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Immigrant Women's Labour Market Transitions

– Hindering Barriers or Manageable Obstacles?

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Tiivistelmä — Referat — Abstract

Questions regarding labour market integration are becoming more prominent in Finland with rising numbers of immigrants. The Nordic welfare model has chosen the labour market as a focal point of integration because of it being a crucial arena for equality, freedom and for the integration process as a whole. Even though measures have been taken to improve immigrants labour market situation, the gap in the unemployment rates between immigrants and persons with Finnish background is still prominent. The situation is especially weak for immigrant women, who on average have a 17% lower employment rate than women with Finnish background. Immigrant women have been identified as a group that require extensive measures to improve their position in the labour market.

This study is an attempt to generate more research in the area by highlighting immigrant women's agency in the integration processes, especially focusing on labour market transitions and challenges connected to these transitions. A qualitative research design was chosen so that focus could be put on the lived experiences of the women and on interpreting their viewpoints and stories. Semi-structured interviews were used as a data collection method to be able to look deeper into the individual and personal narratives of eight first-generation immigrant women.

The results demonstrate that the women have experienced many different transitions between positions in the labour market. These positions were often unstable and constantly changing, such positions were for example being on maternity leave, combining part-time work with studies or being unemployed. Furthermore, the results show that the biggest challenges encountered are connected to entering the labour market. Lack of sufficient language skills, being met with discriminatory behaviour and problems connected to transferring skills were some of the recognized problem areas. Some of the encountered challenges had momentarily felt like hindering barriers, but in the end, they turned out to be manageable obstacles that could be overcome and after all lead to successful outcomes. This study contributes to the pool of research concerning immigrant women, confirming and reinforcing previous research in the area. Policymakers should take vulnerable groups, such as immigrant women, better into consideration and further develop policies that enhance their labour market situation.

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Arbetsmarknadsintegration blir en allt mer framträdande fråga i Finland då mängden invandrare ökat de senaste åren. Att den nordiska välfärdsmodellen valt arbetsmarknaden som fokus för integration beror på att arbetsmarknaden är en avgörande arena för jämlikhet, frihet och integrationsprocessen som helhet. Trots att åtgärder har vidtagits för att förbättra invandrarnas arbetsmarknadssituation är klyftan fortfarande särskilt stor mellan invandrare och personer med finsk bakgrund. Arbetsmarknadsställningen är särskilt svag för invandrarkvinnor, som i genomsnitt har en 17% lägre sysselsättningsgrad än kvinnor med finsk bakgrund. Invandrarkvinnor har identifierats som en grupp som kräver omfattande åtgärder för att uppnå en förbättrad ställning på arbetsmarknaden.

Denna studie strävar till att generera vidare forskning inom området genom att lyfta fram invandrarkvinnors röster angående integrationsprocessen, med särskilt fokus på övergångar på arbetsmarknaden och utmaningar kopplade till dessa övergångar. En kvalitativ forskningsdesign valdes för att kunna fokusera på kvinnornas erfarenheter och tolka deras synpunkter. Semi-strukturerade intervjuer användes som datainsamlingsmetod för att kunna få djupare insikter i åtta första generationens invandrarkvinnors individuella och personliga berättelser.

Studiens resultat visar att kvinnorna har upplevt flera olika övergångar mellan positioner på arbetsmarknaden. Dessa positioner var ofta instabila och ständigt skiftande, exempel på dessa positioner var bland annat föräldraledighet, kombination av deltidsarbete med studier eller arbetslös. Dessutom visar resultaten hur de största utmaningarna är knutna till inträde på arbetsmarknaden. Några av de problemområden kvinnorna uppmärksammat var bristfälliga språkkunskaper, att mötas av diskriminerande beteende och problem i samband med överförande av utbildning och annan kunskap man fått utomlands. Vissa av de utmaningar som kvinnorna mött hade tillfälligt upplevts som hindrande barriärer som dock i slutändan visade sig vara hanterbara hinder som kunde övervinnas och trots allt leda till framgångsrika resultat. Denna studie är ett bidrag till att fylla forskningstomrummet kring invandrarkvinnor och studien både bekräftar och förstärker tidigare forskning inom området. Beslutsfattare bör ta bättre hänsyn till utsatta grupper som invandrarkvinnor och vidareutveckla policy som förbättrar deras arbetsmarknadssituation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Aim and Objectives 3
1.2 Definition of Key Concepts 3
1.2.1 Immigrant 3
1.2.2 Labour market 4
1.2.3 Barriers and obstacles 5

2. BACKGROUND 6

2.1 Finland: From a Country of Emigration to a Country of Immigration 6
2.2 Immigrants' Labour Market Position 8
2.2.1 Immigrants' labour market position in Finland 8
2.2.2 Immigrant women's position 10
2.3 Possible Reasons for Unemployment 14
2.3.1 Inadequate language skills 14
2.3.2 Ethnic penalties and discrimination 16
2.3.3 Transferring skills: Credential recognition and downward mobility 18

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 20

3.1 The Transitional Labour Market Approach 20
3.1.1 Different transitions in the labour market 22
3.1.2 Full employment 23
3.1.3 TLM and gender equality 24
3.1.4 Immigrants' transitions 26
3.1.5 Limitations and future research 27
3.2 The Concept of Self-Efficacy 28
3.2.1 The social cognitive theory 29
3.2.2 The core of self-efficacy 30
3.2.2.1 High and low self-efficacy 33
3.3 Summary 33

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 35

4.1 Research Process 35
4.2 Research Design 37
4.2.1 The phenomenological approach 37
4.3 Data Collection Methods 39
4.3.1 Sample selection 40
4.3.1.1 The informants 42
4.4 Data Processing and Analysis 43
4.5 Quality Assurance 46
4.6 Ethical Consideration 48

5 RESULTS 51

5.1 Transitions Between Positions 51
5.1.1 Moving to Finland 51
5.1.2 Transitions between different types of employments 52
5.1.2.1 Transition between part-time and full-time contracts 52
5.1.2.2 Transition between temporary and permanent contracts 52
5.1.2.3 Transition between paid and unpaid work 53
5.1.2.4 Thoughts on transitioning between contracts 54

5.1.3 Transitions between studies and work *55*
5.1.4 Combining family with studies and work *57*
5.1.5 Experiences of unemployment *60*
5.2 Challenges Encountered in the Labour Market 63
5.2.1 Experiences of job seeking *63*
5.2.2 Language skills *65*
5.2.3 Being a foreigner in Finland *70*
5.2.4 Transferring skills and downward mobility *79*
5.2.5 Findings focused on a gender perspective *80*
5.3 Summary of Main Results 83

6 DISCUSSION 88

6.1 Research Limitations 96
6.2 Suggestions for Future Research 97

REFERENCES 98

APPENDICES I

Appendix A I
Appendix B II
Appendix C III
Appendix D IV

1. Introduction

Immigration is the most visible form of globalisation in the highly mobile world we are living in today (Scheffer, 2011). In 2016, 6.2% of the population were immigrants in Finland, consequently forming a significant heterogeneous minority group (Hiekkavuo, 2017). Questions regarding labour market integration are becoming more prominent in Finland with rising numbers of immigrants. Research shows that immigrants living in Western countries find economic and social integration to be one of the main challenges they face in the new host country (Mannila, Messing, van den Broek & Vidra, 2010). The Nordic welfare model has strong emphasis on integration through work and the belief that social exclusion can be prevented through work is strongly present. Therefore, the labour market has been chosen as a focal point of integration because of it being a crucial arena for equality, freedom and for the integration process as a whole. Through work the individual can gain better financial independence resulting in more freedom, a higher position in society and, furthermore, work gives the possibility to finding meaning by contributing to something worthwhile and gives a feeling of being valued. (Kroll, Similä, Salmenhaara & Blomberg, 2008)

In Europe, and especially in Finland, there is also a shift in age structure that inevitably shifts the labour market conditions. In the future, more pensioners and less people of working age will lead to more strains on the economy, resulting in for example higher taxation to cover costs and the need for immigrants to make up for the declining rates of people in working age. (Eronen et al., 2014) This leads to an increasing importance of successful labour market integration of immigrants. The economic downturn that started in 2008 had an impact on the unemployment rates in Finland. Fortunately, the effects of the economic growth in Finland can be observed in the labour market through increasing employment and decreasing unemployment since the end of 2015 (Bank of Finland, 2016). Despite this, a gap in the unemployment rates between persons with Finnish background and immigrants is still prominent with a difference of approximately 13.8% when comparing non-EU background immigrants to persons of Finnish background (Sigurjónsdóttir & Norlén, 2018). The situation is especially weak for immigrant women, who on average have a 17% lower rate of employment than women with Finnish background (Larja & Sutela, 2015a). Being at risk for exclusion, active measures need to be taken to ensure the successful labour market integration of immigrant women. It is important to acknowledge that labour market integration is more

than a question of time; knowledge of the problem area is required to be able to take appropriate measures to support the labour market integration.

This thesis is an attempt to highlight immigrant women's agency in the integration processes, especially focusing on labour market transitions and challenges connected to these transitions. A research gap has been identified regarding qualitative data on women's own experiences of labour market integration and their position in the labour market. A similar research gap has been identified in other countries, for example Tastsoglou and Preston (2005) describe a similar need in Canada, since longitudinal quantitative studies cannot alone fill the need for extensive research in the area. This thesis sets out to contribute to this discussion by conducting in-depth interviews with first-generation immigrant women about their labour market transitions and challenges they have encountered. The transitions and challenges associated with the transitions have been chosen as a focus point in this thesis. The transition of moving from one country to another unites the women, but every story is unique and other individual transitions have also taken place in the women's lives. Studying these varied transitions between positions gives the researcher a chance to look deeper into the individual and personal narratives of the women.

The theoretical frame consists of a combination of an economic theory to provide views to account for the transitions in the labour market, and the concept of self-efficacy to provide the possibility to study the experiences of these individual transitions and experiences of the encountered challenges closer. The rest of the introduction chapter will consist of presenting the aim and objectives of this thesis, furthermore, the key concepts will be defined. From the introduction chapter onwards, the layout for the thesis will be the following: chapter 2 presents the background to the problem, chapter 3 provides a theoretical framework, chapter 4 discusses the chosen methodology, chapter 5 sets out the results and chapter 6 discusses the results and draws conclusions.

1.1 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this thesis is twofold. Firstly, to examine immigrant women's labour market transitions, by incorporating the Transitional Labour Market approach (Schmid, 1995). Secondly, to examine what kind of challenges the women have encounter in the Finnish labour market and how the challenges are regarded, by incorporating the self-efficacy concept (Bandura, 1977/1986). In order to achieve this aim, experiences of labour market transitions and challenges related to these transitions will be studied through a qualitative research design by conducting interviews with immigrant women. The research questions are the following:

1. What kind of transitions have immigrant women encountered?
    a) How have the women experienced these transitions?
2. What challenges have immigrant women encounter in the Finnish labour market?
    a) Are the challenges regarded as hindering barriers or manageable obstacles?

1.2 Definition of Key Concepts

The following section outlines the key concepts that will be used throughout this thesis. The four key concepts are immigrant, labour market, barriers and obstacles. Descriptions of all the above, including limitations, will be given and the concepts' connection to this thesis will be discussed.

1.2.1 Immigrant

The terms immigrant, person with foreign background and foreign-language speaker will be used as interchangeable terms in this work. Statistics Finland uses the term person with foreign background while I prefer the term immigrant. Statistics Finland (2016) defines a person with foreign background as a person whose parents or the only known parent are born abroad. If both parents of a person are born abroad, the background country is defined primarily by the biological mother. The term immigrant is an umbrella term that describes people who permanently settle outside their country of origin. A lot of the previous research used in this thesis refers to foreign-speakers or persons with foreign background instead of immigrants. To streamline the text, the word immigrant will for the most part be used throughout the text to define a person who has moved from a foreign country to Finland. The term immigrant is easier to use in text and a well-established concept in today's society. Otherwise, a definition for the term would need to be given for every article used in the thesis.

It has been acknowledged that because of the varied use of terms some data might vary, but for the purpose of this thesis that is an acceptably small variation. Furthermore, the term person with Finnish background will be used in this thesis to describe a person with at least one parent who was born in Finland.

The term first-generation immigrant, the focus group of this study, refers to people who have been born abroad and whose parents have also been born abroad. Most definitions of immigrants also refer to people born in a country that is not the parents' country of origin; these immigrants are referred to as second-generation immigrants. (e.g. the Family Federation of Finland, n.d.) It should also be noted that remigration is included in the statistics concerning immigration. Remigration refers to people moving back to Finland, who have Finnish ancestry or otherwise a close connection to Finland. (The National Institute for Health and Welfare, n.d.)

As indicated, there is no clear definite definition of the term immigrant and, therefore, I have chosen to use the broader meaning of the word immigrant, including first and second-generation immigrants but excluding asylum seekers. Asylum seekers have not yet been granted a residence permit and are thus not yet permanent residents of Finland. Therefore, asylum seekers are not included in population statistics, as they have not yet been granted residence permits and home municipalities (Helminen & Keski-Petäjä, 2016). The choice of definition is supported by the fact that Statistics Finland and other statistical sources base their statistics on immigrants by studying population statistics. These statistics rarely make a distinction between first-generation immigrants and second-generation immigrants, and the statistics include only people with a residence permit in Finland.

