therefore through interviews. Since my research questions do not entail a certain setting or a form of socialization but comprises how people perceive certain processes of their lives and how they make meaning of these, interviews rather than for example observations are motivated. I am interested in acquiring knowledge from the lived lives of the persons involved thus, I find it natural to ask them questions regarding this.

The thematic interview, also called the semi structured interview, has its roots in Merton's, Fisk's and Kendall's (1990) approach called the focused interview (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). The idea behind thematic interviews is to explore how a certain phenomenon is perceived and how meanings around it are constructed (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). The thematic interview comprises three spectrums and is explained in the following way; Firstly, typical for a thematic interview is the knowledge that informants have experienced a certain situation or phenomenon. Secondly the researcher has deepened his or her knowledge about the topic, through becoming familiar with processes and structures of the phenomenon studied. Through this deepening the researcher comes to some perceptions and conclusions regarding possible consequences for the people involved. Thirdly, through this analysis the thematic interview guide is formed. Lastly this interview guide is targeted and explored through the people who have lived this, which I as a researcher have analysed beforehand (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008).

4.6. Gathering of data

The data for this study is collected through thematic interviews with six informants, that represent the target group. Typical for a semi structured interview is that some aspects of the interview are set but not all. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). Thematic interviews don't lock the researcher into a specific structure, but is flexible and versatile. Thematic interviews are characterized by an interview guide that is structured around themes that have emerged from previous research or findings (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). Also I have made use of this

approach. Through gaining grass root level knowledge about the target group, and through reviewing literature I have formed a preconception of the phenomenon studied, after which I have sought to through thematic interviews ask for detailed information regarding the different perceptions of the phenomenon. I have made use of an interview guide (See Appendix 2) with themes and follow up questions that have worked as a support for me during the interviews. I argue that a semi structured interview is needed for this specific phenomenon and target group, since it is a heterogenic group, all of the people interviewed have not gone through the exact same processes, so flexibility is needed. With a structured interview it would only put the informant in an uncomfortable situation if I would follow a strict interview guide only to ask questions that I already know. Also a structured interview has a lot of definitions and concepts that the researcher has set beforehand. In this study I am at giving space to the informant, to form their own understanding of integration. This and the fact that the informants have very different backgrounds requires that I can alter and be flexible with the questions. The semi structured interview gives space for this and is therefore a well argued method for the purpose of this study (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). I decided upon individual interviews, because I wanted to focus on the differences rather than forming a unifying meaning of integration. Certainly, group interviews could have yielded interesting new topics and would have minimized my role as a researcher and maybe also strengthened the individual voice, despite this the choice fell upon individual interviews as the research aims at broadening the understanding of integration, showing that this is a variegated group of people with different needs rather than generalizing. Furthermore, the most used and most typical method for phenomenographic researches is an individual open ended interview (Niikko, 2003).

In interview settings the importance of co-construction becomes central. Everything happens in interplay, an interview is a dialog and it is reflective (Niikko, 2003). In the situation the person who is being interviewed is encouraged to reflect upon the phenomenon studied through asking questions. These questions are thought of beforehand and are a result of structured research questions and ontological and epistemological reasoning (Niikko, 2003). The ontology of people making sense of themselves and their surroundings through constructing their reality has been present all the time and the need to be aware that I might affect the situation and the outcome with my presence, preconception of the phenomenon and how I choose to ask questions (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). I strive to give the informant an opportunity to develop themselves, construct meaning and form their subject. Which is

also one of the aims with this study, I want to bring forth the voices of the individual therefore I have seen it as crucial that the informants are been given the opportunity to express themselves and construct their own reality through the interviews, through this they are being given latitude.

What I as a researcher choose to focus on and how I choose to discuss certain phenomenon is important to discuss. Language is a central aspect of the interview (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008) and it might be that it affects the situation that English is not my mother tongue and in most cases not the informant's either. There are nuances in language, and often concepts can be understood differently and furthermore different connotations can become problematic. To minimize the risk of misunderstandings during the interview, I have given thought to the concepts I use and explained them carefully during the interview. A researcher is often seen as a representative of the middle class (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008), and is considered to be unable to discuss within the frameworks of other classes in society. I as a researcher perceive the phenomenon of integration through my own preconception of it and through my own language. To my advantage I have worked with the target group for several years now, which has helped me to understand how certain things are being discussed about and what the general discourse revolving integration and the meaning of it is. Furthermore, I believe that it is of importance not to minimize the informant's role by supposing that they don't have knowledge of the concepts used. So I have asked the informants to define concepts that are of importance for this study from their perspective. Even though it is said that it is of importance that the researcher strives to use everyday language and then put this in a theoretical frame later (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008) on I believe it is of importance to give the informants a voice and express how they perceive certain phenomenon and how they choose to define them.

4.6.1. Sample selection

The choice of sample is an important part of the study itself and needs to be well planned. I started off by outlining who I could interview in order to gain information that was of interest for this study. Fairly quickly I understood that I did not want to have too many requirements that my informants needed to meet, because the chore of this study is to show the manifold of migration and hence integration, it was of importance that the sample was varied and that my informants had different backgrounds and had experienced different paths of integration. But in order to gain an understanding of the meaning of integration and furthermore of the

perceptions of the value of employment within this meaning, some requirements were outlined. The first one was that informants needed to have a residence permit, this so that they could actually reflect upon the process of integration from a perspective that comprised a longer period of time. The second was that they at some point had either worked or had gone through an internship here in Finland. How to gain access to informants is one of the first things that needs to be addressed, when starting the process of gathering data. Luckily I work within the field and so I already had access to it. Secondly it is of importance that the sampling is purposeful for the study. I have made use of both convenience sampling as well as snowball sampling (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008) A convenience sample is argued for when the purpose is to look at smaller samples and to gain understanding rather than to generalize (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). A convenience sample refers to resorting to one's own networks to find informants, while the snowball sample refers to asking the informants to suggest further informants. A research call was sent out through the networks that I have through work. After which more in depth information regarding the study was sent to those that contacted me and felt that they fit the requirements of the study. Some of the informants suggested other informants that they thought would have valuable information regarding the phenomenon. Even though the aim was to get a varied sample, one needs to be aware of the fact that all representatives of the group were probably not reached and also it might be that immigrants that have succeeded are more eager to talk about experiences than others, or the other way around. Furthermore, it needs to be addressed that four out of five informants were women, this skewness in my sample is something that I have chosen not to analyse further, but that I still want to acknowledge. Skewness is common when using the methods that have been used in this research.

All in all, five informants were interviewed for the study. The choice of the place of the interview is determined by many factors, the purpose of the research, the informants and the resources at hand. According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) the most common places are either the informants home or a public institution, the informants working place or a relaxed space, for example the street. All the informants were presented with the choice of being interviewed either at the premises of the Helsinki University Library or at a place of their own choice, in order for them to be as comfortable as possible with the preconception that this would build more trust and enable more in depth and honest discussions. I chose not to meet with informants at my working place because I wanted to be clear that this research is not connected to work, I wanted to separate that role from mine as a researcher. I met with

all of the informants at the Library. A few interviews were held in booked rooms and a few in the Café during more quiet hours. There were pros and cons with both spaces, the Café gave way for a more relaxed atmosphere where the interview took a discussion like manner while the booked room gave privacy and a more serious feel. It was way easier to transcribe the ones in the private room than in the café, but I let the situation steer the choice of where we would sit. I met with all of the informants at the café and made the choice from there, with some I felt that it was more natural to stay while with others I felt that space and quiet was needed. The flexibility was in this case important. All interviews started off with a small overview of the study, a discussion of using the recorder as well as information regarding how I would use the information acquired from the interviews, after which informants signed an informed consent. Each interview started off with some small talk about their current situation after which we proceeded to the actual interview. All interviews lasted from 1,5- 2 hours. Excluding discussions before and after. After each interview notes were written down, about my feelings, how certain concepts and phenomenon were touched upon, in a diary like manner. All interviews were also transcribed during the same or the next day so that the actual interview was still in fresh memory.

4.6.2. Informants

All of the informants are first generation immigrants who have lived in Finland for at least two years, have a residence permit and have either worked or done an internship in Finland. All the information acquired in the interviews has been processed confidentially and in order to not exploit informants the choice to keep them anonymous has been made and therefore they have been given aliases.

Informant:	Alex	Michel	Drew	Emery	Kim
Came to Finland:	2016	2016	2014	2013	2013
Reason for moving:	To seek for asylum	Partner got a job in Finland	Because of partner and studies	Studies	Studies
Works within own field:	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Has worked or had an internship in Finland:	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Went through integration course:	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Speaks one of the native languages:	Yes	Yes	Studying Finnish	Has studied Finnish, but does not speak it	Is studying Finnish at the moment
Situation at the time of the interview:	Doing an internship	In working life	Finishing studies and learning Finnish	Working within own field	Doing a PhD
Has a Finnish partner:	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 1.

4.6.3. Planning

In order to gain as much as possible from the interview setting a thorough plan was made based on existing theories, former research and the preconceptions I have formed of integration through working with the target group. The objective of an interview is to gather data through which qualitative conclusions regarding the phenomenon can be made (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). When planning an interview, the researcher takes a stance in regards to what kind of conclusions one aims to make, hence I as a researcher have an effect on the research throughout the planning of the study, which I need to be aware of and critically examine throughout the process. Through a thematic interview one is not able to form a strong hypothesis, but it can be looked at as a preconception. In the case of this study my preconception is to problematize the discourse revolving the value of employment in the integration process. When using thematic interviews, the research aims at finding hypothesis rather than strengthening an already existing one (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008) The most essential part of planning thematic interviews is to give thought to the themes, which as mentioned before should grow from previous theory and the researcher's preconception of the phenomenon (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008)

According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) the themes for the interview guide grow from deconstructing the research area and from forming ones' area of interest. In this research the following idea has been used, the broad research area comprises integration, what does it mean? Who is to decide when someone is integrated or not and through examining which measures and factors? Furthermore, how this affects the wellbeing of the individual. The phenomenon has then been divided into two main sections; Structural integration and social integration. The main sections have then been divided into smaller themes comprising social aspects of integration like sense of belonging and networks and structural aspects of integration comprising what value employment has had for the persons involved.

A pilot interview was made after which I changed methods from oral history to a phenomenographic approach. During and after the pilot interview I came to the conclusion that biographical research only made an already broad research area even more comprehensive, which lead to the need to be more structured in order to gain actual knowledge regarding specific themes. The pilot interview was needed, it also helped to form an understanding of the conceptualization of the phenomenon. After the pilot interview a new interview guide was made, but it was not tested again. My preconception has also been

of great use here since I have a somewhat broad knowledge of integration practices and the target group that I have interviewed. As a researcher it is important to be able to reflect upon the situation and change approaches according to the situation, the aim was also to be open to new and emerging themes during the different interviews, which then led to some alterations in the interview guide. It was also important to be emotionally stable, to hold a role of a researcher, I am not able to change the situation of my informants even though I sense frustration, my role here was of a researcher and listener. I felt that I needed some sort of strategy to open up but also to make some statements clear cut, therefore I used a ranking system where the informants were able to rank what is most important for them in regards to integration (See table 2). This was really helpful and often opened up for bigger discussions but through a very simple and hands on approach.