1.2.2 Labour market

A labour market can be described as a place of interaction between employees and employers. It is a supply and demand constellation, where the employee is the supply and the employer is the demand. Wage is the price of labour and it represents an income for the employee and a cost for the employer. The demand for labour is affected my multiple factors such as the wage rate, product demand, possibility for substitutes and the number of “buyers” of labour. The supply of labour is affected by factors such as the size of the working population, the wage rate, migration, barriers to entry and Trade Unions. (Economics Online, 2017)

Different theories regarding labour market economics have been developed and for this thesis the Transitional Labour Market approach has been chosen. The Transitional Labour Market approach will be discussed in detail in chapter 3. The term labour market will be used throughout this thesis, referring to jobs in private, public and third sector, without looking at a particular market or industry. The purpose of this thesis is not to focus on the labour market per se, but on the experiences the immigrant women have from the labour market and the transitions they have experienced. Therefore, a deeper economic analysis of the labour market and its construction will not be carried out, thus shifting the focus towards the women and their individual stories and experiences of the labour market.

1.2.3 Barriers and obstacles

Barriers are formations or structures that prevent or hinder movement or action. Barriers stand in the way of completing a process, for example the process of finding employment and because of the barrier remaining unemployed. An obstacle interferes with or slows down progress or achievement. The obstacle provides a challenge but through for example an action plan or by having strong self-efficacy it is possible to move forwards. An illustrative example is to think of a road with barricades or alternatively of a road with a pile of bricks in the middle of the road; the barricade prevents access, but the bricks can be run through or be driven around. A barrier is similarly to the barricade a more permanent concept while obstacles are temporary.

In this thesis, the concepts of barriers and obstacles will be used to describe the differences in the experiences immigrant women have about the challenges they have encountered in the Finnish labour market. Accordingly, the second research question is aimed to outline if the challenges are regarded as hindering barriers or obstacles possible to overcome. The difference lies in both actual experiences and self-efficacy of the women; have they encountered only difficulties and rejection without a single feeling of achievement, thus leading to feeling of being faced with hindering barriers? Or have they despite the challenges been able to overcome the obstacles or at least have a feeling of it being possible?

2. Background

In the present chapter, a brief introduction of Finland's historical background regarding immigrants will be presented. Furthermore, the current population structure will be examined with a focus on immigrants. Lastly, relevant law and policy regarding immigrants will shortly be discussed.

2.1 Finland: From a Country of Emigration to a Country of Immigration

Finland's population has long been regarded as a homogeneous population that has lived isolated because of its geographical location and strict immigration policy (Leitzinger, 2008). Larger waves of emigration in the hope of work and increased prosperity were common until the 1970s. Finnish emigrants moved in larger quantities to the United States, Australia, Sweden and other countries in Europe. (Rapo, 2011) According to Leitzinger (2008) the immigration to Finland has been fairly limited, but persons of foreign background have always lived in Finland in varying numbers during Finland's independence. Several historians talk about a new era of immigration that began in 1973, when large numbers of Chilean refugees arrived in Finland. Previously, immigrants had mostly moved from neighbouring countries as well as small numbers of immigrants from for example Central Asia. The next major wave of immigrants arrived in Finland in the 1990s. The increase of immigrants in the 1990s was mainly caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Unions, the return of the Ingrians[1] and furthermore, increasing restlessness in Somalia, Iraq and the former Yugoslavia. (Hiekkavuo, 2017)

In the last decade, the number of immigrants has increased in Finland. In the 1990s, approximately 13,000 persons moved to Finland, while the corresponding number of recent years has been over 30,000 persons (Miettinen, 2015). Finland has become an increasingly popular country to immigrate to especially in the 21st century, and among other things, the expansion of the EU has made mobility between countries easier. According to Statistics Finland (2017a), a record of 34 905 persons moved to Finland in 2016, which is an increase of 21% from the previous year. 78% of the immigrants were of foreign citizenship, which led to a migration gain of 19 795 persons with foreign citizenships. The migration from non-EU countries increased significantly in 2016, the three largest immigrant groups were from Iraq

[1] The Ingrians, also referred to as the Ingrian Finns, are the Finnish Population of Ingria. They are descendants of Lutheran Finnish immigrants introduced in the area in the 17th century during the revolution of the Swedish Empire.

(3,069 persons), Russia (2,087 persons) and Afghanistan (1,097 persons). The reasons behind immigration are several and very varied to their character. Immigrants living in Finland in 2014 stated the following reasons for immigration: family reasons (54%), immigration due to employment (18%), refugee status (11%), studies (10%) and the rest of residence permits had been granted for other undefined reasons (Sutela & Larja, 2015b).

The capital region is a popular place for settlement among immigrants, a quarter of Finland's immigrants live in Helsinki. Immigrants formed a significant heterogeneous minority group of 14.3% (89 878 persons) in 2016, of which 83% were first-generation immigrants and 17% second-generation immigrants. (Hiekkavuo, 2017) However, an increase in the placement of reception centres for refugees in other counties, as well as a general increase in immigration, has led to an increase in the number of immigrants outside the metropolitan area. Nevertheless, it is still possible to see a migration movement to Uusimaa from the rest of the country and more than half of all immigrants lived in Uusimaa in 2016. (Statistics Finland, 2017a) The amounts of immigrants in Helsinki are large in comparison to other cities in Finland but small on a Nordic level. A comparison to Nordic capitals can be made to sufficiently understand the difference; in Stockholm and Oslo nearly every third resident is an immigrant while the corresponding number in Copenhagen is every fourth resident (Hiekkavuo, 2017).

With increasing numbers of immigrants, a need for successful labour market integration has arisen to prevent isolation and exclusion. The need for successful integration led to rewriting of immigrants' political rights and focus was put on educating immigrants in the early 1980s. Finland's integration policy is focused on integrating immigrants through labour market integration and an especially strong focus is put on learning Finnish. (Forsander, 2008) According to law, immigrants arriving in Finland who register as unemployed to be able to receive unemployment benefit need to partake in integration training for immigrants. A personal vocational plan is drawn up to map out what kind of services are needed to support the integration to be able to become a part of the Finnish society. The plan can include language courses, internships, work life coaching, rehabilitation, career guidance and other related activities. (Työ ja elinkeinotoimisto, n.d.)

2.2 Immigrants' Labour Market Position

This chapter addresses immigrants' labour market position and the problem areas research has identified to be the main reasons for unemployment or difficulty to become employed. First, the general employment situation in Finland will briefly be presented with a closer look on the segmentation of the labour market. Secondly, immigrant women's position will be discussed in detail. Thirdly, some of the major findings regarding previous research on immigrants' unemployment will be addressed. Lastly, problems regarding employers' views on hiring immigrants will briefly be discussed.

2.2.1 Immigrants' labour market position in Finland

Finland can be characterized as a state-dominated welfare regime, where equality and high standards further characterize the country. The concept of full employment is one of the central elements for welfare regimes, therefore, it is also important to pay special attention to the employment of minority groups, such as immigrants. Shortly explained, full employment refers to everyone eligible to work being able to find a job. Full employment is an ideal situation since it provides the maximum amount of income support and taxation, therefore, making it possible to pay the high costs of welfare. (Kogan, 2007) In an ideal situation everyone can find employment, naturally this is not the actual situation and unemployment does exist. The concept of full employment will further be discussed in subchapter 3.1.2.

What does the immigrants' employment situation look like in Finland? The employment rate measures the number of persons employed in working age and the unemployment rate subsequently the number of unemployed persons. It is difficult to state exact numbers regarding differences in the labour market situation between immigrants and persons of Finnish background. A difference in the employment rate has been stated to be everything between approximately 10-18%, depending on the source and who is included in the statistics (Larja & Sutela, 2015a). A fact is that the employment rate has increased in Finland for both immigrants and persons with Finnish background (Kuusela, 2017), however, the labour market situation is still much weaker for immigrants. According to Larja & Sutela (2015a) immigrants had an employment rate of 63.7% while the corresponding figure for persons with Finnish background was 73.7% in 2014. For immigrants who had lived in Finland for less than 5 years, the employment rate was 56%, while the corresponding figure for those who lived in Finland for 10 years or more was 69%. One of the main reasons for the increase in the

employment rate is the fact that women have a significantly increasing employment rate after a longer stay in the country. (Larja & Sutela, 2015a) The most current numbers regarding unemployment rates published are from 2016; the unemployment rate for persons with Finnish background was stated to be 8.8% while the corresponding figure for immigrants born outside the EU was 22.6% and approximately 10% for immigrants born in the EU (Sigurjónsdóttir & Norlén, 2018).

Immigrants are more often than persons of Finnish background employed in positions that are not correlating to their educational background (Myrskylä & Pyykkönen, 2014). Moreover, it is possible to distinguish some stronger occupational distributions, as immigrants are more often employed in the service and sales sectors. Furthermore, immigrants more often have part-time employment and fixed-time contracts, and the working hours are often not conventional office hours. One reason for this overrepresentation in the statistics is probably the greater share of employment in the service and sales sector. The differences are more prominent when examining occupational divisions between men and women. Of all men with employment, 7% were immigrant males in 2014. Approximately 60% of all men who worked as cleaning workers were immigrants, and of kitchen and restaurant workers 50% were immigrants. Of all women with employment, 5% were immigrant women in 2014. Women of foreign background were overrepresented in the cleaning industry (17%) and in assistant work in the industrial and construction sector (14%). Immigrants also choose to become entrepreneurs more often than persons of Finnish background. This may be due to difficulties in obtaining employment in the open market due to inadequate language skills and problems of getting their education identified in Finland. (Sutela, 2015) Some difficulties that immigrants encounter in the Finnish labour market will be discussed in subchapter 3.3.

Kogan (2007) explains how this segmented market, where immigrants are overrepresented in the lower segments, is referred to as labour market dualism by institutional economics. The opposite, the neoclassical economics, assumes that all workers compete in a single, uniform labour market. In the dual labour market, two different labour market segments are created: the capital intensive (primary) and the labour intensive (secondary). Shortly explained, the workers in the primary segment have stable and skilled jobs, where the employer needs to invest in their workers by offering the best tools and further training. The positions require skills and experience, workers are often unionised, and they are seen as expensive capital. On the other side, the workers in the secondary segment have rather unskilled and unstable jobs.

The unstableness arises from the fact that the employer has not made a big investment in the worker and the worker can easily be laid off and replaced. Irregular working hours, low wages and little prospect of advancing characterize the vacancies in the secondary segment. Naturally these vacancies will be shunned by those who have the opportunity to choose, often being the native-born workers.

Furthermore, Kogan (2007) demonstrates the process of immigrants' job search through the economic search theory. Searching for a vacancy implies costs (*C*) and there is also uncertainty about whether the search will even be successful (*p*). The search will go on until the utility (*U*) of an offered vacancy exceeds a certain threshold. When this threshold is exceeded the jobseeker will stop activities to seek other vacancies. For the immigrant jobseekers the search behaviour develops as followed: the costs (*C*) are usually higher for immigrants since they might lack knowledge or social capital in the host country. An uncertainty about how successful the search will be is usually present for every jobseeker, but especially the fear of discrimination (even though it might not exist) affects immigrants, therefore, resulting in a low level of probability (*p).* Kogan (2007) also states that some immigrants are looking for an immediate return (*U*), especially if they are planning on returning to their home country soon and might therefore be open for job opportunities that are low-status vacancies. If immigrants are reluctant to wait for better open vacancies the threshold will be exceeded earlier on than for native jobseekers, who do not have very high costs and are more certain that they will find employment and are therefore willing to wait for better opportunities.

2.2.2 Immigrant women's position

Immigrant women have been identified as a group that require extensive measures to improve their position in the labour market. Especially from a salary viewpoint, immigrant women are in the weakest position in the labour market (Myrskylä & Pyykkönen, 2014). Little research differentiating immigrant women and men's labour market position has been carried out in Finland, especially with a focus on women, even though the need for future research has been identified. Myrskylä and Pyykkönen (2014) published a working paper, *The labour market situation, education and political participation of immigrant women and men in Finland*[2], stating that there has not been a single collected publication in Finland regarding gender

[2] Original titel in Finnish: Suomeen muuttaneiden naisten ja miesten työmarkkinatilanne, koulutus ja poliittinen osallistuminen

differences in immigrants before their own publication in 2014. Additionally, a survey on work and well-being among persons of foreign origin was published in 2015 by Statistics Finland, the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), and the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (TTL). The survey, "Work and Welfare study of persons with foreign background[3]" referred to as UTH, was an extensive Finnish population study that generated information about employment, work ability, functional capacity, health, and experiences of discrimination among persons of foreign origin living in Finland and it also took into consideration gender differences. (Nieminen, Sutela & Hannula, 2015) As mentioned earlier, this thesis is a contribution to answer to the need for more extensive research in the area. In this chapter, an overview of women's labour market position and some of the existing research on the topic will be presented.

The employment rate of immigrant women was 56.1% in 2014 while the corresponding number for immigrant men was 71.2%. Research indicates that women's low employment rate is mainly caused by the fact that immigrant women have children at a young age and the employment rate is low for mothers. (Larja & Sutela, 2015a) Furthermore, research has indicated that long family leaves weaken one's labour market position (Kellokumpu, 2006), and it is far more often women who use the majority of the family leave. Immigrant women have on average a 17% lower rate of employment than women with Finnish background. The differences in employment rates are particularly evident in the age of 25-29 years with a difference of 20% between immigrant women and women with Finnish background. An explanation for the differences in young age may be due to the fact that immigrant women are building a family at a younger age than women with Finnish background. (Larja & Sutela, 2015a) Correspondingly, men name the reason for moving to Finland to be work-related more often than women; women more often start their careers after having children and taking care of the family (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2016). Immigrant women are also more likely to be married than women with Finnish background. The difference is especially noticeable in the young age groups (18-29 years), where 26% of immigrant women are married when the corresponding percentage for women with Finnish background is 7%. (Hiekkavuo, 2017) Furthermore, 15% of 20-24-year-old immigrant women report taking care of their children as their main occupation, while the corresponding proportion of women with Finnish background is 4% (Larja & Sutela, 2015a).

[3] Original titel in Finnish: Ulkomaista syntyperää olevien työ ja hyvinvointi -tutkimus

As mentioned earlier, from a salary viewpoint immigrant women are in a very week position. Immigrant women have a monthly income accounting for 77% of immigrant men's income, 62% of persons of Finnish background's income and 84% of women of Finnish background's income (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2016; Myrskylä & Pyykkönen, 2014). The service, sales and care sectors are the biggest employment sectors for immigrant women; this might also be a partial reason to why immigrant women's salaries are low. Especially the care sector's salary levels have been facing critique and discussions in Finland. The smallest salary differences between immigrant women and men can be observed within entrepreneurs; women are receiving 84% of the men's pay but compared to persons of Finnish background the difference is a striking 61-65% depending if compared to women or men entrepreneurs' income. (Myrskylä & Pyykkönen, 2014)

Previous research on immigrant women has been carried out in different contexts and different countries, a few studies concerning EU countries will be discussed in closer detail. The EU funded FEMAGE project studied how third country immigrant women coped with obstacles and aimed to strengthening their economic and social integration in an aging Europe. The research was conducted through an international comparative analysis in eight European countries, including Germany, Austria, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia and Estonia. A multi-method approach was used; 239 interviews were conducted and data from the Population Policy Acceptance Survey was analysed to understand the native populations thoughts about immigrants. In Finland, the two focus groups interviewed consisted of women with Russian background and women with Kosovo background.

Overall findings of the FEMAGE project revealed that destabilisation of family networks occurs frequently, and women are forced to adjust their gender roles. Furthermore, the women felt that they were made to feel inferior because of their gender. The women also felt trapped in a social, legal, economical or emotional vacuum. Meanwhile, the women perceived the native population in a positive way but the negative views on migration issues outweighed the positive ones from the natives' perspective. Findings also show that the immigrant women aimed to be able to be fully integrated in the host country. In the light of these findings, experts involved in the study claim that the benefits of successful integration should be made more visible to the society. Additionally, immigrant women should be given support to be able to promote their independence; issues such as labour market integration and childcare should be addressed. (Community Research and Development Information Service, 2009)

There is no clear and easy answer to how immigrant women's employment can be activated, otherwise the statistics on immigrant women's unemployment would probably look much brighter. Research suggests that a better employment rate can be achieved through a longer stay in the country; women who lived in Finland for five years had an employment rate of 40% while the corresponding number for women who lived in Finland over ten years was 67% (Larja & Sutela, 2015a). Waiting for the years to pass is unfortunately not a very effective solution since it does not involve action from the women's side or from the employers. Measures have been taken to activate women's employment, especially women staying at home with their children has been acknowledged to be a risk group (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2016). Measures such as policy regarding family leave and a closer discussion on the topic of combining work with children will be discussed later on in chapter 3 when the Transitional Labour Market approach is discussed.

On a final note, cultural differences also need to be taken into consideration, in some cultures the man works, and the woman stays at home and takes care of the family. It cannot be assumed that everyone wants to work, and cultural adaptation cannot be forced upon anyone. Finland is a country, where women have an exceptionally high employment rate and working is highly encouraged. That is also why big differences in employment rates between some groups of immigrant women and men seem very alarming. It should also be noted that immigrants should not be viewed as a homogeneous group; as stated earlier, immigrant women from the EU-region have a higher employment rate than women from outside the EU. One group that has an especially low employment rate are Somali women. The reasons behind the Somali women's weak position are many; both the previously mentioned cultural differences and a lack or a low level of education resulting in weak writing and reading skills or even illiteracy, make it more difficult for them to find employment. Every tenth Somali and Kurdish woman has weak reading skills or is illiterate. Furthermore, family sizes are often big because attitudes towards contraception are negative especially in Somali families resulting in long parental leaves and time spent away from the labour market. (Castaneda, Rask, Koponen, Mölsä & Koskinen, 2012)

2.3 Possible Reasons for Unemployment

In this section possible reasons for immigrants' unemployment or difficulty to become employed will be discussed, the reasons stated imply for both genders. Research indicates inadequate language skills of the host country, ethnic penalties and discrimination to be significant factors leading to barriers and obstacles in the labour market. Difficulty transferring skills such as previous education and work experience across borders has also been identified as a factor to why integration can be troublesome. Lastly, some discussion around the employers' views on hiring immigrants will briefly be presented.

2.3.1 Inadequate language skills

By the end of the year 2016 in Finland, 353 993 persons had a foreign language[4] as mother tongue, thus accounting for 6% of Finland's population. The number of foreign language speakers increased by approximately 24,000 persons from the year 2015. The largest groups with a foreign language as mother tongue included Russian, Estonian and Arabic. Persons with a foreign language as mother tongue accounted for 72% of the population increase in the metropolitan area. (Statistics Finland, 2017b) In most European countries, including Finland, skills in the target countries domestic language is a prerequisite for acquiring citizenship. Accordingly, in Finland this means satisfactory oral and written knowledge of Finnish or Swedish, or satisfactory Finnish or Swedish sign language knowledge. Furthermore, practical language skills also need to be at least satisfactory. The language skills can be proven in numerous ways, such as language proficiency certificates granted after language examinations or by obtaining school certificates that for example include a syllabus or maturity test completed in Finnish or Swedish. In very few cases exceptions to the language skill requirement can be granted. According to law, expectations can be granted if the applicant is over 65 years old, has arrived in Finland as an adult and is illiterate or has health issues that prevent acquiring the required language skills. (Finnish Immigration Services, n.d.)

B1 level Finnish is the level that the language classes as a part of the integration training for immigrants aim for since it is considered to be a sufficient enough level to enhance chances of finding employment. Tarnanen's and Pöyhönen's (2011) research regarding immigrant's language skills in Finnish and opportunities for employment indicates that expert's find the B1 level of Finnish to be insufficient for the actual language skill demands in working life. It

[4] Statistics Finland defines a person with another mother tongue than Finnish, Swedish or Sami as a foreign language native speaker (Statistics Finland, 2017b)

is also important to reflect over the fact that sufficient language skills mean different things when viewed from different perspectives; authorities, employers and the immigrants themselves often have different views on what sufficient means and what areas of skills are referred to. It is not always clear if reference is made to spoken or written skills, producing text or understanding written text or speaking or understanding when others speak.

Both previous research and language policy support the notion of sufficient language skills of the target country being one of the most important factors of successful employment (Tarnanen & Pöyhönen, 2011). The level of salary has also been proven to be connected to the language skills of immigrants (Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003; Euwals, Dagevos, Gijsberts & Roodenburh, 2007). Employed immigrants have a greater opportunity to practice their language skills and learn more by being in daily contact with the target language at work. It is a bit of a paradox, since employers are often looking for employees, who already have good language skills without realizing that immigrants could learn the language well while being employed. Some trends regarding the matter can be observed in the labour market; if there is a shortage for labour employers might be more flexible about language requirements, but if the competition for the position is hard it is easy to reject immigrants on the grounds of inadequate language skills. The notion of Finnish language skills also carries a symbolic value of committing to Finland. Nevertheless, it is still important to note that the relationship between employment and language skills is complex and poor language skills cannot be regarded as a single explaining factor for unemployment. Other factors such as social status, ethnic background and level of educational degree should not be overseen. (Tarnanen & Pöyhönen, 2011).

In conclusion, Tarnanen and Pöyhönen (2011) still recognize problems in the attitudes towards language skills, how immigrants can proceed to an employment that responds to their education and furthermore, how to evaluate the role of language training to make up for 'lack of Finnishness' and its role in increasing the labour market value of immigrants. The lack of Finnishness is often a point overlooked, it refers to trouble becoming employed even though the person has required education and adequate language skills. It is hard to make up for the lack of Finnishness referring for example to a foreign name, a different appearance such as a darker skin colour or to an accent when speaking if it at the end is a question of the employer's lack of sensitiveness towards diversity. The demand to have "cultural competence" is often strong and immigrants are viewed as a group that lack this because of

not being native Finns. (Forsander, 2008) Chang (2014) has studied Taiwanese women seeking self-acceptable social positions in Finland and some of the results are focused on the labour market. The women in Chang's study believed that Finnish employers take little interest in their education and skills even though they are acquired from Finland; their ethnic origins put them in an unvalued status. A strong sense of lacking Finnishness was present.

2.3.2 Ethnic penalties and discrimination

A similar but broader and more universal concept than lack of Finnishness is ethnic penalties; the concept is commonly used in studies of differences in the labour market participation of immigrants and natives (Hasmath, 2012). Ethnic penalties refer to the differences in labour market position after controlling for social background and human capital. In contrast, ethnic 'gains' or 'premiums' is the opposite of ethnic penalties. The concept refers to positive traits that are associated with particular ethnic groups; such as "hard working Poles" or "high-achieving smart Asians". Ethnic penalties should not be mixed with ethnic discrimination; ethnic discrimination refers to unequal treatment because of ethnic background and a clear causal link between the ethnic background and the unequal treatment is established. Ethnic penalties are harder to observe, consequently, ethnic discrimination can be an explanation of ethnic penalties or then it can be caused by other disadvantages. (Midtbøen, 2015)

As mentioned, controlling for social background and human capital must first be made to be able to determine actual ethnic penalties. The socioeconomic background is an important factor when predicting employment; low socioeconomic background is associated with poor educational achievement and poor patterns of employment. (Heath, Rothon & Kilpi, 2008) Some inequalities are caused by actual differences in for example formal qualifications and skills, referred to as human capital. Such may be previously discussed lack of language skills when referred to an actual lack of skills and not the employers' excuse to reject the jobseeker based on for example an accent (Midtbøen, 2015).

Midtbøen (2015) has reviewed comparative literature on ethnic penalties in Western labour markets. The scope of ethnic penalties seems to be very varied across different contexts, but the disadvantage is present in all contexts. Disadvantages are transferred across generations, meaning second-generation immigrants also face ethnic penalties even though they have equal education and equal language skills as the ethnic majority. Midtbøen came to the conclusion that some factors strongly affect the level of unemployment. These factors were

the economic situation of the destination country, past and present immigration policies, acquisition of citizenship and educational systems. Previous research does not answer *why* there is clearly a disadvantage for non-European minorities in all contexts. The disadvantage might be caused by subtle or overt discrimination, from lack of relevant social networks or from some other factors. However, field research does show some compelling results of discrimination being a significant barrier for employment.

Researchers have for a long time been interested in figuring out the processes behind discrimination. Sociology of integration has long acknowledged hostility towards immigration (Silberman & Fournier, 2008) and social psychology research focused on groups has acknowledge the presence of in and out groups, which can be seen as a corner stone for discrimination processes. Tajfel's and Turner's (1979) classical Social Categorization theory suggests that we categorize ourselves and evaluate these categories; the categorizations are in favour of the in-group and difference the out-group. More precisely, differencing the in-group by comparison to an out-group strengthens the favouritism of the in-group**.** The evaluation process of deciding who is "we" and who is "they" is contemplated through three mental processes: Social categorization, social identification and social comparison.

First, we need to categorize things to understand the social environment. Then we choose what group we belong to and identify ourselves with it. Lastly, we compare ourselves to another group; the comparison needs to be in favour of the in-group so that a positive self-esteem can be maintained. Our self-esteem and self-image is highly connected to the groups we identify ourselves with, a positive social identity is important for a good self-esteem and groups help us to form or maintain a sense of self and to feel good about ourselves (Baron & Kerr, 2003). We enhance the in-group and discriminate the out-group to enhance our self-image; this leads to a divided world of "them" and "us". We will try to find negative things about the out-group so that we can feel better about ourselves. We exaggerate the differences between groups and the similarities of things in the same group. There is a high risk for discrimination if prejudice, stereotypic views and hatred of the out-group are taken to extremes. The act of discrimination can be subtle or overt. Subtle refers to actions that are more covert and the offender knows that it is wrong, while overt refers to more blatant actions that are easy to spot since the offender does not try to hide it because they do not view it as being wrong. On a final note, discrimination only partly explains labour market deprivation of

immigrants, but research has proven it to be one of the main causing factors (Kroll et al., 2008).