Rank the following claims
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To be in working life• To be able to make my own decisions, to be independent• To feel part of something bigger• To have people around me that I can trust• To feel needed

Table 2

4.7. Analysing

In order to be able to analyse the data that has been gathered a plan was made according to the principles for analysing phenomenographic material (Niikko, 2003). According to Niikko (2003) the phenomenographic analysis is not very structured. She states (2003) that the premise is the data, that entails structuring and organizing of the different parts in an analytical process. The chore is as Larsson (1986) states to describe the variation in experiences. He continues (1986) by emphasizing that the material needs to be read and reflected upon, several times. The analysis is split into two phases; During the first phase the researcher reads the material carefully, many times. The objective with reading is to find important expressions that describe the research problem but also to get a sense of the general

impression in regards to the research questions. The focus is constantly on the expressions, not on who says what but the variations in the expressions. So in the analysis focus is shifted from the informant to the expression. The objective is to seek for meanings and understandings revolving the phenomenon behind the expressions (Niikko, 2003). In the second phase after the reading, in the light of the research questions, the researcher starts to sort out and categorize the expressions into themes. The categorization happens through mirroring meaningful expressions to each other (Niikko, 2003).

4.7.1. Different phases of analysis in practice

According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) analysis happens on different levels during different phases of the research. During the interviews, questions regarding conceptualizations have been asked, for example have I understood you correctly, could this be thought of as a way of sensing something specific. Follow up questions have enabled analysis and ensured that certain things have been understood correctly. During the interview grouping of expressions have already taken place. After the interview the material needs to be unravelled. This has been done through a thorough transcription of the material. Material can either be transcribed or analysed straight from the recordings (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). It is more common to transcribe the material first and then proceed to analysing, therefore I have chosen this method, also differences in expression and themes become more visible when written down. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) state that the nature of the research guides how thoroughly the transcription is to be made. I feel that it is of importance to pay attention to how things are discussed, in what manner and with what feel, so I have transcribed pauses and laughs. After the transcription I have proceeded to reading the material several times, with my research questions in mind, I have made small notes on the sides of the papers, but have not yet at this point looked for categories, rather I have tried to gain an understanding of the phenomenon as a whole. The next step has been to read through the transcriptions more carefully, through the expressions that have emerged as meaningful and according to the research questions that have been set out to answer in this study different categories have been formed. I have not made use of any programs for coding or categorizing, but have used the search function in Word to look for different expressions. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) states that it is normal that the material feels flat to begin with, hence it is important to read it through several times. And to mirror the different expressions towards each other. In phenomenographic research the content of the material is what is supposed to be in focus (Larsson, 1986). Therefore, I have gathered different expressions under certain themes in

different documents. After which I have mirrored the themes to each other. During the categorization both the questions asked and the material itself has played an important role. The same phenomenon can be understood differently. I have worked inductively from bottom upwards, and according to (Dahlgren & Johansson, 2011) I have followed a phenomenographic structure for analysis by first outlining focus categories that answer the research questions that I have set out to answer, afterwards these focus categories have been put together in bigger categories called description categories in accordance to their content. A map of the categories have been made which I have had visible all the time when reading through the material again in order to structure the expressions under the corresponding categories. The material has been read through several times after the structuring of categories. This has been done with each description category in mind, so I analysed one theme at a time, with the quest of answering one question at a time. This has made the analysis way more structured, ensured that I focus on actually answering the question but first and foremost, made me come in contact with the material. As Larsson (1986) puts it, one of the chores of phenomenographic analysis is to become familiar with the material, and read it through several times, to come closer to the actual experiences perceived. One phenomenon can be perceived in several different ways, depending on who is asked. This is one of the preconditions of phenomenographic research. Within phenomenography the set-up of the different perceptions is called a sample space (Dahlgren & Johansson, 2011). The sample space is portrayed through description categories, which are a result of careful consideration of smaller focus categories that have emerged from the empirical material and have then been grouped according to their content into the bigger description categories. Charts of how I have grouped each category will be presented together with the results and analysis of this research.

4.8. Ethics and reliability

Ethical considerations are present throughout a study, from planning the research area to presenting results (Kuula, 2011). Within humanities and social and behavioural sciences a researcher's task is to produce new information to help understand social problems, or society and culture in general, openness and transparency are key while trying to minimize any form of harm to the subjects involved (Finnish Advisory board on Research Integrity, 2009).

According to the Finnish Advisory board on Research Integrity (2009) the point of departure should be to consider the autonomy of research subjects, avoiding harm, and ensuring privacy and data protection. Throughout the study these general guidelines have been followed. The research has been conducted respectfully by bearing in mind the integrity of the research subjects. All stages of the research have been carefully considered, from planning to reviewing literature, to the gathering of data and to finally analysing it and presenting results.

According to ethical guidelines (Finnish Advisory board on Research Integrity, 2009) the research has been conducted with a strong emphasize on autonomy. A research call was sent out, with an overall view of the study, stating that participation is voluntary, after which potential informants contacted me. Sufficient information about the study, how much time was needed to participate as well as the possibility to withdraw at any time was presented at this point. All informants have before the interview been presented with an informed consent (See appendix) and asked to sign it. It entailed an overview of the study, presentation of the gathering of data and how data will be processed as well as the possibility to withdraw at any point. Also, information about me as a researcher as well as contact information to my supervisor was included. Informants have been treated with respect throughout the study, the aim has been to give them latitude and a chance to speak about and reflect upon their experiences of integration. The idea of integration as something politically loaded, often a contested topic, has been present all the time. Through giving the research subjects latitude, I have tried to minimize the risks of societal debate effecting their willingness to speak freely in order to protect the validity of the study as well to create a safe space. Respecting the subjects of research does not only entail the actual interview setting but goes further into the analysis and the presentation of results. Reporting findings in a respectful way, minimizing any form of harm through explaining critical findings analytically has been the focus. Privacy in research has to be evaluated case by case, however it is a right protected by the constitution of Finland and also an established principle of research ethics (Kuula, 2011). Since the information acquired from the interviews could be of sensitive nature, and also to ensure that informants are comfortable to talk about difficult topics without exploiting them, the decision to anonymise research subjects was made. What is important to understand is that total anonymization is seldom possible and furthermore anonymization does not always prevent identification, informants might still be identified by colleagues, friends or family.

All informants were given aliases. A lot of thought was given to this process in the quest of not taking a stance but without coming up with the perfect solution. The aim was to be as respectful as possible, while ensuring privacy and striving after high anonymization. The decision was made to give gender neutral and English aliases, without giving thought to the ethnical background. In the context of this study there is no combining factor between the different subjects of research, and they are not representatives of any institution but are participating as private persons, this should minimize the risk of identification. Furthermore, all material acquired during the gathering of data are stored where no one else than me has access to them, this as well as anonymization ensures the protection of data (Kuula, 2011).

One of the main characteristics of conducting research through somewhat open ended interviews is co-construction (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008), hence reflections upon how people understand each other is of relevance. If the informant and the interviewer come from different backgrounds, and have lived in different cultures then their way of viewing phenomenon can also differ (Rastas, 2005). What needs to be noted is that I come from a different position in regards to my informants, several of which I know from before through work. This has on the one hand ensured a communication based on knowledge and cultural awareness towards the target group but on the other hand, can be difficult to understand that I now hold a different position, the one of a researcher, a neutral one. To try and minimize the risks of my working identity having an impact on how honest my informants feel they can be and therefore affecting the results of the study, I have at an early stage given them sufficient information stating that the research made, is independent and unattached from my role as an integration coordinator.

Openness is regarded as a precondition for science as well as for testing validity (Finnish Advisory board on Research Integrity, 2009). Through paying attention to all ethical guidelines presented, and by carefully explaining all problematics I have encountered and through presenting my methods and why I have made certain choices alongside the process of the study. I have strived to increase transparency while protecting my informants from any potential harm through ensuring their privacy and the protection of data acquired.

5. Results and analysis

In this part of my paper I analyse my empirical data, present the results and mirror them to previous research and theories. I have used the principles of phenomenographic methods for analysing as a springboard. I will start off by answering my first research question after which I will proceed to the next one. As mentioned in the chapter of principles for analysing I have made use of themes and categories. These are categories that have emerged from the empirical data, through asking the questions I have set out to answer in this study. The themes in my interview guide have also worked as a basis for the analysis.

Research questions:

1. What is perceived as meaningful for integration by the respondents?
2. How do the respondents perceive the value of employment within integration?

5.2. What is perceived as meaningful for integration?

In regards to the research question of *what is perceived as meaningful for integration*, three description categories have surfaced which are; interaction with society, communities and employment. The description categories are a result of careful consideration of smaller focus categories that have emerged from the empirical data. The categories explain the most prominent variations in experiences in regards to what is perceived as meaningful by the persons involved. In order to follow how I have analysed my material, charts of each description category with focus categories will be presented under every heading. The empirical data points to the fact that integration is a manifold concept, which can be understood from many different perspectives.

5.2.1. Interaction with society

The results in this chapter demonstrate that different interactions with society, are understood meaningful for integration. This subchapter has surfaced through three focus categories that have emerged from the data, which are access to information and support, societal and cultural understanding and the importance of language. The focus categories are closely linked to structural understandings of integration that stress for example education and language skills as essential for being part of society (Pyykkönen, 2007).

Description category:		Interaction with society	
Focus categories:	Access to information & support	Understanding of society and culture	The importance of language

All five informants discuss information and support as a crucial part of integration. Everyday things as were to go for different services, has been or is challenge for most. Alex who moved here in 2016 to seek for asylum, sees information as one of the biggest challenges for integration.

Because in integration, one of the biggest challenges is lack of information. Where do I have to go if I have some sort of issue or question? / .../ To have the right information is very very very helpful, when you don't have information it's like you are someone in the dark, you are just listening to rumours, hear and say. It creates a situation of uncertainty. Uncertainty leads to worry. Uncertainty leads to depression. As you are not sure about stuff. /.../ Information is the biggest thing. (Alex)

Alex holds the thought that sufficient information is the key to integration, to be able to take part in society you need to have information, if you don't have that it leads to uncertainty. Michel who also moved to Finland in 2016 but because of her partner who got a job, continues in like manner. She stresses the fact that you need to ask questions to get to the information needed.

Ask for help, don't be afraid to ask. As I understand it, here, they are happy to help, but you need to ask. /.../ So ask for help, and I know it's difficult because you already feel so out of place. (Michel)

Emery who moved to Finland in 2014 because of studies, also stresses the fact that you need to go out and seek for the information. She holds that the integration courses are lacking in providing for sufficient information and support, especially for highly educated immigrants. It seems that many of the informants believe that different support systems are out there, but it is the information about them that is lacking.