From an employer's perspective there seems to be a problem with wanting to invest in immigrants. Employers might anticipate a temporary presence and, therefore, not want to invest in on-the-job training or other resources on immigrants (Kogan, 2007 refers to Offe & Hinrichs, 1977). Research has strengthened this assumption from the migrants' viewpoint; reluctant attitude towards investing in human capital that is specific for the host country, such as the language of the host country, have been found since the immigrants themselves also anticipate a short stay in the host country (Kogan, 2007 referring to e.g. Chiswick, 2000; Dustmann, 2000). Furthermore, an employer's personal beliefs and preferences can highly affect the recruitment outcome and keep immigrants from being able to gain access to the labour market, even though the qualifications of the immigrant are the same as a native-born jobseeker's. However, the previously mentioned UTH Survey's results show that 78% of employed immigrants believe that immigrants are treated fairly at work and 63% have received sufficient support from their supervisors (Väänänen, Toivanen & Koskinen, 2015). On the other hand, these quite positive findings from UTH's study is the result from surveying immigrants who already have a job and, therefore, to some extent have had employers who are open to employing immigrants and ready to invest in them.

2.3.3 Transferring skills: Credential recognition and downward mobility

Education is one of the most important determinants of immigrant success in the labour market (Kogan, 2007; Midtbøen, 2015). Therefore, it is of high importance that the educational qualifications of immigrants are recognized in the destination country if such qualifications have been attained previously. The transferability hypothesis refers to the process of qualifications acquired in the country of origin being transferable in the destination country (Arendt, Nielsen & Jakobsen, 2016). Especially the human capital theory underlines the importance of educational qualifications in the migration context. Briefly explained, human capital refers to the investment individuals make in themselves that enhance their economic productivity (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). Kogan (2007) argues that the level of educational opportunities varies in different countries and immigrants arriving from dissimilar institutional structures than the host country are less expected to successfully integrate. Accordingly, immigrants from other EU countries often have an easier time getting their educational qualifications recognized, than immigrants from third countries.

Arendt, Nielsen and Jakobsen (2016) studied the importance of origin and destination country skills for labour market attachment of immigrants from Pakistan, Iran and Turkey in Denmark. The results implied that qualifications from the country of origin are not directly transferable to the Danish labour market. The results were aligned with previous research (Arendt, Nielsen & Jakobsen, 2016 referring to e.g. Friedberg, 2000; Chiswick & Miller, 2009). An interesting finding is that indirectly educational qualifications affect the labour market attachment through the fact that the previous qualifications impact the educational attainment in the destination country. A sort of re-investment in the education needs to take place in the destination country. In summary, provided that the immigrants have obtained a degree in their country of origin, the degree needs to be converted and made relevant in the target country to strengthen chances of employment.

Downward mobility is often a result of problems to transfer skills, which means moving to a lower status job than a person's education or previous experience would predict. Chang (2014) identified downward mobility to be a problem for highly educated Taiwanese women in Finland. The women struggled to find jobs that were matching their education and previous experience, therefore, they ended up in low status jobs that resulted in downward mobility. The downward mobility was accompanied by strong feelings of shame and powerlessness. As Chang (2014, p. 71) explains it, "although integration plans significantly improve immigrant employment outcomes, it overlooks the institutional and structural problems of the underemployment and deskilling of highly educated and skilled immigrants". The problem is deeply rooted and acknowledged in many countries.

3 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, the Transitional Labour Market approach, from here on referred to as TLM, will be discussed with a focus on gender equality and women's transitions in the labour market. The TLM approach sees the labour market as a dynamic place, where transitions take place between different positions. Furthermore, the self-efficacy concept will be discussed and tied together with the notion of hindering barriers and manageable obstacles that are present in this thesis. Self-efficacy refers to individuals' perceptions about their own abilities to successfully complete a task; therefore, it is a useful theory when examining how challenges that are present in the labour market are regarded.

3.1 The Transitional Labour Market Approach

Globalisation and changes in family and demographic structures has created new challenges for the employment systems; the need for more mobility and flexibility has never been as high. Moving to another city or even another country to find a job or to pursue building a family is common nowadays. Rising divorce rates can also be observed, which lead to increasing amounts of single parents that are mobile and need flexibility. These changes can be seen as individualisation processes, where people can have longer periods in their life where they need flexibility to answer the needs of their individual wishes and situations. (Schmid, 2001) TLM approach sees the labour market as a dynamic place of different transitions between positions. The TLM approach was launched in the mid-1990's by Günther Schmid and Peter Auer from Germany, with the main objective to create a framework to promote efforts of labour market reform. TLM was a reaction to the long-term unemployment that dominated Europe during the eighties and the nineties; it was developed as a reform proposal and challenged the traditional labour market policies. (Gazier & Gautie, 2011)

Some extensive research has taken place regarding the TLM approach connected to large EU-financed programs. The TRANSLAM research programme coordinated by Schmid covered three of the four main transitions previously discussed, excluding the retirement transition. Further research was strongly built around the TLM.net, a network allowing researchers to affect the European Employment Strategy and increase flexicurity, which refers to combining labour market flexibility with security for works in a dynamic economy. (Gazier & Gautie, 2011) In the Finnish context, an important study regarding immigrants' transitions will be addressed in closer detail in the separate 3.1.4 subchapter.

As discussed earlier, the process of supply and demand of the labour market is still present, but the TLM approach sees the market as a mobile space of transitions and weight is put on public policies and institutional arrangements. (Brzinsky-Fay, 2010) The approach addresses the issue of increasing demands for flexibility and social security by understanding and reforming labour market policies in a world where traditional full employment is no longer feasible (Schmid, 1995). In short, labour markets need to increase their adaptation and integration capacities to be able to meet the needs of the employees; the TLM approach is an elastic framework to do this. It is especially designed to help actors facing social risk (Gazier & Gautie, 2011), such as long-term unemployment and marginalisation, and the theory can be applied to the focus group of immigrant women in this thesis. In the context of this thesis, especially the transition for first-generation immigrants from their country of origin to Finland is of interest. Furthermore, for women the discussion of combining domestic life and work life will be relevant. The transition from education to work is also another relevant issue. All the above-mentioned transitions will be discussed in subchapter 3.1.1.

The definition for the key word "transition" has varied in different context. German publications and initial studies use the German term "übergänge", which means link, footbridge or gangway. Transitions in the context of employment have referred to departure from a full-time long-term job because of various reasons such as unemployment spell or parental leave. A second definition for transitions has also been developed; a broader term meaning any changes in one's position. The second definition is more commonly used today, but there is an emphasis on the need to define the starting point of the transition and it should also be defined where the transition will lead the person. Furthermore, the transitions are often complex and followed by a sequence of more transitions. The TLM approach challenges the traditional views of basic positions such as employed, unemployed or inactive. There are many intermediate positions between the supposedly stable departure positions and the TLM approach takes these mobility spaces into consideration, hence, the lines between positions become blurred. (Gazier & Gautie, 2011)

Gazier and Gautie (2011) describe how TLM is supported by four management principles that derive from the thought that policy makers should base decisions so that the amount of freedom increases in the system. TLM's four principles are empowerment, solidarity, co-financing and management by objectives. Empowerment refers to policymakers needing to take into consideration individuals' need for real choice by giving a wider selection of

choices. Empowerment should not lead to putting excessive burden on individual responsibility, but to offer the opportunity of choice. Solidarity refers to the unequal positions that exist in the labour market, therefore, collective interventions need to be taken to increase equality and offer support. Co-financing and management by objectives means that a bottom-up initiative needs to be created and active participation of all stakeholders is needed.

3.1.1 Different transitions in the labour market

There are many different transitions in the labour market. Schmid (2001, p. 235) distinguishes five types of transitional employment: (1) transitions between education or training and employment; (2) transitions between short-time work or part-time work and full-time employment, or transitions between dependent work and self-employment or a combination of both; (3) transitions between productive (but unpaid) private or social work and (paid) market work; (4) transitions between unemployment and employment; and (5) transitions from employment to retirement. There are endless possibilities and the risk of choosing a wrong transition is also strongly present. The aim of TLM is to through a holistic approach, by focusing on both the individual and the institutional level, to develop policy to enhance transitions. (Brzinsky-Fay, 2010) A holistic view takes into consideration the employment and social protection regime and furthermore, the domestic sphere. Finland as a welfare regime and the countries public policies and institutional arrangements will be discussed at a later stage in subchapter 3.1.4.

From where does the need for mobility and flexibility arise? As discussed above, there is a wide choice between different pathways and opportunities, which leads to growing numbers of decisions that need to be made. Both expected and unexpected life events are an inevitable part of life. Gazier and Gautie (2011) refer to Schmid's (2006) example of young people and especially young women, who must take five big choices in a relatively short time span, these choices usually lead to critical transition periods. The choices are choosing an occupation, finding a job, finding a spouse, finding a house and deciding on if and when to have children. Schmid implies that the choices are often made in a hurry and have a crucial impact on one's life. The example might be a bit old-fashioned and the opportunity for early career steps and later family life is more common, but the essence of the example holds true and key decisions tend to pile up at once in early adulthood.

TLM suggests that individuals need help when facing these important choices. Such help can for example be trial periods or the opportunity to part-time work instead of making irreversible career choices with little room for flexibility and transition. The TLM approach also sees unemployment as a position among other positions and unemployment does not necessarily need to be viewed as something negative. The free time could be used for something positive like building bridges to new employments, leisure-activities or other meaningful activities to enhance future employment or self-rewarding. (Schmid, 2001) Schmid's view on unemployment is strongly connected to the concept of self-efficacy, the perceptions about one's own abilities to succeed, that will be discussed in chapter 3.2.

3.1.2 Full employment

As mentioned earlier, Schmid (1995) ponders upon the question if full employment is still possible. Full employment refers to utilizing all available resources; everyone eligible to work should be able to find a job. Furthermore, traditional full-employment has referred to eight hours a day, five days a week for up to 46 to 50 weeks a year for 40 to 50 years (Schmid, 2001). The level of unemployment is not targeted to be 0% since frictional and structural unemployment does exist during full employment. However, during full employment long-term unemployment should not exist. Frictional unemployment refers to unemployment because of for example workers quitting jobs to find better ones or moving to a new city to look for a job. Structural unemployment is caused by shifts in economy due to factors such as rapid development in technology or government policy. Workers fail to find a job or employers fail to find employees because the jobs that are available do not match what employees have to offer. (Eichhorst & Konle-Seidl, 2016)

It is though a debatable subject what the acceptable level of unemployment is during full employment; in Finland the aim would be approximately 3-5% according to Ministerial Advisor Petri Syvänen at Ministery of Economic Affairs and Employment (Karjalainen, 2017). By asking the question if full employment is still possible, Schmid (1995) refers to the critique TLM places on our social model. Full employment is still seen as the key target for our social model and there is need for a policy change as TLM approach recognizes that the concept of full employment has changed. Therefore, policy makers should aim at "sustainable" full employment with a higher flexibility and for example sensitivity to gender equality (Gazier & Gautie, 2011). Transitions should be well-organized and a normal part of life and social integration.

3.1.3 TLM and gender equality

TLM also addresses questions regarding gender equality. One frequently discussed transition is the one from education to paid work. This is an important transition, where women often already encounter inequalities which lays a foundation for future inequalities. Women often have greater difficulty finding their first job, are more likely to work part-time and often earn less than men early on. (OECD, 2012) Female participation in the labour market has increased, however, the traditional constellation of the women staying at home with the children is still relevant. The earlier mentioned individualisation process leads to more demands for flexibility in the labour market. Parents might want to stay at home with their children, both women and men, or for example combine part-time work with family life. Affordable childcare and flexible labour markets have been identified to be key solutions to be able to increase women's labour market participation (OECD, 2012).

Schmid (2001) names four criteria that should be fulfilled for a good and equal transitional labour market: (1) the empowerment criteria, (2) the criteria of sustainable employment and income, (3) the criteria of flexible co-ordination and (4) the criteria of co-operation. The first criteria refers to well-developed infrastructure regarding child care and the possibility to maintain employment during transition periods. The second criteria refers to the opportunity to earn income during time when unpaid work (family time) is present. The third criteria refers to co-ordinated efforts between the employees and employers regarding entitlement to flexible family leave. The fourth criteria refers to allowing parallel family leave instead of sequential leaves, furthermore, arrangements regarding working time should allow flexibility to combine work and family life. Schmid (2001) uses Sweden as an example within this framework, referring to Sweden coming very close to fulfilling all the above criteria and thus, the bargaining position for women is much better. In the context of this thesis, it can be argued that Finland at least offers the prerequisite to meet these criteria as well. This argument will be strengthened and discussed later in this chapter.

The previously mentioned types of transitional employment included transitions between productive (but unpaid) private or social work and (paid) market work. The transitions between unpaid household work and gainful employment will at this point be discussed closer. In most European countries, a trend of women withdrawing fully or partially from the labour market because of family responsibilities can still be observed. From a policy viewpoint, these transitions are still lacking co-ordinated measures. Flexibility towards being

able to change between fulltime or part-time employment and training to prepare for the return to fulltime employment after for example family leave is not sufficient. (Schmid, 2001) From the employer's viewpoint it is difficult to have employers changing between fulltime and part-time work, if the workload is consistent. This means that someone else will have to cover for the employee who now needs flexibility to work part-time when a contract for fulltime employment has been made. This can result in frustration at the workplace or additional costs, if someone else needs to be hired. Hence, it is often depending on the employer's attitude and values if the necessary measures for flexibility will be taken and transitions will be encouraged.