So I mean that's what's missing. I mean Helsinki has a lot to offer but when you are a foreigner you don't know about it, so information is really important. That's the first thing. You need more than what you can find on the internet. (Emery)

5.2.1.1. The object of integration courses, employment or integration?

All of the informants who have attended an integration course, talk about the lack of support and the lack of meeting the individual needs. The groups are big and backgrounds are vast, so it seems a challenge to answer to those needs. Emery talks about the integration course as the following.

There is this missing support especially for people who are educated. /.../ These kind of tools are not included in the TE courses. It's only language, and it's not any kind of language, it's language that is focused on that kind of jobs, so it's like how you say cleaning and how you say that. (Emery)

All of the informants discuss language as an essential part of how they understand the meaning of integration but most of them also stress the fact that too much weight is put on language. Often, this is not the first thing, according to them that would need to be addressed. Alex states that he was not ready to dive into language, that he would have needed a different stance, he holds that not everyone is ready to learn a totally new language, when so many other aspects of life are unstable.

It was part of the integration plan, to learn the language. / .../ But emotionally I wasn't ready to learn the language, I was just trying to set up in the country, to fit in the community. And then I had to go and learn this language which is not anywhere close to what I know from before. /.../ Though it is a good idea, that you have to learn

the language, because it helps you integrate into society, you can talk about yourself, express yourself, you feel that you are part of the community. But there are other factors. It was not really for me, to learn the language as fast as the program was designed. (Alex)

The other half of the informants who have not attended an integration course, and hence not either studied the language through that. Have a different attitude towards it, two of the informants have Finnish partners, and through that they have come to understand the importance of language. Both in terms of being able to be a part of the community, getting friends and networks but also in terms of understanding and not being pushed to ask for help from their partners constantly. Kim who moved to Finland because of studies in 2013 explains how she views the importance of language in correlation to being able to take part in society, and get to the information needed. She holds that the language becomes a barrier for integration. This is the first thing she addresses when asking her if she feels integrated.

Yes, and no. Of course language is a huge barrier. I have a Finnish partner, if I for example receive a document from the Vero place, I have no idea because it is in Finnish maybe Swedish, I have no idea so I give it to my partner, ask if there is anything I need to do, but if it wasn't for my partner. / .../ I'm pretty much an introvert, I wouldn't ask anyone like oh can you translate this for me, and also it's kind of sensitive information so there are these kind of details that make me feel not integrated. (Kim)

According to previous research language skills are seen as one of the core conditions for successful integration (Forsander, 2002). According to Forsander (2002) education and work do not hold value until language proficiency is good enough. The material of this research somewhat conforms to this thought. Many of the informant's stress that they have come to understand that language is a huge part of being able to take part of a society, which is crucial in order to feel integrated. Language has an important role in constructing one's identity as Ochs (1993) states it, it is a tool for communication and cognitive ability and therefore also essential for integration. What is interesting to see is that the material points to more positive attitudes towards the need for learning the language amongst them who it has not been forced upon, whilst frustration and lack of motivation can be sensed with those who have attended an integration course. Despite this all informants hold that language is an important part of

integration and needed even though future jobs would not require it. According to the material the biggest challenge, when it comes to language, is the fact that it is difficult to get to practice it in real life. This conforms to previous research that stresses that immigrants often do not have a big Finnish network and furthermore that practicing the language is limited to small talk while grocery shopping (Forsander, 2002). Alex holds the same thought and sees it as problematic for integration that the language internships are so short. He argues that it should be the other way around, more time practicing in real life and less time in the classroom.

And then you have the kieliharjoittelu for four weeks. What is that?? You study for one whole year. It should have been other way around. More time practicing and getting to know people. That is what integration is all about. Not pumping people with knowledge. (Alex)

The integration courses do not feel purposeful for him. In his opinion integration is about meeting people and learning in those meetings, not sitting in a classroom.

The material points to a gap between the personal understanding of the meaning of integration and what is expected from society, this can also be seen as a division between social and structural integration (Pyykkönen, 2007). Many of the informants stress the fact that in the beginning they were just trying to fit in, to find their place. But the integration courses are intense and according to the informants they do not always take into account the situation of the individual. According to the Finnish law if you are or become unemployed you are to take part in formal integration measures, a personal integration plan is then made to map out what kind of services and support is needed in order to support the integration process, this often entails an integration course that focuses on language and future employment (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2018). Half of the informants have attended an integration course, frustration and difficulties in motivation can be sensed with all of them. It seems that all of the informants who have attended a course, feel that it is not tailored to the individual needs, and furthermore that the object is employment and not integration. Several informants also talk about learning being forced upon you and not voluntary, which also affects personal motivation. So what is expected of the individual in terms of being able to take part of society does not always support the individual in that. The Finnish law of integration is constructed to support immigrants in

enabling them to become active agents of the Finnish society, according to Davydova (2012) employment is seen as essential for integration. From the material questions regarding whether or not these should be the first measures taken can be discussed. Alex points out that several persons come to Finland with heavy backgrounds and trauma, he states that often one is not ready to dive into the courses, that the support you get is not enough. He stresses that psychosocial aspects of wellbeing should be taken into account more profoundly before starting school and pushing towards employment.

I can use the example of other refugees, somebody comes to Finland to seek for asylum they've lost their children parents, property, they've witnessed gruesome killings. And after that maybe some women have gotten raped. Maybe sell themselves to get money to come to Finland. Then They've gone through a lot of hurdles, they've crossed the Mediterranean Sea. People just get confused. And then jump out of the boat and dive and die. You know. And they go through the camp. Then they get a decision. And then very fast they get sent to the community. And these people they are traumatized, some of them have PTSD but these issues are not attended to, they are not getting counselling. Its trauma, grief, people have lost their lives. And then every day they are being pushed to school. You know what I mean so, that kind of mind is not going to learn a new language. They haven't got closure, they have never accepted. So it feels like some people you get this feeling, of a resistant attitude, you are not learning. You have issues at home and you don't have a social life. (Alex)

According to previous research and theories on integration psychological distress is seen as a disturbance in the integration process (See e.g. Berry, 1997).

Alex continuous talking about the courses, he feels that the entitlements given control you and that it poses questions of how autonomous one can be. He explains that he came here as an adult, as a professional, but feels that he is not being treated as one. This affects his understanding of integration in the context of learning.

You are being controlled, there are so many conditions to those entitlements, it makes you feel out of place, maybe it makes you feel like you are not fit to a certain environment. /.../ Makes us feel as we are not part of the society, you are being discriminated, you know you are being directed on what to do, which is ok but it

doesn't give you any satisfaction. / .../ When you are being pushed to do something, you lose motivation. (Alex)

Pyykkönen (2007) states that even though integration, as an ideal state, should encompass equal interactions, exchanges of thoughts, values and habits, between the minority and the majority, this seldom happens. He holds (2007) that in practice, it is more about the minority learning the habits of the majority, as Berry (1997) also puts it, cultures seldom work an equal level. According to Pyykkönen (2007) in order for immigrant's to be able to actively partake in the structures of society they need to take part in the same processes of socialization which are built in accordance to the majority. The before mentioned expression from Alex, demonstrates this inequality, where autonomy is no longer as present, due to entitlements and conditions that come with the entitlements.

5.2.1.2. *The importance of understanding and being understood*

All of the informant's touch upon the subject of integration as something temporal. Michel discusses the importance of being understood, holding that this entails both language and cultural aspects of life. She understands integration as something that happens in everyday situations when you understand society and when you can reach out to people and they understand you, this has temporal connotation and happens in certain moments.

I feel like I live a parallel life that sometimes touches society. /.../ That you can go through your everyday life and don't feel like a constant outsider, that you don't panic when you go to the cashier because they might ask you something other than do you want a bag. (Michel)

Emery also discusses understanding, and takes it back to the classroom environment where she feels that understanding is not being enabled. She feels that stereotypes are being reproduced and that immigrants are taught that Finns are a certain way. It is frustrating and will not increase understanding and affect integration positively. She expresses her frustration regarding the integration courses and what she feels is missing when exploring what integration is and what is needed for it to happen.

And also it perpetuates, like what I was seeing a lot, the definition of Finns, that they are like this and like that. I found it really ridiculous, because I have Finnish friends,

and they can be really quiet or really talkative, it is not the fact that they are Finns. The personality is way more predominant than the culture. But when you think about the courses there are no Finns involved, just the teacher who is very far away, and then this just gets reproduced, what we learn there in the classroom, that people are a certain way. But it's that thing, you are not a part of, it's theirs. And for Finns it's probably the same when they see a foreigner, when you are not involved and you don't have contacts, then also you perpetuate some sort of ideas, like the foreigners here are just spending all of our money, but it's because there is a lack of integration. You don't know the other side and the other side does not know you. (Emery)

Emery as well as other informants stress the importance of getting to know one and other, as meaningful for integration. Otherwise there will always be a gap between people where they don't actually know each other but reproduce stereotyped pictures of each other, which poses a lot of problems for integration. According to Ager & Strang (2008) language and cultural knowledge are key factors that facilitate the integration process. They hold, in line with the material of this research, that gaining cultural competences is an important factor to integrate into society. But furthermore, they (2008) stress that this does not only reach to the immigrant's knowledge of the host country but also comprises native's knowledge regarding immigrant's culture. So the importance of people meeting and learning from each other, as many of the informants of this study expresses it is crucial, and maybe somewhat lacking according to them. The Finnish integration law also states that integration should be a two-way process, where the immigrant has an active part in gaining sufficient knowledge and information through the support of the authorities but where society also plays an active part in changing as it becomes more diverse (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2018).

In regards to information and support as well as understanding of cultural settings and language, it becomes evident that the support of a partner has been crucial for the informants. This was not something that was sought to be answered through this specific research but grew from the material. Questions regarding partners were not asked, but were present in four out of six interviews. Always in correlation to information, support and language. Several informants state that they would not have made it through the bureaucracy without the support from a partner, or that they would not have been motivated to study the language if it wasn't for the fact that they wanted to be able to take part in their partners' communities.

Drew who also moved here because of studies in 2014, explains how her partner has helped her to start a life in Finland. She is not sure if she would have stayed here otherwise, the other informants who also have partners in Finland state the same, it would not have been evident to stay without the help and support from a partner, whether Finnish or not.

Support from whoever that may be, but helping you with the whole process, what to do where to go what papers you need and so forth. /.../ It was very confusing because I felt there was some information on one site and then you have to click yourself forward to another site and it wasn't clear if you need to go the police or maistraatti first. (Drew)

The category of interaction with society grew through the importance of gaining sufficient information and knowledge in a new society, to be able to take part in it. Questions of culture and understanding how Finland works were also present and conform to previous research and theories on integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). The informants who have registered as a unemployed and taken part in integration courses hold that they are not being heard in the process of mapping out their integration plan, which then leads to frustration and lack of motivation. Access to information, seems to be regarded as a key factor for integration, while all of the informant's state that they need to actively reach out to find that information, that it is not easily accessible. Neither is it easy to reach out to Finnish communities, therefore partners have been of great importance when navigating in a new society.

5.2.2. Sensing belonging

The results in this chapter demonstrate how sensing belonging is meaningful for integration. The description category emerged through two different focus categories which are: Feeling at home and being a part of communities and networks. These focus categories are linked to a more social understanding of integration which encompass relations to other people and groups, and finding one's way in society, through feeling needed and a part of greater communities (Lockwood, 1964).

Description category:		Sensing belonging
Focus categories:	Feeling at home	Being part of communities and networks

All informants talk about communities and being part of something bigger as something that is meaningful for integration. This entails friends, networks, other groups as well as feeling at home in Finland.

5.2.2.1. *Feeling at home and having the possibility to create a home*

Emery discusses the importance of feeling at home, that this is meaningful for integration. When I ask her to explain what integration means for her, she gives thought to several components that are linked to sense of belonging and feeling at home:

I guess it's about not feeling so isolated, I mean it's not about not feeling a part of your home country anymore but also feeling like this is your home, this homing aspect that you feel it's home, that you don't feel like okay I'm leaving next month.
(Emery)

Feeling at home has a temporal notion. Kim also stresses the importance of being able to think into the future. For that, stability in life is needed. The fact that she knows she is going to stay here for some time, enables her to build a home, a community and sense belonging. It affects her wellbeing.

I share an apartment with my partner, we don't like it so much, like the location and stuff but we can make it better, we always had the chance to make it better. But I

think we were both so insecure because of me not having any strong link to Finland apart from my studies, so we never did anything about it. So now that I have this position and I'm going to be here for many years we just decided to buy lots of furniture and that's so nice and it makes me really happy. / .../ So you create this wellbeing and you literally build a home and I can totally feel it. (Kim)

Being able to create a home also creates wellbeing and safety, which seem to be building blocks for integration. Not all informants talk about being able to build a home. But all informants talk about the importance of being a part of something bigger. About meeting people as the chore of what is meaningful for integration, whether that is through work or not. A few of the informants also experience difficulties in finding their own communities, especially when reaching out to Finnish communities, but also because they wanted to create own communities and networks and not only join their partners.

For me integration means that I have friends, people around that I can turn to when I need something and that I have activities that I don't feel left out of them. (Drew)

Having something, it's not being alone, that's how you also feel at home, when you are part of something bigger. It's more than just networks. It's about being part of things. (Emery)

Because integration it means to meet people and if you are not being given the opportunity to work you are not meeting people. You are not spreading your wings. You are not building networks. (Alex)

I don't know maybe I'm an isolated case I don't know but whatever, I did take, I hesitated into joining my partner's community and also I didn't try to create my own community because I was just so stressed about studying at the time and doing my thing but now, as soon as, you know this PhD has changed a lot, and I'm really building my own community now. / .../ I don't know It's just obvious, it's necessary, I need friends. (Kim)

According to previous research sense of belonging affects wellbeing and hence has a positive impact on integration (Soon, Bishop and Drew, 1999). The material of this research conforms to the before mentioned. All informants stress the fact that they need to sense that they belong to something. According to Maslow (1943) one of the key motivations of humans is to belong to something bigger. And as many of the informants states it, it is just necessary, to have people around you.

5.2.2.2. Difficulties in meeting people and how to find one's place

It also becomes evident that it is not always easy to reach out to people, even though you feel that you would need to. Michel expresses her frustrations in getting to know people:

But I find it really hard to make local friends. Sometimes I feel they already decided these are my friends I went to school with them. And not that they are malicious they're just not interested. / .../ It makes me sad, for example in my building I say good morning, and they just look at the ground. One time I said "moimoi" and they slammed the door. The only locals I have made friends with are those that have foreign partners and I met their partners at some sort of international event. (Michel)

Alex continues in like manner and talks about his experiences meeting Finnish people, he also states that he had wished that it would have been easier, that he could have asked for help when needed. He talks about cultural differences, about his home country, how people take care of each other there. That he misses that. He continues and says that he has found some communities here, through volunteering, and also communities that link to his background his home country. When talk about Finnish society and meeting people he states the following and if he has found it difficult to get in touch with natives, he states the following.

Yeah very very hard. Everybody knows that the Finnish society is very closed. Even Finns don't relate to the Finns. Neighbours never meet. For a coffee or lunch. not even on big days. In our community you walk in the village you greet everyone, even if that person is on the other side. That's how we live, we live in a community. We look out for each other. In my community, if you find a young kid walking alone somebody will stop and ask. Somebody could stop and spank the kid, if they

misbehaving. Or they could grab the kid, and take her home to her parents. if you don't greet you have bad manners. We look after each other and it has helped our communities to fight crime, and develop. You always ask people to eat. My mom always cooks enough food so if someone comes, a visitor we have enough. In my apartment I always cook enough. Nobody leaves hungry. That is how we show hospitality. But then I have never really felt integrated in the Finnish community, it makes me feel like I don't belong to this community like I am just on my own, it's not cool at all. I don't feel good about it. (Alex)

Alex still hopes that a long term job will change this, that he will be able to find his community through that. But that he would really like to find Finnish friends. He hopes that a job will give that. Michel also discusses work as a source for finding networks and expresses that already now, even though she has only worked for a couple of weeks, she senses some sort of belonging to the group of colleagues. I will discuss the value of employment in terms of social networks and communities more in depth in following chapters.

Emery continues in like manner and stresses the importance of having social connections outside of your own ethnic group. She holds that this is where integration happens when different people meet and understanding increases amongst these groups. Emery reflects upon her own situation and states the following.

And I think it's also the response, of course I was in a different situation. But look at these people they are only surrounded by their own people, it's a response to the courses and to the society. I have friends from everywhere but that's my way of living, but when you think about integration if you are in your bubble, how can you say that you are integrated, it's not going to happen. (Emery)

According to previous research it is not easy to access native communities, and getting a network of your own often becomes one of the challenges for successful integration (Vitasovic, 2012). Emery holds that it becomes problematic when immigrants only interact within their own networks.

Kim on the other hand stresses the fact that integration doesn't have to be about sensing belonging to a Finnish community, that all sorts of belonging affect your wellbeing and how integrated you feel. According to previous research also connections to your own ethnic group, family, friends or partners have a positive effect on integration (Ahmad, 2005). She states the following about feeling a part of different communities:

Yeah I don't know it's not like, I don't know. I'm in Finland, and it's not like I have to integrate into a Finnish society that is purely Finnish, it's a very mixed place, and in that sense I feel integrated. So integration means to sense belonging but it doesn't have to be solely to the Finnish... As long as you're happy (Kim)

Emery continues by explaining where she has found her communities, and that it's not enough to just meet people, that you need to sense that you belong somewhere. She thinks that interests and hobbies are a good way of finding your place.

But it's not just meeting, because you have these "kielicafés" and things are happening in Helsinki but it's not just meeting. It's being part of, it's having a group, if you like knitting then find that group, then you meet people with similar interests despite background and you are part of something. And then you get to know that other side through that something. when you just meet, it's the case of the teacher. (Emery)

Emery holds that you need to feel a part of something bigger, that this is where understanding happens. She has found her communities through reaching out to different groups and feels that this is a good way of feeling integrated in a society.

Michel has found her community through engaging in associations, while Alex stresses the importance of volunteering, of being able to help and also through reaching out and asking for help. Drew says she has stepped out of her comfort zone in order to get to know more people, this is according to her what has made her feel integrated, having people around her that she can turn to. Kim has found her place through studying Finnish and finding likeminded people there, who she then has engaged with in other settings.

Definitely this association, I'm the vice president of that, and that was the first place where I felt I was actually doing something useful. They came to do a presentation during my integration course, and I went to their events, it ended up being exactly what I wanted to do, such as cultural events, being part of this community. (Michel)

Because I have been working you know ten years. I didn't just want to sit back. I wanted to contribute. And to be able to give something to the community offer my service, something. That's why. And because of building networks, because it might open up new possibilities for me. So that's why. And you talked about integration. Through networking I managed to get a mentor. And my mentor has been so awesome up till now. We are still in touch. This person has really helped me much, in terms of emotional support. You know we meet, we talk about issues, about challenges, we share ideas. And it's really awesome. I got that mentor through networks. So networking is really good. (Alex)

It's not necessarily having a job or I don't know. So in that way I am integrated. Cause I have a lot of friends and everything but I did have to work for that. I had to go out too many events and seminars and actually get out of my comfort zone. Which when I came here was actually really hard. Cause I wasn't that kind of a person, now I am fine with that. I kind of learned how to do it and it's fine but in the beginning it was kind of scary. (Drew)

It's the only intensive course that they have for foreigners, it was this continuation so the group already knew each other, which was kind of like, is she going to integrate... but then I found three or four forest students that I knew from before that I was tutoring. So as a comparison, I study forestry and I am also part of the LGBT community, they don't go, I don't feel so integrated in that, I can't find people like me. So in this course people are usually from language, social sciences, open minded, so it's easier. And I also go, I started going in December to these LGBT meetings out of the student union, and some people in the Finnish course also go. So that's a nice surprise, like awesome. (Kim)

The category of sensing belonging grew from the fact that the empirical material showed that social connections have an immense role in feeling a part of a society. It is a human aspiration as Maslow states it (1943), and as many of the informants argue, it's just evident, that people need people, that people want friends and need to feel part of bigger communities in order to feel integrated. This is in accordance to previous research that encompasses social notions of integration, where being part of communities is seen as essential (Liebkind, 1994). In communities' people are being given the chance to identify with something that is of importance for them, this creates a sense of belonging (Soon, Bishop and Drew, 1999). Many of the expressions of the informant's underline this exact thought, of being a part of bigger communities as crucial for integration and wellbeing. Therefore, sensing belonging but also being able to build a home and feel at home are expressed as meaningful for integration by the persons involved. This is in accordance to previous research which points to the importance of social networks and being able to trust people around you as a factor for integration (Nieminen et al., 2015).

It is noticeable that all informants have different ways of finding their communities, and also that it is not always easy to reach out to them. But each and every one has found their own way of sensing belonging in a new society, which has led to positive feelings about integration even though it would not always comprise connections to Finnish people. Despite this several informants state that it would be important to find Finnish connections, but at the same time they acknowledge that it is difficult. This is perceived as a challenge for learning the language and understanding the customs in a new society, by several of the informants. In accordance to this contacting natives has already for a long time been seen as a challenge for integration and especially in regards to get a chance to practice the language (Forsander, 2002). Despite this, connections to any groups have been understood as positive and helping the informants to feel at home and thus more integrated. The material points to the fact that also in relation to sensing belonging integration has a temporal aspect, where it is sometimes touched upon.