Therefore, employers should develop their policy and practice to support the combination of work and family life. Equally important is the fact that both women and men use these opportunities. Policy that promotes paid parental-leave, public childcare and family-friendly work conditions are often used by women. (OECD, 2012) Why do men in the same scope not use these flexible opportunities? Is it acceptable for women to use these opportunities but for men it is a sign of not being committed to their careers? An important purpose of the TLM approach is to make sure that if these opportunities to combine career and family are used then it should not be on the expense of one's career and earning progression. Labour markets might offer possibilities to combine family and work life, but if it is an actual flexibility that will not impact one's career is debatable.

Schmid (2001) further addresses the issue of unfair work sharing and what kind of work sharing strategies could be developed through policy measures. Since the market is depending on institutional arrangements it is also important to take a closer look at the role of the state and public policies. Finland is a welfare regime with strong policy to support families. Family leaves are based on the Employment Contracts Act and there are many kinds of leaves. Parents can receive maternity, paternity and parental allowances to be able to stay home with their children and still receive financial assistance. Policy also to some extent encourages parents to stay home simultaneously, out of the 54 days of paternity leave up to 18 days can be held at the same time with the mother's maternity or parental leave. Furthermore, the parental leave can be divided between the mother and the father, or one of the parents can take the full parental leave, but it is not possible for both to be on parental leave at the same time. The flexibility to work part-time and still receive partial parental allowance also exists. Only 9.5% of the parental allowance was paid to father's in 2016, which suggests that some

kinds of barriers to equality still exists even if they are not caused by insufficient policy and institutional barriers. (Social Insurance Institution of Finland Kela, 2017)

In conclusion, Finland does offers some of the previously discussed flexibility and policy that supports transitions but the inequality between genders is still persistent. An even stronger focus on enhancing gender equality through the four criteria could be established. At the end, it is up to the employees to claim their rights and use the possibilities institutional arrangements offer them, the opportunities cannot be forced on someone. This means that men would have to adjust to new career patterns; career patterns that are like the ones women have been facing for centuries (Schmid, 2001).

3.1.4 Immigrants' transitions

It is important to consider the transition of moving from one country to another and what kind of difficulties might arise connected to this. This transition is distinctive for immigrants and the combining factor for all the women in this study. Scheffer (2011, p. 8) ponders upon the emotional side of leaving ones' home and how "relocation is an experience of uprooting, even though we know that people don't have roots, they have legs." In a world where immigration can be seen as the most visible form of globalisation, it is important to seek understanding of the difficulties settling down in a new country brings; the loss of social and cultural certainties, mastering a new language, finding employment and gaining control in unfamiliar surroundings.

Krutova, Lipiäinen and Koistinen (2016) have done a longitudinal study on labour market attachment of immigrants in Finland to uncover patterns of integration. In order to understand this phenomenon, Krutova et al. (2016, p. 102) wanted to "identify the typical patterns of labour market attachment in the long term, classify the typology of transitions that lead to different main activity statuses and categorise explanatory factors for transitions (age, gender, education)." Their hypothesis was that immigrants' labour market integration should be understood as a process that includes different transitions. These transitions can for example include employed-unemployed; employed-inactivity; inactivity-apprenticeship, etc.

In their study, the researchers used the Finnish Longitudinal Employer-Employee Data (FLEED) created by Statistics Finland and analysed the data concerning immigrants from year 2000 to 2010. Sequence analyses were done between different transitions between

statuses. In conclusion, the results show that immigrants' labour market positions are unstable and changing all the time. Both immigrants who integrate quickly after only a few transitions, and immigrants who require several transitions and a significant period of time were found. Delayed entry decreases the likelihood of sustainable employment but a general decrease in unemployment can be seen in the longitudinal analysis. Some other interesting results show that on average, the mean time of being in the 'unemployment' status was 5.5 years, whereas in other statuses ('employment', 'apprenticeship' or 'outside the labour market'), the average time was 2 years before circulation back to another status took place. A longer stay in the country will gradually smooth out the differences in the employment rate between immigrants and the native population, generally taking approximately 10 years. (Krutova et al., 2016)

3.1.5 Limitations and future research

The strong emphasis on individuality in the TLM approach should not be mixed with the social-liberal models that wish to empower people and give them assets, so they can act independently from the negatively viewed welfare state. The TLM approach also puts the individual in the centre, but the target is not to empower them so that the individual does not need the state's support anymore. On the contrary, TLM sets out to change policy so that the state can offer the needed support to successfully be able to make the desired or sometimes forced transitions. It can be described as co-responsibility between individuals and the state, and this co-responsibility should start from policymaking. Policy makers should take into consideration that a one-size-fits-all perception does not work and more individualised and especially dynamic ways of seeing employment, with a positive focus on transitions, needs to be made. As mentioned, the co-financing and management by objectives takes the discussion and decision-making down to a relatively localized level so that more voices can be heard. (Gazier & Gautie, 2011)

TLM is sometimes misunderstood as promoting unstable jobs and encouraging to change jobs, thus generating weak attachments to organizations. The misunderstanding probably arises from TLM's overemphasis on mobility and flexibility, therefore neglecting discussions of the advantages of stable jobs. TLM does not set out to encourage people to leave their jobs but to encourage policymakers and organizations to adapt a more mobile and flexible policy, such as internal work-rotation or versatile leave schemes. Some may view this as a pressure to activate people to make transitions that are unnecessary just for the sake of being flexible and mobile. TLM-oriented reforms are also criticized to be a costly and not actually producing a

financial gain for anyone. Many of the resources already exist at least in some form; they are just limited to privileged groups or have not been developed properly. The TLM approach encourages opening the opportunity for mobility for everyone and to further develop already existing policy. In some cases, it might mean to start from scratch and develop suitable policy. Future research agenda recognizes some domains that still require more research. TLM research should aim at taking into consideration all market activities, including developing countries and non-market activities. Inter-discipline methodology should also be developed to be able to strengthen connections between different areas. (Gazier & Gautie, 2011)

Lastly, this thesis has been created by noticing a need for qualitative research regarding how people have experienced transitions. Since the TLM approach has a strong focus on promoting efforts of labour market reform and institutional support, this thesis sets to find out how transitions are perceived on a personal level by focusing on the narratives of women who have experienced them. To emphasise the sensitivity of the transitions, Schmid (2001) explains how the process of social exclusion might be set in motion when critical transitions take place. Especially transitions, where it feels like one door closes but there is not yet another one open are transitions that can lead to strong personal reactions. Given that the reactions are strong enough, it might lead to withdrawal from the labour market, and consequently lead to social exclusion. However, the reaction usually stems from a longer period of unemployment and the feeling of not having any hope left. The reaction is usually strongest if there are no other alternative 'roles' to take, such as staying at home with the children or early retirement. The social exclusion in one dimension, here referring to the labour market, can lead to marginalization or exclusion in other dimensions of life. The key to be able to deal with critical transitions lies in the successful adjustment to these events; how are the changes perceived, is the environment offering support and what kind of individual characteristics does a person have to cope with these transitions? In the following chapter, the concept of self-efficacy will be discussed with a focus on the question of how changes and challenges are perceived.

3.2 The Concept of Self-Efficacy

Understanding underlying difference in cognitive styles is important when examining if individuals interpret and experience different events as an opportunity for growth or as being defeating. In this thesis, the second research questions focus on the challenges women immigrants face in the Finnish labour market. The concept of self-efficacy will work as a

theoretical frame to be able to answer the questions of if challenges are regarded as hindering barriers or manageable obstacles. Self-efficacy refers to the ”beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura, 1986, p. 2). The concept of self-efficacy was first presented by Bandura (1977) in his article *Self-Efficacy: Towards a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change*. Later on, self-efficacy was included as a component in Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory. The theory was thoroughly presented in his second book *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory* and has influenced the world ever since. For this reason, Bandura’s social cognitive theory will briefly be presented before the self-efficacy component will be discussed in greater detail.

3.2.1 The social cognitive theory

In the 1960s, Bandura developed the social learning theory (SLT) that later developed into the social cognitive theory (SCT) in 1986. The theory underlines the role of individual’s capability to construct reality, self-regulate and make sense of information through cognition. In closer detail, the *social* part of SCT acknowledges the environmental factors, whereas the *cognitive* part acknowledges the cognitive processes behind individuals’ motivation and actions. (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1979) Five basic human capabilities have been identified as the core of SCT and the sixth construct, self-efficacy, was added when SLT evolved into SCT. As mentioned earlier, self-efficacy is one of the core constructs of SCT, therefore, the next chapter will solely be used to present the concept of self-efficacy.

The five original constructs of SLT are (1) Reciprocal Determinism, (2) Behavioural Capability, (3) Observational Learning, (4) Reinforcements and (5) Expectations. Bandura (1986) developed the social cognitive theory based on the triadic (1) reciprocal determinism model, where personal, behavioural and environmental factors affect each other and, therefore, influence a person’s self-percept. Through this reciprocal influence, individuals both produce and are products of their environments. (2) Behavioural capability refers to understanding and having the actual skills to perform a behaviour. Individuals can learn from consequences of their behaviour and develop skills for the future. (3) Observational learning refers to watching other people perform behaviours and observing the outcome. Therefore, a reproduction of the action can be produced by modelling others. This construct is the core idea behind the original SLT theory. (4) Reinforcements ties closely to reciprocal determinism; the positive or negative reinforcement can be internal or external and it will

affect the likelihood of continuing or discontinuing the behaviour. (5) Expectations refers to the likely results of one's behaviour, what will the payoff of the action be? The value individuals place on outcomes differ and are very individual.

Some limitations of SCT have been identified. The theory has for example been criticized of being loosely organized and unclear regarding exactly how the interplay between person, behaviour and environment are organized. One implication of the fact that the theory is loosely organized is that when implementing SCT many choose to focus on one or two concepts, such as the choice of self-efficacy in this thesis. Additionally, some have critiqued the theory of not taking into consideration hormonal differences that influence behaviour and how behavioural patterns might change during the lifespan. (Schunk, 2012)

3.2.2 The core of self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is the estimate of one's fundamental ability to cope, perform and be successful; it explains motivation to perform an action. Self-efficacy has been identified as a type of personal resource that enables individuals to serve as contributors to their own lives. Self-efficacy beliefs strongly influence individuals' choices and aspirations; the amount of effort they are ready to invest when faced with challenges and the amount of stress they feel is connected to self-efficacy beliefs. It especially deals with the notion of individuals being in control of their own lives by believing that different outcomes can be affected through their own actions. (Bandura, 1999)

When individuals do self-evaluations and form self-efficacy they use information from several sources. Self-efficacy is situational specific and derived from four primary sources that are portrayed in figure 1: (1) performance outcomes (mastery experience), (2) vicarious experiences, (3) verbal persuasion (social persuasion), and (4) physical and affective states (physiological experience) (e.g. Bandura, 1994; Bandura, 1997). The names on the sources of self-efficacy vary in different studies but the content of them is the same. Research indicates that self-efficacy is more strongly influenced by self-referenced information than by social comparison and a certain hierarchy exists between the four sources (Steyn & Mynhardt, 2008).

(1) The performance outcome is the most important source of self-efficacy; it entails practising and earlier experiences. The feeling of success, in other words, the feeling of mastery enhances self-efficacy. On the other hand, feelings of failure that especially take place early on decrease self-efficacy. The effects of failure will not be very influential, if the failure happens after a strong self-efficacy has already been developed. (2) The vicarious experience source refers to observing others, especially successful performances that serve as a role model for future endeavours. Individuals can also learn about the degree of difficulty of the task from others. However, the person observed should not differ in important characteristics, otherwise it can be difficult to measure one's own capabilities through observing. Observation is a weaker source of self-efficacy than own experiences.

(3) Verbal persuasion is not a very strong source; however, it is the source most often used and has been identified to be a good supplementation to other sources. Verbal persuasion refers to being given advice on how to be able to succeed in a difficult task. The one giving the advice should be a trustworthy and prestige person. This source leads to very weak results if the individual does not have any own beliefs of being able to carry out the task. However, if the person already has some beliefs of being able to carry out the task then the beliefs can be strengthened. (4) The physical and affective states of a person influence the estimations of the capability to perform a task. Individuals monitor their own feelings such as tension, fatigue and anxiety. How these interpretations are cognitively processed effect self-efficacy; often these bad states are seen as signs of personal deficiency and are seen as predicting unsuccessful behaviour. This source is seen to be the least concrete one. (van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2001)

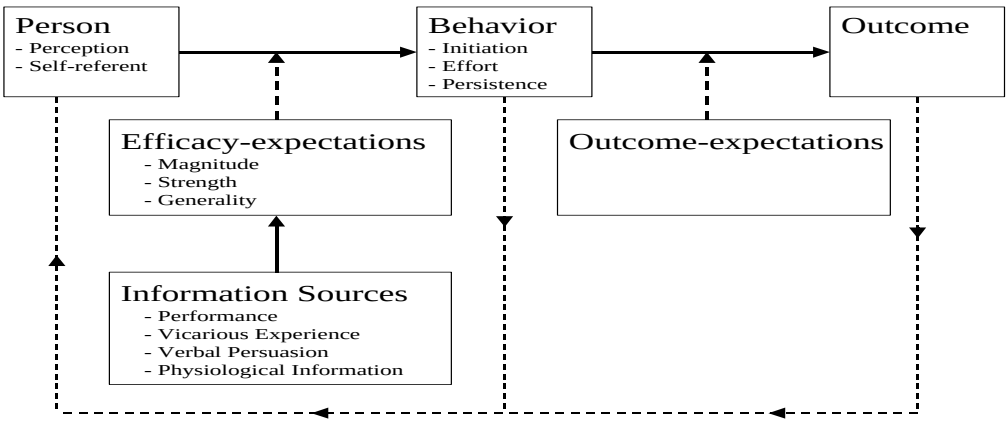

Figure 1. The Self-efficacy model (van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2001 referring to Shortridge-Baggett & van der Bijl, 1996)

To be able to determine self-efficacy, it is also important to distinguish the self-efficacy concept from other concepts such as self-esteem, locus of control, and outcome expectancies. Self-esteem is a judgement of self-worth; therefore, it should be distinguished from self-efficacy. Locus of control refers to how much control you feel like you have over a situation, not a judgement of your own capabilities to produce a good outcome per se. Locus of control and self-efficacy do have common elements, and individuals with high self-efficacy often feel like they have control of the outcome of a situation. (Bandura, 2006) The difference between self-efficacy and outcome expectations can be describes as self-efficacy being the judgement of one's own capability to for example perform actions to enhance employment, whereas an outcome expectation is the judgment of the consequences that will follow from the outcome, such as being able to pay the bills and feeling good about yourself when finding employment. The act should be partly separated from the outcome, since an outcome is the consequence of an act and not the act itself. (Bandura, 1986) Even though the terms should partly be separated they are closely interlinked, since most outcomes come from actions. High self-efficacy beliefs have been proven to be connected to better outcomes (Bandura, 1997).