5.2.3. Employment

The results in this chapter demonstrate that employment is perceived as meaningful for integration. Here employment is seen in a greater sense, comprising free time activities, volunteer work and paid work. The description category is based on three focus categories which are the before mentioned. In this chapter expressions of how employment is seen as meaningful for integration will be presented. In the following chapter results regarding what value employment has for the individual will be presented more in depth.

Description category:		Employment	
Focus categories:	Free time activities	Volunteer work	Paid work

All informants have been or are currently in working life, so when discussing integration and what is perceived as meaningful within integration all of the informants have discussed employment in one way or another. In regards to previous research the success of integration is often mirrored towards employment (Ager & Strang, 2008). Despite this many of the informants express that employment is not everything. And that a job has not always given them what they thought it would, in terms of integration.

5.2.3.1. *The connections between employment and integration*

Drew, who is just about to finish her studies, has been working in Finland previously but is now unemployed, explains that her first job here in Finland helped her in regards to feeling integrated. She felt that she was in touch with people and that really was a push in the right direction.

Yes, I think the first job that I had almost right away when I moved here, I think it really helped because when I was working with the people I was in touch with them, and used to go out for a drink or something. And it helped, but still I was a totally different person then, I was very shy and that's why I think some of those connections are kind of lost because I just, I think I would handle things differently now. And maybe I would be more in touch with those people. But I think it helped because it was nice to know some people and there were even some that worked there that I kind of even bonded with a bit more and yeah. (Drew)

Emery who is highly educated, explains how employment is important for integration, but that it's not solely about paid work, but more about sensing purpose. She struggled for a long time finding work in her own field, so she worked with delivering newspapers, cleaning and in restaurants, which did not help with the feeling of being integrated, on the opposite, made her feel unwelcome, as if her competence was not valued. But at the same time, she was doing things that were meaningful for her. Joining hackathons, and different projects that were not paid but gave her purpose.

My family doesn't have much; they are not rich to be honest. Right now they even need my help and I come from very, I faced a lot of difficulties just to be an engineer to get that education. It was not easy, and being able to come here, I am not stupid so that I only had the possibility to keep doing cleaning jobs and just keep doing these kind of odd jobs, it reminds you, it slowly and slowly kind of kills you inside. And then I didn't feel at that moment that I was being integrated in that sense, that Finland didn't want me in some kind of way. (Emery)

Emery continues by talking about different projects that she has joined just to feel that her expertise is being put to use, this has been valuable for her even though it has not given her financial security. But being a part of something bigger has made her feel needed and hence more integrated in society.

Another thing is also that you feel that you are part of like now I have friends that are doing projects here in Helsinki, I met them through hackathons, the one that I am working more with is a guy, we were doing a hackathon for robotics he had this idea that he wanted to manage water and everything but he lacks of the mechanical part so right now i am doing that for him. Not looking for money or anything but just to help him. Like because the project is really interesting. (Emery)

Alex who is also highly educated, unemployed at the moment, but doing internships through the integration course and also doing volunteer work explains what is meaningful for him in regards to integration.

To belong somewhere to something, we talked about work, psychosocial support. To deal with challenges of the individual, people have different problems and issues.
(Alex)

Belonging to groups or bigger communities is seen as essential for integration, according to previous research it has positive effects on wellbeing, and helps immigrants in the quest of becoming equal citizens with rights and obligations, these feelings of inclusion are supported by both immigrants and the surrounding community's attitudes (Liebkind, 1994, Pyykkönen, 2007). Through the before mentioned expressions by Emery and Alex it becomes somewhat clear that it is more that sense of being part of something than actual paid jobs that matter in regards to what is meaningful for integration.

Alex continues and explains how he knows so little about Finnish life and believes that work plays a big part, and also hopes that in the future this will give him a greater network which will make him feel more at home in Finland:

Well with Finnish I haven't really felt it, because I don't have any Finnish friends. I have never been invited to a Finnish family. Like you know. I know nothing about the Saunas and blablabla the mökki in the summer. I don't know what Finns eat, I know nothing about that. I'm in Finland I would like to integrate with the Finnish people. And how do you integrate with them? At the workplace! There you will find Finns! And become friends. I think that when you have worked with them for a long time, they'll stop calling you a stranger a foreigner. And see the good side of you and perhaps you get a long and it helps with integration. But for example the mentor program i visited my mentors house, she came to my house. It is something. Because it is like going to Africa and not getting a chance to speak with Africans, the natives. Or not eating their food. Getting to know the people of the country, it is really something. How they live how they behave, nobody wants to mess up or get embarrassed. Do things that are abnormal. For example, you go to our communities, you can't kiss in public it's a taboo. (Alex)

According to previous research it is perceived as important to build networks over ethnic borders (Ahmad, 2005), this contributes to better positions in the labour market. Alex believes that through work he will find Finnish networks. He touches upon different

activities as a mentor program that he has taken part of, where he has gotten to know a Finnish person and that this has been of great value for him, still he hopes that one day when he has a permanent job, that it will give him greater networks in a Finnish setting, that he hasn't yet experienced, and which has effected how he feels in terms of integration.

Michel who is currently employed, has been so for about two weeks, within her own field. Has experienced it as meaningful for her integration process, she explains how her situation has changed after she started working in regards to integration.

I've already noticed that a lot of people at the workplace really want to make me feel included, and they ask me about what did you do before you came here. And they invited me to a restaurant yesterday. and it doesn't seem like a big deal. but it really made me feel a lot better. because my partner is not from here. we don't have family here and it is really hard to not have a group. I mean I have other immigrants that were with me in the integration course and that's fine I'm glad I have them but it's also really meaningful to get some local groups. (Michel)

Michel stresses the fact that it has felt good for her to come in contact with local groups and that working has made her feel more included. She holds that work gives you internal value, you feel needed and hence it affects how integrated you feel.

Kim who is now doing her PhD at the same faculty where she used to study has on the other met people through work, she feels that it's quite lonely, and kind of a sad transition from being a student and having a close group of friends to then working alone. Therefore, working has not affected her integration process in terms of meeting people and feeling a part of something bigger. But she still holds that it's important, it gives a foundation and has enabled her to think about the future, and to build a home in Finland. We talk about her transition from being a student to working.

Of course it plays a role in your brain and mind-set, I feel safe, when the position came, not safe as in rights but like resources, I have work healthcare, so that's really good, and also I have been able to stay here and think about the future. But I don't work with many people, like that's actually, something I have been feeling very strongly like before you go to classes you have your group of friends that you go in

with together, now there is like no one. Like if I take a course I take one but it's just short term, and you know you don't get to know anyone. (Kim)

Kim holds that moving from studying to working has given her security, which of course has an effect on her integration process and she also perceives it as meaningful. On the other hand, she has struggled in finding her place and people around her that would make her feel more at home.

The category of employment grew from the fact that all informants talked about employment as a part of what they perceive as meaningful for integration. The success of integration is as mentioned before often mirrored towards employment, also because the structural notions of integration are far more easy to measure (Pyykkönen, 2007). Some informants expressed the meaning more than others and as more profound, but it is fair to state that not all informants were employed at the moment when the interview took place. So it might not be as clear cut to think in retrospective or to imagine a future with employment. In this chapter employment is therefore seen in a bigger perspective, comprising both volunteer work and different free time activities, this aspect grew from the material, from the importance of finding one's place through other things than paid work. Especially when paid work did not conform to the informant's education or did not give the informants a social network. According to Ager & Strang (2008), employment, housing education and health is often seen as the public face of integration, the factors that are often researched and discussed within the phenomenon. But they (2008) also state that this seldom increases the understanding of how the persons involved actually perceive integration, therefore other factors such as social aspects needs to be examined. Through the expressions of employment in regards to what is perceived as meaningful for integration, it became quite evident that so many other factors affect integration and also how employment is viewed within integration, it is not as simple as whether or not you are employed. Also Waters & Moore (2002) state that it is too simple to make the separation between employed and unemployed, since feeling part of a community, doing volunteer work, or having other meaningful social connections can be a huge relief of psychosocial distress. It is therefore fair to state that employment is meaningful for integration, but needs to be looked at from a broader perspective in order to get at the real expressions of the value. Employment and the value of it will be discussed more in depth in the following chapter when answering the second question of this research.

5.3. How do the respondents perceive the value of employment within integration?

In regards to the research question of *how the respondents perceive the value of employment within integration*, four description categories have risen which are; financial security, purpose, structure and faulty expectations. The description categories are a result of careful consideration of smaller focus categories that have emerged from the empirical data. The categories explain the most prominent variations in experiences in regards to what value employment has for the individual. In order to follow how I have analysed my material, charts of each description category with focus categories will be presented under every heading. After presenting the results summaries of each description category will be presented. The empirical data points to the fact that employment has a lot of benefits and is valued as a meaningful part of integration but that it also often comprises faulty expectations that are not met in real life.

5.3.1. Financial security

Description category:	Financial Security	
Focus categories:	Independence	Being able to think about the future

All informants express that a job would give them financial security, at the moment three out of five informants are employed in paid jobs, but all still reflect upon how being employed would give them financial security and independence, and how this would affect their wellbeing and thus their integration process. Financial security makes the informants feel independent and through that enables them to plan the future and build a home. Many of the informants express that this is a foundation for being able to function. Even though many informants have partners, and they would get by without having a paid job it gives a sense of independence and autonomy and furthermore gives way to a more equal relationship where they are able to contribute. Jahoda (1982) talks about modern employment as the only structure in industrialized societies that is able to meet the needs of people who are trying to make sense out of their existence while ensuring economic safety. Through the material the

thought of employment being fundamental emerges, because it ensures financial security, and financial security is in most cases crucial for being able to actively take part in the structures of a society and hence feel integrated (Pyykkönen, 2007). According to Jahoda (1982) poor economy is the prominent and manifest effect of being unemployed, therefore it is also relevant to discuss the perceived value of employment in regards to financial security.

5.3.1.1. Being independent but not feeling valued

Emery explains that before she had work in her own field as she does now, she had to do small jobs on the side, just to get by. She means that this gave her security and that it's needed in order to get by in life.

Yeah because I didn't have money, like I had to do cleaning i delivered newspapers, also cooking. / .../ It gave me a way to live. Because I didn't have money. So it gave me support yeah, it's not if you don't look outside the TE, it kills you. I see people they have so much skills and they just go to work in a varasto because they think it's the only option. And when you hear this kind of stories of four years of unemployment and not finding anything I don't know how many courses of Finnish and I can hear that they speak so well but they still don't get anything. It's like you feel like ok maybe i will never be able to find something. But also its like there is this missing support especially for people who are educated... (Emery)

At the same time, she holds that she was not happy about this, even though it gave her financial security, she did not feel valued, and part of the society. She stresses the fact that the integration courses and TE fails to look at the individual needs, she felt useless and that the Finnish society did not value her education and competence.