The concept of self-efficacy is often used in quantitative studies measuring three dimensions: magnitude, strength and generality through measurement scales. Bandura has referred to self-efficacy being domain-related and does not believe general self-efficacy should be measured, it should always be connected to a certain task (Bandura, 1997/2006). Even though the concept of self-efficacy is often found in quantitative studies, some qualitative research regarding self-efficacy has taken place (e.g. Glackin & Hohenstein, 2017; Mladenovic, Wozniak, Plotnikoff, Johnson & Johnson, 2014). In the context of this thesis, the self-efficacy concept will be applied in a qualitative manner to fit the aim of examining how immigrant women regard the challenges they have encounter in the Finnish labour market.

In practice, using self-efficacy in a qualitative manner means that the women will not be asked to fill in questioners with measurement scales, therefore, there will be no quantitative data to process and analyse. Instead, the interview will be carried out in a way that gives the researcher the opportunity to form questions that answer the specific sub-question regarding if the challenges are regarded as hindering barriers or manageable obstacles, a question that is closely tied to the theory of high or low self-efficacy. This means that per se, the perceived self-efficacy will not be measured quantitatively but concepts that are tied to self-efficacy will be discussed during the interviews.

3.2.2.1 High and low self-efficacy

Self-efficacy beliefs are a core of human functioning and affects many of the decisions we make and the way we structure our lives. It impacts our goals and aspirations, and especially how committed we are to pursuing things. Moreover, self-efficacy beliefs impact how long individuals will continue their efforts when faced with obstacles and the amount of stress and depression that is experienced when coping with difficult demands. It also affects our thinking; do we think erratically or strategically, optimistically or pessimistically? (Bandura, 2006) Many meta-analyses have confirmed the key role of self-efficacy in self-development, change and adaptation (Bandura, 2006 referring to e.g. Boyer et al., 2000; Holden, Moncher, Schinke, & Barker, 1990; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

The belief of being able to do things is important; individuals with high self-efficacy are assumed to have more personal resources, leading to more control over their lives. High self-efficacy also enhances accomplishment and well-being. (Bandura, 1994) This leads to better understanding of consequences of their actions, seeing and seizing opportunities and the ability to remove themselves from unpleasant situations (Bandura, 1997). The ability to 'make things happen' is better for people with high self-efficacy beliefs, therefore, challenges can more easily be mastered. If people with high self-efficacy fail after trying, the failure is attributed to insufficient efforts or lack of knowledge; things that can be achieved by further efforts next time. Individuals with low self-efficacy tend to dwell on their failures and feel a lack of motivation and effort. Individuals with low self-efficacy have low aspirations and are not committed to pursuing their goals; they only see problems and no solutions and will therefore produce insufficient or even no effort at all when faced with difficult situations. When an action is insufficient they blame themselves for not being capable and the threshold to try will be even higher next time. (Bandura, 1993; Bandura, 1994)

3.3 Summary

For the purpose of this thesis, the TLM approach has been incorporated with the concept of self-efficacy. As mentioned earlier, the aim of this thesis is two-folded and, therefore, it is justified to use these two theories to be able to meet the research objectives of this study. Firstly, the aim is to examine immigrant women's labour market transitions, by incorporating the Transitional Labour Market approach (Schmid, 1995). Secondly, to examine what kind of challenges the women encounter in the Finnish labour market and how the challenges are regarded, by incorporating the self-efficacy concept (Bandura, 1977/1986). In order to answer

the research questions, experiences of labour market transitions and challenges to become employed will be studied through a qualitative research design by conducting interviews with immigrant women. The upcoming 4th chapter will focus on the research methodology that lays the ground for the study, thereafter, the results and discussion will be presented in chapter 5 and chapter 6.

As previously explained, both experiences of transitions and the concept of self-efficacy have been incorporated in the research questions and a model has been developed to explain how these two are intertwined. As shown in Figure 2, the cycle of transitions the women encounter start with a life event that leads to a transition from one position to another. The transition leads to a reaction; something has happened, and the individual reacts to this change. The self-efficacy beliefs play an important role between the reaction and the behaviour; will the transition be interpreted as an opportunity for growth or as being defeating? What kind of efforts will be made, and more precisely, what kind of behaviour will the women show when faced with difficulties? In this interface, the self-efficacy beliefs play a very important role and as mentioned, high self-efficacy beliefs have been proven to be connected to better outcomes (Bandura, 1997), which is the last part of the cycle of transitions.

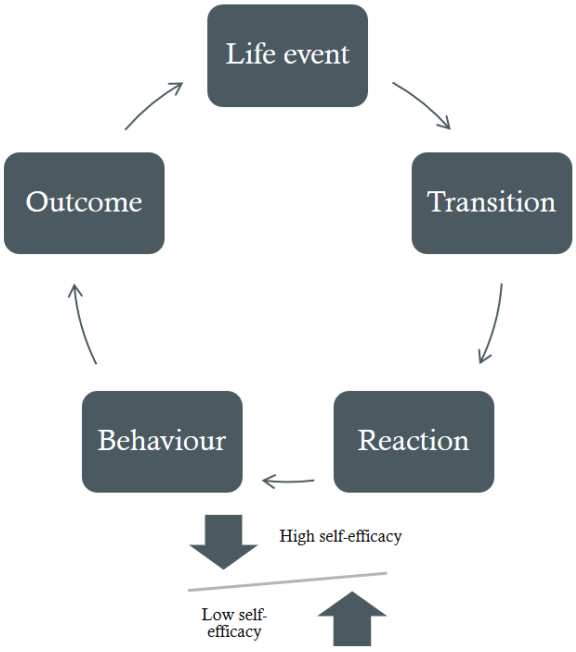

Figure 2. The cycle of transitions incorporated with the concept of self-efficacy

4 Research Methodology

The upcoming chapter will in detail describe the different aspects of the research methodology. First, the research process will thoroughly be described to illustrate how the process has proceeded and especially how the research area was selected. After this, the qualitative research design and the phenomenological approach will be discussed. Furthermore, the data collection method including sample selection and descriptions of the participants will be presented. Another key point, the description of the data analysis, will be included. Lastly, quality assurance as well as ethical consideration will be discussed.

4.1 Research Process

Firstly, the research problem was defined and rephrased into a meaningful research area and research questions. The precise research questions were formulated through several revisions and took their final form after finishing the theoretical framework. The research area was selected due to professional and personal interest in immigrant women's employment. A professional interest stem from various experiences I have had in my work as a recruiter, where I have been in contact with immigrants looking for new job opportunities. Especially unemployed women have been a group I have found very interesting. I still remember one woman who unknowingly inspired me with her story and gave me the idea for this meaningful research area. My personal interest stem from all the transitions that lie ahead of me; starting a full-time employment after finishing my degree, possibly moving abroad one day and finding work in a new country and hopefully starting a family in the future.

Secondly, a thorough review of literature took place to be able to map out what kind of research has previously been done in the area. The theoretical framework was built utilizing a wide range of data sources such as books, articles and online journals. Thirdly, the method of data collection was prepared by analysing advantages and disadvantages of different methods. It was clear from the start that a qualitative design with semi-structured interviews was going to be an effective way to study the women's transitions and experiences of the Finnish labour market. Designing the questionnaire was an important process of the data collection stage and a short pilot study was conducted to test the questionnaire to make sure the questions were easily understandable and not biased or ambiguous. As a limitation, it should be mentioned that the pilot study did not involve full length interviews and the participants were not representatives of the target group.

The actual data was gathered by conducting interviews with eight immigrant women. The participants were given the opportunity to choose between meeting at a café or in a libraries group study room. Through this they had the opportunity to have the safety of a public space or then the choice of having utter privacy by meeting the researcher in the libraries facilities. Some suggested meeting at their house because of it being more convenient for them. One of the interviews took place over Skype because the informant did not have time to meet up face to face. It is important to be aware of how some information, such as body language, might be lost when the interview is not conducted face to face, however, the picture and voice was of good quality and a good flow and trust was successfully built over the webcam.

To begin with, the women were asked to have a look at a leaflet containing information about the study (see appendix A), even though this document had already been sent to them beforehand. After this, the women were asked to fill in the informed consent form (see appendix B) and the preliminary background questionnaire with short questions regarding for example their age, country of origin and the length of their stay in Finland (see appendix C). The interview guide (see appendix D) served as a guideline throughout the whole interview. The approximately 1-1,5 hours lasting interviews were audio-taped to give the researcher the opportunity to return to the material and to have more freedom to focus on the interaction instead of taking precise notes (Ruusuvuori & Tiittula, 2005). The data collection method will closer be discussed in chapter 4.3. On a final note, Marshall & Rossman (2011) point out that reciprocity issues might arise when informants offer to give their time to be interviewed. Since this study was conducted without any financial support, the ability to compensate the informants was weak. A small token of appreciation felt appropriate, henceforth, a wrapped glass candle with a handwritten thank you note was given to the informants after the interview as a sign of appreciation.

Fourthly, after the data had been gathered and transcribed an analysis of the data took place. The data analysis process will closer be discussed in chapter 4.4. The results chapter was written based on the analysis, both a comprehensive presentation of the findings was made as well as a summarization of the main findings. Furthermore, a separate discussion chapter was written, where the results were explained and interpreted using the theoretical framework that supports this thesis. Finally, a first draft was sent in to my supervisor and the received feedback was addressed after this. Lastly, a second draft was successfully sent in and that marked the final stage of this research process and the completion of this thesis.

4.2 Research Design

Choosing which research design to use depends on the research goals as well as on personal preferences and talents (Tracy, 2013). A research gap has been identified regarding qualitative data on women's own experiences of labour market integration. Therefore, a qualitative research design has been chosen so that focus can be put on the lived experiences of the women and to interpret their viewpoints and stories. Qualitative research has many strengths; it is rich and holistic, offering more than a snapshot by preserving a chronical flow and explaining why the chronology has occurred (Tracy, 2013). It is a dynamic way of doing research, where preformatted codes of conduct do not restrict the research and the study can evolve during the process. The researcher plays an important role since all information is filtered through the researcher. A good qualitative researcher should be interested in people and empathic towards them and find excitement in exploring individuals' thoughts in depth. (Lichtman, 2013). Qualitative methods have been identified to be appropriate to achieve many research goals. In a thesis that sets out to research experiences of labour market transitions and challenges to become employed, it is justified to use in-depth methods to be able to answer the research questions. Qualitative research can grasp experiences that otherwise might be overlooked in structured surveys. This research sets out to identify a phenomenon through how it is perceived by the actors; a voice for the taken-for-granted assumptions is given through this study. Therefore, the methodological approach of phenomenology has been chosen and will be closer discussed in the next subchapter.

4.2.1 The phenomenological approach

Phenomenology can shortly be described as the philosophical approach to the study of experience. Phenomenology has a history beginning in the twentieth century with some premonition already in the late nineteenth century. The word *phenomenology* refers to the study of phenomena. (Cerbone, 2006) It is often used in social and health sciences, and it is especially well suited to understand several individuals shared experiences of the same phenomenon. The essence of the phenomenological approach is to capture participants' experiences and examine how they make sense of their experiences (Lester, 1999). Phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is the front figure of the phenomenological approach and many branches have been developed ever since by for example Merleau-Ponty, Sarte and Heidegger (Hammond, Howarth & Keat, 1991). Some have strengthened Husserl's original thoughts, while other have critiqued his worked and developed completely opposite ideas, such as Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) (Cerbone, 2006).