Michel who now is employed believes that paid work has allowed her to contribute to her relationship in an equal way, which has affected her wellbeing and that that has had an effect on her integration process. When I ask her how being employed has changed her current situation in terms of integration she states the following:

What is really nice is that I can contribute equally with my partner for rent now. And he has been like it's not your fault that you are unemployed and with his salary we have been getting by ok. But to know, when rent day comes I know like her is half of the rent I think it's really good for my relationship and my wellbeing. (Michel)

Michel also says that being employed has given so much more than just financial security, it has given her substance in her everyday life, which has had an impact on her relationship and her personal wellbeing.

Drew who is not employed at the moment, reflects upon her previous experiences and thinks about the future, and holds that it would be nice to be able to be financially independent even though they get by with her partner's salary and he supports her in finishing her studies. She talks about how it would be to have a paid job.

Of course the financial aspect, which would be nice to have. And that kind of also, I feel a bit, my self-esteem in that sense is kind of low, because I'm unemployed. I mean my boyfriend says I'm still a student but you know I'm not actively sitting in a classroom anymore. So for me I'm unemployed, no, those projects are not for me real jobs. (Drew)

She also states that not having a job and not being financially independent affects her self-esteem. She works with some projects but does not see them as proper paid jobs and therefore they do not offer the financial security that she is hoping for. Also, even though Drew is practically still a student, she perceives herself as unemployed because she is no longer actively sitting in a classroom.

Kim who is now employed within her own field expresses that finding a job was a must for her, because without that she would not have had the financial security to be able to stay in Finland. So for her, this was one of her primary goals. It was not an option to stay here without a paid job. She explains how she feels when I ask her about staying in Finland after she graduated.

Let's say things have worked out for me very well. I got job. Because for me the primary thing in my mind is if I graduate and don't get a job I can't stay because I

don't have the money, so if I didn't get this place so fast I would have stayed a bit longer, our agreement is kind of like one year trying options you know, but then feeling it out somewhere else in Europe... (Kim)

Alex who is not employed but doing an internship through his integration course, reflects upon how important it would be for him to earn his own money. This would give him financial security but also affect other aspects of life. Now money is often an issue, and it creates distress.

When you get an opportunity to work it gives you that, you get some kind of satisfaction. I am in school now, I have a profession, I am working, I am earning, I can buy a coffee, I can do whatever I want, it gives a level of satisfaction. And independence, but if you are being given and there are so many conditions, it makes you feel out of place, maybe it makes you feel like you are not fit to a certain environment. (Alex)

The category of financial security grew from the empirical material, but has its roots in the interview guide that is based on previous theories on employment and the value of it (Jahoda, 1982), but also on theories revolving integration that entail aspects of safety and stability (Ager & Strang, 2008). All five informants believe that employment either gives or will give financial security, which is by all perceived as fundamental for their integration process. Ager & Strang (2008), discuss integration from a broad phenomenon and in line with the expressions above, holds that aspects connected to financial security such as housing and safety and stability are crucial for successful integration. According to the informant's it is needed in order to feel independent, and needed in order to have a relationship on equal grounds. But first and foremost, for over half of the informants it is crucial, in order to be able to stay in Finland. The material points to the fact that from financial security independence grows, this independence enables the informants to think about the future, in regards to staying here in Finland which again affects their possibilities of actually creating themselves a stable everyday life and a home. This is directly linked to the feelings of being integrated and can therefore be seen as an important part of integration as a whole.

5.3.2. Purpose

Description category:		Purpose	
Focus categories:	Self-esteem & value	Motivation	Experience

Four out of five informants discuss how employment creates purpose. According to Jahoda (1982) collective purpose and achievements are a hidden benefit of employment, that unemployed are deprived of. Purpose is often expressed as having goals or knowing what you are doing and why. Being able to put your expertise into use and feeling valued through that is an expression that many have. Also having purpose lifts your self-esteem and motivates you to further challenge yourself. Furthermore, being employed means gaining experience, which is regarded as a purposeful. Being employed has thus had an impact on the informant's ability to develop themselves and to believe that they have a future in Finland. As mentioned before not all of the informants are in paid jobs at the moment, but have reflected upon previous experiences or on non-paid jobs which according to them also creates purpose.

5.3.2.1. *What creates purpose?*

Alex who is doing his internship and is going to do a work try-out for the same organisation talks about how being employed gives you purpose and affects other aspects of life. He feels that purpose is fundamental, that people need to sense purpose in order to thrive. Otherwise as he explains it, we are not satisfied. Sensing purpose is in his opinion very important. He talks about his experiences from the integration courses and that it is easy to lose motivation when you are forced to do something that does not feel purposeful:

When you are given the opportunity to work. You are going to meet people, you are going to learn the working culture in Finland. And you're going to feel independent, you can meet your needs, you're going to feel a level of satisfaction. You have tasks to fulfil. It gives you purpose. But when you are being pushed to do something, you lose motivation. (Alex)

Alex is hopeful that a long term job will affect his sense of purpose. From the experiences that he has from his internships he holds that work gives him independence through which he senses purpose.

Emery talks about purpose a lot, mostly in terms of integration. She holds that this is fundamental in order to feel at home, that you need to have a purpose. But she also talks about it in correlation to employment, because it is often through that, that she senses purpose. Previously before getting a job within her own field she delivered newspapers, worked as a cleaner and other small jobs on the side. During that time, she did not sense any purpose with work, she was mostly frustrated. So she had to look for purpose through other things. That's when she joined a project, that was without pay, but gave her purpose, made her feel alive again. In the following quote she talks about what purpose means for her and how it felt to feel that again.

so you mean what components are needed in order to feel at home? I guess the first one is having purpose if you don't have a purpose then. / .../ How I see it I put myself two years in front, how I can get there. Because my life has not been that easy in the sense of money, my family has been great but money has been an issue for me all my life. So it's always like how I can get there, what I need to do to get to that point, that is a sense of purpose.

Being in working life is not everything, I mean it's nice to be able to afford things because actually when I got this job helping this guy, and we are really aiming at getting it going. That month that I started to do that I felt like okay I am using my brain, I was again like feeling kind of alive. Not only competitions and so forth but it was like I have a purpose again. We have a calendar we knew what to do. It was like having a job without the pay. (Emery)

So being employed does not always give you purpose, in the case of Emery, she was very frustrated and sad that she was not being able to put her expertise in use. She was not able to plan the future, because she was not working with something that conformed to her level of education and competence. Hence she had to search for a collective purpose from a different source, and that was incredibly valuable for her.

Michel who is now working, talks a lot about how being employed has made her feel internal value, like she has a purpose, and that she is actually fit to do something in this society. She feels that she wants to contribute, and that it feels amazing to be able to. Furthermore, she

feels that being in working life has pinpointed the things that she is good at and that that really affects her wellbeing. Working together with colleagues who respect her and value her competence feels good. She reflects on how she feels valued because she is employed:

And I feel like I actually have more value, like I know have internal value but the fact that someone is willing to tell me yes you can work here, you can contribute to society. Makes me feel much more valued here in Finland. (Michel)

When we talk about how Drew has experienced that being employed has affected her life she often talks about experience and confidence and self-esteem. That being employed gives you confidence to embark on new challenges, and that confidence and experience are needed for the future.

No so it's kind of, the financial aspect, self-esteem, more confidence, you feel better about yourself... / .../ Of course it gives you experience, and I got a tip from one person that said, if you wanna start a business you need to work 5 years in the field and because you learn things. So if I would start a business I'm not planning that, but I think that its useful to work in the field that interests you. And you never know where you might end up. /.../ You know something totally different. I worked as an administrative assistant at this big international workplace, where most of the foreigner's work. Cause it doesn't require Finnish. Yeah that was. I was surprised that I got the job, it was unexpected. But, it was in the same year when I moved so it helped me with my self-esteem. (Drew)

The description category of purpose grew from discussions revolving motivation, experience, self-esteem and value. But was already incorporated in the interviews on the basis of previous theories on what value employment has for the individual. Sensing purpose is fundamental, Alex and Emery, talked about it frequently, both in terms of integration as well as employment. Kim did not discuss purpose at all, she touched upon the subject through discussing motivation in regards to the Finnish language and that being employed has in that sense given her a purpose to learn the language because it has given her the stability and security of knowing that she is going to stay in Finland. Michel and Drew on the other hand talked about confidence and self-esteem as something that is important and meaningful for the future. The material points to the fact that purpose is understood from

different perspectives by many, but is something that employment usually gives you if you feel that you are able to put your experience and competence into use. It also became evident that a paid job does not always naturally lead to a sense of purpose, that sometimes purpose can be found through other measures, which somewhat derives from Jahoda's (1992 in Edwards & Hansson) theory, nowadays purpose can be sensed in many different settings, and often a paid job might only have that value, that it is paid. As in the case of Emery who worked with delivering newspapers, which did not give her purpose but gave her a way of living, and at the same time enabled her to search for other collective purposes. So today, collective purpose can be found in various different settings. Still, some sort of collective purpose that Jahoda discusses (1992 in Edwards & Hansson) even though it might be outside formal employment, seems to be an important building block for wellbeing and hence for integration.

5.3.3. Structure

Description category:	Structure	
Focus categories:	More content in everyday life	Daily routines

Three out of five informants talk about structure as an outcome of being employed. According to Jahoda (1992 in Edwards & Hansson) the modern society is built around people having routines and structures for the waking part of the day. In accordance many of the informants hold that it is of great importance and that they have suffered because of the fact that their lives have not been structured before. Others again stress that their lives have not changed that much in terms of structure from the transition to work from either studies or an integration course. Structure seems to be very individual, and have individual meanings for most, for some structure is important while for others, it doesn't seem to have changed that much.

5.3.3.1. *A more meaningful everyday life*

Michel who has been working for a couple of weeks with a stable job from 9-5 talks about the fact that she likes her daily routines that are connected to working, and that it also gives her more content in life which makes her happier. She doesn't just sit around all day. In

accordance to previous research not having structured days might have a negative impact on people, because the division between work and leisure are not settled (Jahoda in Edwards & Hansson, 1992). Michel explains how she feels about her daily routines and the fact that employment has given her structure in life and therefore had a positive impact on her wellbeing:

I don't sit around and feel depressed, because long term unemployment is hard on anyone. No matter if you are foreign or Finnish. It's extremely poor for your mental health. I have my times that I go, wake up at the same time, eat breakfast with my partner. Go to work, see the same people on the tram every day, it makes me happy.

She continues that routines also affect her everyday life, she feels she has more content and more to talk about with her partner:

And also like before he would be going to work and I would be going to maybe two hours of class, but now we can have better conversations. Like how was your workday and I always have something that happens with the little ones. (Michel)

Drew talks about her current situation and expresses that not having a structured life bothers her a lot. It affects motivation and makes her feel as if it's hard to get things done. Despite the fact that she is not working at the moment she tries to structure her day, that makes her feel better. Drew is a good example of the fact that it might be easier to reflect upon daily routines and structure when you are left out of them, being in working life and having them often results in taking them for granted, which the material in this research points to. Drew talks about how she feels about structure in the following quotes:

I don't have that well-structured days and that bothers me a lot. Though I could plan that maybe I'll spend two hours' job searching two hours learning Finnish, but somehow at the moment I'm really struggling with motivation. I think I just burned out after that book project. So I'm kind of on holiday right now. But I know that it helps if I write down stuff, and plan in hours. I think I'll have to start doing that next month, but at least I'm trying to dedicate a couple of hours a day for that blog, and try to set it up. so I'm trying to keep myself busy.

She continues when I ask her if having a structured life is important:

Yes, and a job gives that. because it's a routine but it's also structure, makes your life easier at least for me, I like to plan my life. (Drew)

On the other Drew expresses that she structures her days and time even though she is not employed, which points to the fact that in today's society, employment is not seen as the only purposeful activity that gives way for a structured life.

The category of structure grew from the material but was also a part of the interview guide which was partially based on previous research on employment (Jahoda, 1982). Structure did not seem to be of such importance for everyone, partially because the informants did not sense big changes going from being unemployed to employed, because they still had structured days, going to integration courses, or doing volunteer work or other for them meaningful activities. According to previous research (Jahoda, 1982) meaningful activities that create a structure can be found elsewhere but often entails paid work. The material in this research strongly indicates that in today's society, meaningful activities that create daily routines can most definitely be found outside employment, this might be a reason for why it is not perceived as important. Despite this over half of the informants discuss structure as something valuable, but it is not always connected to employment.

5.3.4. Expectations

Description category:		Expectations	
Focus categories:	A job will open up more possibilities	A job will give me increased social networks	

In the following subchapter I have a somewhat different approach to analysing. Through the material some categories grew that were later on understood as expectations, expectations of what a job would give, but maybe then did not in reality. These could also have been discussed as perceptions of what a job would give, but since over half of the informants were able to reflect on their current situation in terms of expectations and the other half on previous experience, the decision was made by me to not talk about if perceptions conformed to reality but rather to talk about them as expectations that were either met or not. The most prominent expressions regarding expectations were that: a job, any kind will open up more possibilities, act as stepping stones, and that a job will contribute with increased social networks. All of the informants touched upon expectations through these expressions. According to previous research employment is seen as a source of social contacts (Jahoda in Edwards & Hansson, 1992) and furthermore social networks are regarded as a source for acquiring a first job (Pehkonen, 2006). Previous research already points to the problematic, that social contacts are needed in order to gain employment, but that employment actually should be the source for gaining social contacts. The empirical material of this research also points to this dilemma.

5.3.4.1. *The possibilities of employment*

Alex talks about the possibility of employment opening up new possibilities, but also stresses the fact that it is dependent on the individual, on the situation you are in. He holds that not all types of jobs give you that, neither do all jobs give you what you hope for in terms of social integration, networks and communities. He reasons like this when I ask him about different jobs and what could be expected of them:

People say, that is a stepping stone. But what kind of networks do you get when you are cleaning alone. Working in the night. What kind of networks are you making? If someone has nothing, then maybe it can be good for them. But it depends on the

individual. You are not talking to anyone, but if you are working as a volunteer, maybe assisting someone in an office you get to meet somebody. You get to talk to people. That's how you network. You work in the kitchen cleaning dishes who is going to talk to you. So that's not integration. (Alex)

Alex holds that employment as in paid jobs that are often offered to immigrants that are struggling to find a job within their own field that would conform to their education, don't always offer what you would hope in terms of for example social networks. He sees it as problematic, even though he acknowledges that it gives you something, it might give you a foundation, be a stepping stone, or give financial support. But he does not perceive it as integration.

5.3.4.2. Employment does not naturally lead to greater networks

Kim who is now working within her own field, expresses that being employed has not helped her socially, it has not widened her networks and that she often feels alone:

I used to be in this office, there was supposed to be people there but they were never there. So I was just by myself all of the time. But now I moved into a new office that has capacity for way more people, also there is not a lot of people there, but seriously, up to now I just go there and I don't talk to anyone I talk to my supervisor of course but there is no reason to talk to anyone. / .../ It's bad, I don't notice anything at a daily basis but if I at some point, because it's not healthy, but now it's better for example a person spoke to me today. it's just different, you're not used to it... (Kim)

Kim explains that employment has not affected her social networks and that not having them through work has really forced her to look for them elsewhere. So according to her employment is not a guarantee of finding one's place. And hence not always an integrating factor.

Emery also believes that employment makes you feel part of things and increases your social networks. Despite this she points out that these feelings were not present when she was working with odd jobs on the side, and also that feelings of networks were present before

she got the position within her own field, mostly through the non-paid projects that she is part of. She explains how she got the position within her own field through networks:

Yeah and actually I got the job because I met one girl, she works at the company and she was telling me there is this position as an engineer and we need this designer. And we were actually in a class in Aalto and she saw how I was working and she liked it and she told me to apply for the job and I applied and I think she helped in some kind of way. And I got through the interviews, but having this first contact was important. (Emery)

She continues by stating that she now feels that she is a part of some networks both through work and through the non-paid project that she works for:

Yes, right now I am part of a company and I am part of this group but this happened before having a job. (Emery)

She holds that it is not solely through employment that one reaches out to bigger networks, often networking is needed in order to find that first job, which can then act as a stepping stone for future employments.

Drew talks about her disappointments in regards to working life in Finland. She had hoped that being employed would have had a positive impact on her social life, she mirrors this to how things were in her home country, and ponders if maybe, this is a cultural difference.

I would've hoped that sort of the people that I meet there that they would've become friends, I don't know what the problem was... That we were different, or that I was shy, or because in my home country you bond with colleagues much more, I learned that from my boyfriend also that he doesn't really go out with his colleagues. / .../ I feel like in Finland it's not, it's a different working culture, in my home country its very common to you know go out with colleagues and do things with them, even now I go back and meet my ex-colleagues and I have worked with them maybe for a year or less you know.

She continues talking about the expectations of the first job opening up more possibilities:

Yeah, but then I also hoped that having my first job in Finland will open up more possibilities in here like putting that position in my CV and writing you know Finland, would help me find other jobs but I don't think that did anything. /... /yeah and that's why I was really excited, but maybe I just suck... (Drew)

I noted that Drew is frustrated and that she doubts herself in regards to finding employment again. She doesn't feel that previous employment opened up new possibilities, and furthermore she is also kind of disappointed that it didn't lead to greater social networks. She also touches upon the subject of shame in being unemployed and that that has had a negative impact on staying in contact with people from her home country.

Yeah there's a bit of a shame, and also my mom is a bit of ashamed to tell people I don't have a job. And that's kind of frustrating. On the other hand, it's not the end of the world. (Drew)

Michel on the other hand feels that working has had a positive impact on her social life, she feels more included. And that has been important for her. Her group of colleagues have made her feel welcome. She also feels that this job will give her some sort of indication of what she wants to do in the future, she feels positive about the fact that this could be her thing, and therefore also sees it as a stepping stone. She talks about the importance of social connections at work:

Yeah I don't need my best friends to be my work mates but to have a positive relationship with them is really important for me, and I really feel that I have that now, through work. (Michel)

The category of expectations grew from the material, and came to be a somewhat important chapter that depicted the whole spectrum of what value employment actually has for the individual in regards to the integration process. Through the expressions of four out of five informants it became evident that social networks were not a direct outcome of being employed, which derives from previous theories (Jahoda in Edwards & Hansson, 1992) that

state that employment should be a source of social contacts, but as mentioned before this is a far too easy separation to be made, integration is a manifold concept that entails many different factors. Through the material it becomes evident that these factors work hand in hand. For example, in the case of Emery, she stated that work did not give her social networks, so she had to look for it elsewhere, through these networks she then gained her first employment within her own field. Drew also touched upon the subject of shame in being unemployed and that this has affected some social contacts. Previous research shows that being unemployed might make it more difficult to contact people, because of feelings of shame (Jahoda in Edwards and Hansson, 1992), but Drew still found her way of gaining social contacts outside work and seems happy about her situation. Michel felt very positively about how employment opened up new social networks. While Kim felt very lonely at work, the material thus points to the fact that all expressions are individual, dependent on the situations at hand, there are so many factors that need to be taken into consideration. In several cases the informants felt that they needed to reach out to different groups and networks in order to gain employment, or that they needed to find social connections through other measures because employment did not give them that. Despite this all informants have positive thoughts about employment and believe that in the future it will give them certain benefits.

6. Summary of results

The aim of this thesis was to investigate what is perceived as meaningful for integration and furthermore what value employment actually has within integration, from the perspective of immigrants. Interviews were made with five informants who had personal experiences of working in Finland, and were able to reflect on their integration process and what has been meaningful for them. The overall idea was to pose some questions regarding employment and integration, and give way for an individual thought revolving these questions. The material points to the fact that integration as well as employment within that discussion are manifold concepts and processes that have a subjective connotation, this suggests that integration and how it is perceived is individual. Furthermore, being an immigrant is a fluid concept with a temporal connotation, also immigrants are a heterogeneous group of people with very different backgrounds and different needs. It becomes evident that the informant's situations have changed a lot during the course of years that they have been in Finland, and this has had an impact on what they perceive as meaningful. The results in this research are somewhat shattered, on the one hand clear tendencies in what is perceived as meaningful for integration, for example access to information and social connections are perceptions that most informants share, but when it comes to the second question of what value employment has for the individual a much shattered result can be seen, where differences in expressions are greater. Some informants have perceived employment as one of the most prominent factors for integration, because it has enabled them to stay in Finland. While others have not gained what they would have wished for through employment. All of these expressions are related to the situation at hand, so it is needed to state that not all informants were working within their own field and not all informants were working at the moment of the interview.

Regarding the first research question of what is perceived as meaningful for integration a somewhat unanimous research result can be seen. Informants stress the importance of *Interaction with society* as a great part of integration. Interaction with society in this case entailed matters regarding access to information and support, understanding of society and culture and the importance of language. Integration according to the Finnish law is today seen as a two-way process (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2018), and can also be seen as something important in the results of this study. It is expected that immigrants are being provided with sufficient information and support in order to thrive in a new society. Information is according to this seen as a crucial element of integration by

the informants. Furthermore, language is according to previous research seen as a resource for gaining employment and being able to actively take part in society (Forsander, 2002). The results of this research also conform to the previous, but language is also a huge challenge, and with several informant's language has not been needed to gain employment. The integration courses are understood as lacking, the informants hold that they are not taking into account the individual needs and conditions. Furthermore, sufficient information and support is often seen as a challenge by the persons involved. According to the results of this research it is fair to state that the structural processes of integration are understood as challenging, often affect motivation and furthermore that they reproduce stereotyped ideals. These notions are understood as part of the cultural and societal understandings that are perceived as meaningful for integration. And also conform to previous research and ideals of minorities and majorities (Pyykkö, 2007).