Husserl introduced the concept of lifeworld, which means the world as it is lived prior to analysis or reflective representation. It is a sort of a natural world, the background and foundation of all cognitive activity. Furthermore, Husserl was fascinated by the nature of consciousness, he stressed that consciousness is presupposed in all our dealings with the world. What does it mean to be conscious? Husserl was interested in the epistemological essence of consciousness. He wanted to understand the outside world as it is interpreted by and through individual's consciousness. When describing the structure of experience, Zahavi (2003, p. 14) explains how Husserl "pays particular attention to a group of experiences that are all characterized by being *of* something, that is, which all possess and object-*directedness*." This attribute is also referred to as the concept of intentionality. Husserl's own publications are complex, and he has been described as a difficult thinker and a frustrated writer. (Moran, 2005) Consequently, Husserl's own publications and more complex philosophical thoughts will not be presented in further detail.

As previously mentioned, Heidegger developed his thoughts on phenomenology in an opposite direction of Husserl's. Husserl's descriptive and Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology have led to a sharp division of thoughts. Heidegger was a student of Husserl and took great interest in Husserl's writings. Heidegger was preoccupied with the questions of being and the analysis of human existence, and did not base his philosophy on consciousness, which was the core of Husserl's doctrine. He felt that phenomenon cannot be separated from their context, an individual is a part of the world and the history with all its context. (Heidegger & Krell, 1993) Phenomenology can both be seen as a philosophy and as a research method (Nakayama, 1994). Husserl spoke of phenomenology as more of a philosophy while Heidegger uses the term phenomenology as a method (Heidegger & Krell, 1993). From the researcher's point of view, Reiners (2012, p. 2) explains the difference between the descriptive and the interpretive approach as following:

> Interpretive phenomenology is used when the research question asks for the meaning of the phenomenon and the researcher does not bracket their biases and prior engagement with the question under study. Descriptive phenomenology is used when the researcher wants to describe be the phenomenon under study and brackets their biases.

In this study, the researcher is interested in the context of the phenomenon and the researcher does in one way participate in co-creation of the interpretations, therefore, bracketing will not take place accordingly as the descriptive approach would demand. In practice when conducting a phenomenological study, the data collection is most often gathered through in-depth interviews. (Lester, 1999) The analyses process slightly differs depending on if it is the interpretative or descriptive variation of phenomenology. A common central assumption from which the analysis proceeds in both variations is that there is an essence to an experience that is shared with others who have had the same experience. The interviews are analysed as individual experiences and later on compared to find the essence of the phenomena (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Further discussion regarding how the analysis was conducted will take place in the data processing and analysis chapter 4.4.

4.3 Data Collection Methods

A studies data collection method should always be affiliated with the research design and research questions (Trost, 2005). The decision to use semi-structured interviews as data collection method is motivated by the studies qualitative design and the phenomenological approach. In addition, the interview is a qualitative research method that is useful when the research questions are formulated so that the goal is to study the participants' own experiences of the phenomenon. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe interviews to be guided conversations about a decided theme, furthermore, they differ from other conversations by having a specific purpose and structure. An important step of interviewing is to reflect on the interpersonal skills of the researcher; the ability to build trust, respect norms and being sensitive to cultural differences and, therefore, considering ethical issues. Weak interpersonal skills or a lack of trust between the interviewer and the informant can crucially affect the quality of the data, therefore, if these are weak it can be viewed as a limiting factor of interviewing. (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Ruusuvuori & Tiittula, 2005) The trust is built by truthfully telling the participants about the purpose of the research, how their answers will be presented under an alias and their information kept confidential, and lastly by being genuinely interested in the participants' stories (Ruusuvuori & Tiittula, 2005).

For the purpose of this study, especially the semi-structured interview serves as an effective way to gather data. An interview guide was designed to offer some guidelines on how to stimulate discussion and to make sure the same main topics were covered with all the participants. The interview guide offers a bit more of structure than just an informal,

conversation interview. It is also the most commonly used type of interview. It helps the interviewer to cover themes that are important for the research, but also gives the informant the freedom to frame the responses and develop the topics as wished. (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) The interview guide designed for this study does contain many support questions, but they were more of directional questions to give some structure to the semi-structured interview if the informant was not very talkative. Trost (2005) describes how the researcher should try to in-depth understand the experiences and feelings of the participants. It is better to ask how questions instead of why questions, since it is the researcher's task to analyse and interpret the answers. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) describe it, the interview can be a very positive and empowering experience for the participant. It could clearly be noticed how some of the women enjoyed sharing their stories, and how it even sometimes was difficult to end an interview because of an endless flow of new insights that the interview had awoken. On the other hand, with some participants the rather extensive interview guide served as an excellent guidance for situations when answers were briefer, and information was scarce.

4.3.1 Sample selection

A sampling plan was developed to be able to ensure a structured way of finding participants. A few questions were present throughout the plan: who, what, where, how and when? Gaining access to the participants is an important first step when planning the sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Furthermore, Tracy (2013) highlights the importance of a purposeful sampling; this refers to choosing data that fits the projects research questions, goals and purposes. This studies sampling plan can be described as a mixture of convenience sample and snowball sample. A convenience sample refers to turning to one's own personal networks and utilizing them to find participants. Snowball sample refers to asking participants to suggest other possible participants. In this study, a short informational text was written about the study and shared using multiple channels such as LinkedIn, Facebook and email. Readers were encouraged to contact the researcher's email if they themselves fit the requirements to participate in the study or to share the information if they know someone who could be interested. The aim was to spread the information about the study widely to be able to find a good varied sample. However, the researcher needs to keep in mind that one's sample will always partly be defined by who is prepared to be included in it. It is for example possible, that women who had encountered only challenges and no feelings of success were not eager to share their stories.

The requirements to participate in the study were outlined as following:
1) You are a first-generation immigrant woman living in Finland (referring to women, whose parents and themselves have been born in another country than Finland)
2) You have experienced some labour market related transitions (a transition refers to moving between different positions, such as being unemployed, working part-time or full-time, or being on maternity leave)
3) You have at least a degree from secondary level studies (gymnasium/college/high school or vocational school)
4) You can spare approximately 2 hours of your time during February in the capital region

The requirements were carefully considered, especially requirement one and three. The sample of first generation immigrants was chosen because from a transitional viewpoint these women have experienced the transition of moving to a new country and often share different experiences of learning the language than second-generation immigrant women do. Secondly, the choice of focusing on women with at least a degree from secondary level studies was made so that lowly educated people, who in general struggle to find a job when competing in the labour market with highly educated Finns, would be left out of the sample. In this way the discussion would more strongly be focused on other problem areas than the fact that many job openings require at least a secondary level degree in Finland.

Potential participants sent in emails or messages on LinkedIn stating their interest to participate in the study, hereafter, a selection process took place to ensure some variation in the sample. Without asking for a specification of their background, the women chose to write some information about themselves such as country of origin and a short explanation of what kind of transitions they had experienced. This was probably done to justify their participation in the study, and to show that they fill the requirements that had been outlined in the short informational text that was shared. This gave the researcher the opportunity to affect the sample so that for example not only women with the same country of origin or the same educational background were interviewed. However, no EU-citizens showed interest in taking part in the study, so the sample consisted of women with a non-EU background. Marshall & Rossman (2011) highlight the importance of being able to justify the sample by making sure a sample with reasonable variation is included. Choosing a sample according to every single relevant variable is impossible, therefore, a reasonable variation is enough.

4.3.1.1 The informants

Adhiti is in her early thirties and moved from India to Finland in 2011 because of her husband relocating to Finland for his job. Adhiti has a master's degree in IT from India and has worked in the IT field for four years before moving to Finland. She is now working in her first employment in Finland; a position that fits her educational background well. Adhiti has a child and speaks some Finnish.

Anya is in her mid-twenties and moved from Russia to Finland in 2011 to start her university studies. She has finished both her bachelor's and master's degree from an interdisciplinary programme that combines business and IT. Anya has had two jobs in Finland and is currently employed in an analyst position that matches her educational background well. She speaks Finnish at work and has been speaking the language for a while already.

Veliane is in her late thirties and moved from Ghana to Finland in 2007 to pursue a master's degree in social work. She already had a bachelor's degree in social work from Ghana. She has continued her studies and is now studying to become a nurse. Veliane has three children with her husband, who also moved to Finland from Ghana to study. She has been working as a personal assistant for many years with different clients and is at the moment on maternity leave from her job. Veliane speaks a bit of Finnish.

Elena is in her mid-twenties and moved from Russia to Finland in 2011 to start her university studies in business. It was very clear early on that she was going to come to Finland to study a bachelor's degree. Elena has worked for a few employers but ended up founding her own company last year. She speaks Finnish and is comfortable using the language; she started learning the language before she even moved to Finland.

Esra is in her late twenties and moved from Turkey to Finland in 2014 to pursue a master's degree from an interdisciplinary programme that combines business and IT. Her previous studies include a bachelor's degree in engineering she finished in Turkey. Esra has had two jobs in Finland and is currently employed in an analyst position that matches her educational background well. Esra is not fluent in Finnish but she is taking courses to learn the language.

Stephanie is in her late twenties and moved from Vietnam to Finland in 2011 because of her relationship at that time. She started a bachelor's degree in Vietnam but did not end up finishing it, in Finland she studied both a bachelor's and master's degree in business. Before

moving to Finland Stephanie worked with event management in Vietnam. In Finland she took up a job in the cleaning industry and she is still working part-time there. Her full-time work is in the business field; a position that matches her education well. Stephanie speaks some Finnish.

Marianna is in her late twenties and moved from Russia to Finland in 2013 because of her Finnish husband. She has a double bachelor's degree specialized in marketing from both Russia and the Netherlands. She has done an internship in Russia and the Netherlands and did a couple of internships in Finland. Marianna is currently employed within project work and does not feel like her strengths are utilized in this position. Marianna speaks a bit of Finnish.

Gemma is in her late thirties and moved from Kenya to Finland in 2013 because of family reasons and stayed in Finland to pursue a degree in nursing. She has a diploma in teaching from Kenya and worked as a teacher for many years. Gemma is about to finish her last work practice to be able to finish her nursing degree. She does some gig jobs in care work when she is not busy taking care of her child. Gemma speaks a bit of Finnish.

4.4 Data Processing and Analysis

A plan for managing, analysing and interpreting the data was developed to make sure the data processing was going to be done in an organized manner. The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen as an analysis method since is supports the choice of the interpretative phenomenological approach that was described earlier on. IPA sets out to investigate in-depth how individuals make sense of their experiences and has theoretical origins in phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. Phenomenology and hermeneutics are linked by the fact that experiences, the essence of phenomenology, and meaning, the essence of hermeneutics, are closely intertwined (Tuffour, 2017). A sort of double hermeneutic is present since the researcher tries to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their own experiences. The researcher tries to understand how the experiences have felt from the participant's point of view. The idiographic approach also plays a part in the theoretical origins of IPA through the fact that every single is examined individually before any general conclusions are made. (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014)

IPA was developed to be used in health psychology but has become very popular in many fields and is useful when exploring many different problems. It is especially suitable when conducting research that is sensitive to context. (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014) It has become a dominant methodology in many scientific disciplines (Tuffour, 2017) and was an appealing choice for the study in question. IPA is a flexible method that can be adapted to many different topics and there is no single right way to do IPA. The flexibility that the methodology offers is also one of the criticisms of IPA; to some extent it lacks standardization. Furthermore, another methodological limitation is the fact that some researchers see IPA as mostly being descriptive and not interpretive enough (Tuffour, 2017). As a researcher it is important to be aware of the criticism and make sure the narratives are sufficiently interpreted and not just described. IPA has previously been used in similar contexts when researching transitions (e.g. Smith, 1999), therefore, the choice of IPA is justified and relevant in the context of this thesis.

Regarding the actual analysis process, as stated earlier, the data was recorded through in-depth interviews with the informants. A crucial part of the data processing is transposing the spoken word that has been recorded during the interview into a text, referred to as a transcription. This process transforms the raw data into processed data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011 refers to Wengraf, 2001). Furthermore, Marshall & Rossman (2011) reflect over how precisely transcription should be done. Should incorrect grammar be written the exact same way the informant said it? Should incomplete sentences be included even though they do not make sense? It is important to think about the way the researcher portrays the informant and not be insulting in any way. When transcribing the audio-tapes it could clearly be noticed how some women made grammatical errors when speaking, for the most part these mistakes were not corrected to maintain an authenticity in the text. Furthermore, a researcher must consider the fact that the results will be transformed into categories and, therefore, the risk of taking things out of context can occur. It is important to not twist what anyone has said and to make sure the context is transparent when presenting the results. For IPA, a semantic level of transcription is usually good enough; laughs, longer pauses and all the worlds spoken were included in the transcription. (Smith & Osborn, 2008)

The data organization phase took place in the beginning while doing the transcriptions and followed throughout the process. In the beginning, the transcriptions resulted in long text files, where every informant's transcriptions were kept in separate documents and thoroughly red many times. An initial analysis already started taking place by noticing differences, similarities, echoes and contradictions (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The data had to be reduced and made into manageable chunks (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The next phase that followed was the theme development phase. The researcher needs to find deeper connections between the data received from the informants and the conceptual framework. Through this, categories can be derived from the pool of concepts that the researcher has acquired or from the words the informants use themselves. (Marshall & Rossman, 2011 referring to Basit, 2003) In practice, the rich data was managed through initial colour coding in every document to identify some initial themes. After this, a document for each initial theme was created, where all the transcriptions from all the informants regarding this theme were gathered in a table.