The second category in regards to the first question is *sensing belonging*. Sensing belonging entailed feeling at home, and feeling part of. These were prominent expressions that were discussed throughout the interviews, it is therefore fair to state that sensing belonging to different groups and feeling part of communities is perceived as one of the most meaningful factors for integration. Many of the informants stated that this is needed in order to sense purpose, in order to find employment but first and foremost in order to manage their everyday lives. It is fundamental and motivating to feel part of something. This conforms to previous research (Pyykkö, 2007), but has not been lifted in the integration discussion that much lately. The third category of the first research question is *employment*. Employment was also discussed a lot throughout the interviews and therefore also found its' natural place under what is perceived as meaningful for integration. Many of the informants held that employment is also something that is fundamental, but fundamental in a different aspect than sensing belonging. Employment is needed in order to get by, it is a precondition for over half of the informants in order to be able to stay in Finland. Employment leads to financial security which enables the informants to think about the future, build homes and feel at home, but even more importantly to be independent. It also affects self -esteem and motivation, it gives purpose. Several informants believe that purpose is a chore condition of feeling integrated. It is very clear that integration has a broad meaning for the persons involved. But more importantly it needs to be understood and inspected through several different aspects, all factors that have an impact on integration are intertwined, they work together and are often dependent on each other. Therefore, no generalizing theories

revolving integration can be made, we can only analyse through theories and listen to the people involved in order to gain more understanding. Also Ager & Strang (2008) hold that integration is a manifold concept and that their theory can only help to understand, analyse and to see patterns between different domains.

Regarding the second research question of what value employment has for the informants within the spectrum of integration. A more shattered result is seen. Four categories rose from the empirical material these were; financial security, purpose, structure and expectations. The results for the second research questions are not as unanimous, and differences in expressions are more frequent. The value of employment is experienced as different by many, but the before mentioned categories are the most prominent expressions. Purpose is experienced as something valuable that a job often gives, despite this, that job is not always a paid job, but can be other forms of “work” for example non paid projects or volunteer work. As mentioned earlier it might not be of use or relevance to separate between being employed or unemployed, since a lot of the features of what is experienced in paid work can nowadays be experienced in other settings. Some of the informants were for example working outside their own field, this did not give them a sense of purpose, whereas they looked for it elsewhere for example through volunteering. Financial security is perceived as a fundamental benefit by all informants. It also gives way for a more equal relationship which is perceived as important, but more importantly it enables the informants to think about the future and build a stable home in Finland. Structure is perceived as very important by two informants while for the other three, they didn’t sense so much variation in regards to structure and being employed or unemployed. The last category comprised expectations and came to be an important theme. Expectations in regards to what a job would give you were discussed a lot, both through perceptions but also through experience. The most prominent expressions in this category were that a job will open up more possibilities and that a job will give you increased social networks. Also here, the expressions are shattered, one informant holds that her job made her feel included and valued. While the others did not sense that it gave them anything in terms of social connections. Furthermore, it was interesting to see how again, the spectrums are so intertwined. That often social connections led to employment, not the other way around.

The aim of this thesis was to open up a broader discussion revolving integration, to bring forth the voices of the individuals who are experiencing it and furthermore to explore what

value employment actually has in the discussion revolving integration, from the immigrant's perspective. The results from this research cannot be generalized in that sense, they only demonstrate the individual thoughts and perceptions regarding a phenomenon that is current and interesting to explore. In the following chapter I will discuss the results and mirror them to the surrounding frameworks of the society.

7. Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to bring forth the individual voices of integration, through exploring what value employment has for the persons involved. My intention was to get a deeper understanding of what is perceived as meaningful for integration and the value of employment within it and furthermore to shed some light on how broad the phenomenon of migration is and what impact this has on integration.

The theoretical background consists of former research revolving migration, integration and employment. Also I have found it important to make use of known theories revolving integration and the value of employment. The aim of this thesis has in a sense been to open up for a greater discussion revolving integration, to problematize the discourse that often only comprises employment, I have sought to do this through exploring what immigrants perceive as meaningful for integration and what the value of employment is within integration. This study has confirmed my initial belief that employment is important for the individual, but even more so, it has confirmed that sensing belonging is a huge building block for integration. By now it is fair to state that sensing belonging is a precondition for integration. Because today's society is characterized by individuality and hence the frameworks for working life are changing, this study stresses the need to give more thought to how social aspects of integration could be better supported, to enable people to actually take part in society, and staying here, long term. Migration does not only entail refugees, as the public often depicts it, refugees are in fact a minority within the immigrant population in Finland, and Finland only receives a handful of the refugees fleeing in the world. Migration is broad and people move here due to a wide range of reasons. This needs to be addressed, in the public discourse as well as in the official policies.

The research results reveal that integration is a manifold concept, something that is not easily understood, it is subjective and temporal, furthermore it demonstrates that employment is of great value for integration, but that it also encompasses faulty expectations that are often not met in real life. Understanding of the cultural setting in a new society, sufficient information and support during the integration process, language skills, connections to networks and communities and employment are the core of what is perceived as meaningful for integration. When exploring what value employment has within the phenomenon of

integration, financial security, purpose, structure and faulty expectations where the most prominent themes.

By the time that the study was conducted no research was made in Finland on the perceptions of integration practices from the standpoint of critically exploring the value of employment within integration from the immigrant's perspective. During the summer of 2018 a report on a study made by the city of Helsinki was published. The study focuses on pathways to work, the hidden value of employment and how this affects wellbeing. The research is conducted through interviews with immigrants (Yijälä & Luoma, 2018). This furthermore stresses the importance of this type of research, where the persons involved are placed in the centre of the discussion.

Integration is as mentioned before a broad phenomenon which encompasses a lot of different factors that are all intertwined and affect each other in one way or another (Ager & Strang, 2008). The problem, in my opinion, and as this research also demonstrates, is that the public face of integration, what is discussed, what is problematized, and what is sought to build up frameworks and working supporting systems for, often revolves around employment. This is partially because state policies have a strong focus on labour market integration at the moment. Hence employment is what is supported, through initiatives, projects and official measures. It is fair to state that employment affects our daily lives, work sets the rhythm of the waking part of our day, it might give us broader social networks and has a substantial impact on the economic situation and therefore on wellbeing in general. But within integration, in the public discourse the success of integration is often mirrored only towards employment, whereas they become equal, employment and integration. However, this study shows that this is not the case, employment does not equal integration, integration is a comprehensive process that entail a wide range of factors that affect how integrated one feels in society. Furthermore, a separation between being unemployed and employed is far too simple to be drawn within integration, as mentioned before nowadays many other settings provide the same benefits for the individual as a paid job does, for example volunteer work gives way for people to sense purpose and connect to other people and communities. Despite this, it is of great importance to acknowledge that employment has certain benefits that other settings do not provide, the most prominent one, according to previous research (Jahoda, 1982) as well as this study, is that a job gives you financial security. And this is fundamental, in order to be able to live and stay in Finland. But several benefits that are thought to be a

result of employment are according to this research only expectations that are not met in real life, social networks do not expand in all jobs, greater self-esteem or a sense of purpose is not always an outcome of employment, especially when immigrants are working with jobs that do not correlate to their education, in so called inadequate employment. Little research has been made on what impacts inadequate employment has on the wellbeing of immigrants, especially in Finland (Yijälä, 2018). This study also only touches upon the subject, through the expressions of the respondents who talk about it when exploring what value employment has for them in regards to their integration process. Therefore, further research on inadequate employment and what consequences it has on immigrant's wellbeing would be a natural extension to this research and an interesting topic to explore.

This research only provides a small window into the lives of immigrants and how they perceive their situation in a new society, but at the same time it stresses the fact that integration is subjective, it correlates to the situation at hand, it is affected by many different factors, and employment is only a fraction of what is perceived as meaningful for the individual. Sensing belonging is fundamental for all informants and stresses the fact that it needs to be taken into consideration in the structural frameworks of integration. What I hope is that in the future, integration will be inspected from an even more comprehensive standpoint, with the individual in the centre. I hope that there will be a turning point in where the Finnish society starts seeing immigrants as something valuable, rather than challenging, but not only from an economical perspective, as it seems today. Finland needs immigrants, but at the moment and even more so in the future I believe that Finland will be phasing challenges in getting people to stay. Integration policies need to focus on comprehensive wellbeing on social aspects of integration, and acknowledge that integration is so much more than just employment. I hope that more effort will be put on the two-way process that integration is supposedly about, on changing ourselves, our attitudes and the society that we share, while becoming more diverse.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed consent

I hereby give my informed consent that the information acquired from the research interview can be used as part of the material in Yasmin Samaletdin's master thesis and in publications related to this thesis. The overall aim of the study is to bring forth the individual voices of integration processes through thematic interviews.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any point. All information will be processed confidentially.

Place and date:

Signature:

Contact information

Researcher: Yasmin Samaletdin samaletdin.yasmin@gmail.com 0408410198
Supervisor: Pia Mikander pia.mikander@helsinki.fi

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview guide

Background:

1. Tell me about yourself:
 - *When and why you have moved to Finland?*
 - *Did you move here on your own?*
 - *What is your situation today?*
 - *Do you have a partner/family here in Finland?*
 - *What is your educational and or working background?*

The value of work

1. Are you working at the moment? Within your own field?
2. **If you are in working life:** How has that changed your everyday life?
If you are not in working life: How do you feel it would change your situation?
 - *Economic independence? Stability?*
 - *A sense of purposefulness?*
 - *A bigger community?*
 - *Feeling important?*
 - *Access to something else?*
 - *A structured life, is that something that is important?*
 - *Greater self-awareness, confidence, a strengthened identity?*
3. Has work had an impact on your social life? Given you a greater network? People you feel good with? People you spend time with outside work?
4. Do you feel that work has had an impact on your integration process? How? If not, why? What are you missing?
5. **If you are not in working life:** What do you think is affecting that you are not finding employment? Language? The lack of social networks? Something else?

The perception of work

1. Did your perceptions of what work would bring you conform to reality? If not what was different?
2. Would you have hoped that being in working life would have given you more? What?

Social networks through work?

1. Do you feel that you belong to something bigger? What? Why is it important?
 - *E.g. work, family, friend groups, hobbies, communities*
2. Do you have people around you that you can trust, that you can turn to when you feel you need something? From where do you know these people?
3. Do you feel that you have obligations towards someone?
4. Who do you spend most of your free time with?
5. Have you experienced difficulties in meeting people?
6. How would you define social networks? Why are they important?

Integration and the meaning of it

1. Have you taken part in any activities that are meant to support your integration process? What and why? Has that given you something?
2. Have you gotten the support you feel that you need? What has been crucial for you?
3. Do you feel that you are integrated in society? What defines being integrated for you? What does it mean?

Rank the following claims

To be in working life

To be able to make my own decisions, to be independent

To feel part of something bigger

To have people around me that I can trust

To feel needed