As a final and most important phase, the interpretation took place by further developing the previously mentioned table into subcategories. The analysis was framed especially by the combination of previously studied challenges to integration, the TLM description and the concept of self-efficacy. Related concepts and themes emerged from the analysis and these were linked to each other. For example, a main theme called *transitions* was identified in the beginning, from here the data was further processed into separate transitions such as work related/family related/related to moving. These categories were then further analysed keeping the conceptual framework in mind. A constant process of writing analytic memos took place throughout the analysis, this way it was easier to see emerging themes that were becoming increasingly evident. Many scholars encourage memo writing since it helps to identify gaps and questions in the data, insights can be deeper if the reflection process carries on through the memos. Furthermore, it is also easier to keep track of one's thoughts for the discussion chapter that naturally already starts to emerge during the analysis. Analysis is sufficient when main categories can be defined and relationships between categories can be established and the whole analysis can be integrated to a credible interpretation with a good flow.

At some point the researcher also needs to realize that further analysing the data only results in the same findings and no salient new categories will be found, theoretical sufficiency has been met (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). It is also important to be critical of the findings and

seek for other reasonable explanations for finding links among the categories. The final stage in transforming the themes into a narrative for the results chapter, themes need to be explained and illustrated through quotes. The choice of having a separate discussion chapter where the findings are discussed was made to explore the findings in relation to the existing literature.

4.5 Quality Assurance

This subchapter will demonstrate how the study design will ensure that the data and their interpretations are strong and credible. To make the thesis as clear as possible, the quality assurance subchapter has been written as a separate subchapter from the ethical consideration subchapter. Henceforth, it should be noted that these two chapters are somewhat interlinked, and ethical consideration should be considered as an important part of quality assurance. In the case of qualitative research, the traditional standards such as generalizability and use of control groups are not the right criteria to aim for (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Yardley (2000) presents four key dimensions that can be used to assess qualitative studies; sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance. Sensitivity to context refers for example to how the literature used is relevant, and how the socio-cultural context where the study is conducted is acknowledged. Commitment and rigour refers to the fact that the interpretations should be conducted thoroughly, and the sample should be appropriate. Transparency and coherence refers to how a high level of transparency should be met by describing in detail how the study has been conducted. Furthermore, there should be a coherence throughout the whole research process; between the aim, the chosen philosophical perspective, the methods of analysis and so on. Impact and importance refers to how research need to be conducted because it has meaning and will be useful for others. Research should have a theoretical and practical impact, furthermore, a socio-cultural impact is also important. All four dimensions have been acknowledged and actions have accordingly been taken in this study.

As a researcher, it is important to constantly perform critical self-reflection and to reflect on what biases one carries throughout the research process. In qualitative research this is especially important since the researcher is the qualitative research instrument (Tracy, 2013). One of the challenges is both to demonstrate personal interest, as has been done in subchapter 4.1, but on the other hand to consider the researcher's positionality and its influence on the

research (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Positionality both refer the individual's world-view and the position that has been adopted in relation to the research task (Holmes, 2014 refers to Foote & Bartell, 2011; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). There are many factors affecting the researcher's positionality, such as gender, geographical location, social class, religion and so on. (Holmes, 2014) Therefore, I have located my views, values and beliefs in relation to the research and acknowledged through self-reflection my own positionality.

Since the researcher is the qualitative research instrument it is extremely important to be aware of one's own biases. As a researcher, I am not a very experienced interviewer, but my work as a recruiter has trained me to meet new people in interview settings and through this I have acquired many hours of interviewing experience. I have acknowledged my own views and positions which might have influenced the research process, especially referring to execution of the research process and interpretation of the data findings. Through my work as a recruiter, I have seen some of the struggles immigrants are facing on the Finnish labour market and mothers who are ready to return to working life after being home with their children. The experiences I have encountered earlier on have been more negative than positive, since most people who I have encountered are unemployed and, therefore, looking for job opportunities and speaking with recruiters. This has led to a presumption that immigrants struggle with integrating in the labour market and that especially transitions for women are very difficult. I could also observe my own bias when the first women started contacting me because they were willing to participate in my study. I had imagined that a sample of unemployed immigrant women would be formed, when I suddenly found myself getting emails from employed women who seemed to have very successful career paths at a young age. Lichtman (2013) implies that bias can never be fully eliminated or strongly controlled, furthermore, she does not even see the reason to why qualitative research should be bias free since the researcher is the research instrument. Hence, in this study, the bias will not be covered up or efforts to fulfil absolute objectivity will not be made. The researcher's positioning has been acknowledged and discussed accordingly to demonstrate the good quality of the study.

Another important part of quality assurance is reflection over if the study will deliver the desired outcome. Do the study's results give the researcher the tools to answer and discuss the research questions accordingly? This thesis results and discussion chapter demonstrates how the study has been successful at answering the research questions. It is also important to

reflect on what kind of research counts as significant and important. The researcher should reflect on a microlevel on the possible beneficial aspects this research can have for the participants, and on a macrolevel to reflect on the social and economic added value this research can bring. Many of the women expressed gratitude and were happy that I was interested in their stories and wanted to conduct a study on the subject. Some women even experienced that it was useful for them to share their stories with me because it gave them a sort of clarity and confidence that they had accomplished great things despite some struggles on the way. On a macrolevel I hope this study can bring some added value in research on immigrant women in Finland, since there clearly is a research gap on the subject. One needs to be realistic that the study has been conducted for a master's thesis and will not be published in any academic journals. However, the results presented in this study can hopefully shed more light on what kind of transitions are present in the women's life and what challenges women face to possibly in the future take more effective measures to prevent the labour market exclusion of immigrant women. To ensure this research can bring added value, it has been ensured that the research answers the right questions and is published unbiased and made accessible for those who would wish to read it.

4.6 Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration permeates the entire research process from the planning phase until the last word is written in the discussion. Questions about ethics often arise in situations, where there is no single right way to operate. (Kuula, 2011) To gain some further information on ethical consideration, the universities guidelines for conducting research with good scientific practice was studied before starting the research process. The responsibility for abiding good scientific practice rests with the whole research community and each individual researcher. No approval from the Ethics Review Board in the Humanities and Social and Behavioural Sciences was needed since the requirements that need to be met for an ethical review of the research to be conducted were not fulfilled. Furthermore, the results will not be published in a scientific journal that requires ethical review.

The general guidelines for conducting research with good scientific practice are followed in this study. The research has been conducted by respecting participants integrity, by being meticulous and accurate in all stages of the research from planning it, collecting the data and presenting and evaluating the research and its results. It has been clarified that no research permits, or ethical reviews was needed according to the requirements. The researcher's status,

rights, responsibilities and obligations have been stated to the participants in the study. The data acquisition, research and evaluation and publication has been made in an open and responsible way. Furthermore, other researchers' work has been respected and cited appropriately throughout the thesis. (Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity, 2012)

Throughout the process, several measures have been taken to ensure good ethics. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (see appendix B) before participating in the study and the participants were also briefed about the same content orally to make sure nothing was unclear. The opportunity to ask any questions about the study or its publication was also given. Aliases were given to the participants to minimize the risk that the individuals would be identifiable. Names of people the respondents mentioned in the interview have also been changed, furthermore, other sensitive information like names of companies have been anonymized. In each survey one must separately consider what information should be anonymized to reduce the risk of identification. The use of alias in this thesis is important, since it reduces the risk of direct identification and increases the inner coherence of the material instead of just speaking about codes as names. (Kuula, 2011) However, it is important to critically reflect on what degree of identifiability the participants are exposed to even when using aliases. In the context of this thesis it is important to include detailed information about for example how long unemployment periods or employment contracts the women have had, what their country of origin and age is. Furthermore, as a writer it is important to think about how one writes and to make sure it is done in a respectful manner without violating the dignity of the individuals and minimizing the risk of recognition. (Kuula, 2011). All the material, like consent forms and background forms have been stored in a safe place, where no one other than the researcher has access to them.

Finally, especially in the context of this thesis it is important to reflect on intercultural awareness. One of the main assumptions regarding qualitative research is that the interviewer and the one being interviewed need to understand each other. If the informant and the interviewer have grown up and lived in different cultures, then their experiences are most likely going to be different and their way of viewing the world might also differ. This can affect the interview situation and the results of the study. (Rastas, 2005) For this reason, is it important for the researcher to have intercultural awareness throughout the whole research process, especially when designing the interview guide and in the interview situation itself. A reflection of what kind of questions might be considered as offensive or inappropriate was

made to decreases the risk of uncomfortable situations. At the same time the research needs to have the courage to ask difficult questions but to make sure to do it in a sensible way and not by any means force the informants to answer questions they feel uncomfortable answering. In this particular study, some of the topics can be considered as sensitive but nonetheless very important to discuss. Such topics can for example be asking about the reason for relocating to Finland or questions regarding motherhood and how it has affected the women's employment.

5 Results

The results of the empirical study will be presented in this chapter by focusing on two main themes; transitions between positions and challenges encountered in the labour market. The two separate chapters will consist of subchapters were the results are presented in closer detail. The main results will briefly be presented in the summary chapter that combines the findings of both main themes.

5.1 Transitions Between Positions

The results in this chapter demonstrate what kind of transitions were found in the women's lives and how they had experienced these transitions. A limitation was made so that the transitions the women had experienced before their move to Finland were not discussed, therefore, the first subchapter discusses the transition of moving to a new country. Furthermore, transitions between different types of employment, the transition between studies and work, combining family with work and studies, and lastly experiences of unemployment will be discussed.

5.1.1 Moving to Finland

All the informants had moved to Finland because of their studies or because of a partner. Most of the women chose Finland because of its reputation of having free education for foreigners too. Some of the informants had visited Finland prior to their move but for the majority their move here was the first time they ever visited the country. Traveling abroad or even staying abroad for longer periods was nothing new for the women since most of them had done an exchange program abroad during their previous studies or alternatively did an exchange after moving to Finland. A sense of interest for new places and curiosity towards new experiences was a uniting factor when observing the women's stories. Adhiti and Esra had already built careers in their home countries and, therefore, they had to leave those behind when moving to Finland. Esra brought up how her transition to start her studies in Finland was mostly smooth, but it did change her life quite drastically. She left behind a nice job, a good income and a comfortable life in Turkey to take up studying again in Finland. It can be an uprooting experience to have to leave everything behind and start over again.

> *It was smooth, but it is still always difficult. I was kind of settled down in Turkey, I had my work and you know how you go to the same places. (Esra)*

5.1.2 Transitions between different types of employments

The informants had experiences of transitioning between part-time and full-time contracts, temporary and permanent contracts, and unpaid traineeships and paid employments. In addition, all of the woman also had experiences of moving between contracts inside the company they worked for, or experiences of looking for new opportunities in the labour market while already being employed.

5.1.2.1 Transition between part-time and full-time contracts

The informants who were finished with their studies started full-time jobs after finishing their degrees. An exception was Stephanie who was combining a full-time and a part-time job; she decided not to resign from her part-time cleaning job even though she started working full-time at a business position correlating to her study background. She is a hardworking person and she felt that her part-time job did not require a lot from her, and she was able to combine both employments because of flexibility inside both companies. Her full-time employer was more interested in making sure that the job was done, than that 37,5 hours a week are filled, and she also had a lot of flexibility to choose shifts and take time off at her part-time job.

> *So I work mostly as a supervisor and I am so used to the work so I don't need to spend much mentality or physics for the job anymore. I do the shifts as I wanted and that is the perk of being a supervisor there. I can take off any time I want, so very flexible. / .../ With my full-time employer the hours are very flexible. I can come any time as long as I do the 37,5… No, they don't really require that. As long as I do my job. / .../ Those two companies are not in the same industry, so they don't have conflicts, so I have flexibility, it doesn't really matter. (Stephanie)*

5.1.2.2 Transition between temporary and permanent contracts

Some of the informants started working with temporary contracts that turned in to permanent contracts. However, Adhiti is still patiently waiting for the promise of receiving a permanent contract to become true. She has had her contract renewed many times but because of internal problems her employer has not been able to fulfil the promise of a permanent contract. Regardless, she still feels confident and enjoys her work.

> *That discussion was happening last year, that it will be permanent this time but then due to some things that are happening inside the organization, do to that it did not happen*

this time. But there is a promise from the organization that the next one would be the permanent one. I mean even though the contract is temporary but the work and everything is good. (Adhiti)

The opinions on if it matters if the contract is temporary or permanent were varied. Marianna was contemplating on taking up a new temporary job opportunity and, therefore, leaving her permanent contract with her current employer. She felt like she was not developing her skills in her current task, and she has also been unhappy with not receiving a pay raise even though her responsibilities have evolved a lot during her 2,5 years in the company. She felt ready to take on a new challenge as soon as she gets the opportunity, even if the contract would be temporary.

I wouldn't mind taking a contract of course if it is more than a year. Because for me it's not a problem, I understand that a year… I think it looks okay on the resume especially since I've never been a job hopper. / .../ Everything over a year or even a year I would take. As long as the positions allows me to make a career move. / .../ Maybe I am a bit adventurous at that point, but then again at the same time I don't take huge risks but if I know that this contract will allow me to progress in my career I don't really care about my current permanent work because I think it's better to in this age to make a good move and to try something new instead of sitting for ten years in this permanent work that doesn't basically offer you any development. (Marianna)

5.1.2.3 Transition between paid and unpaid work

Experiences of transitions between unpaid work, such as internships and paid work were also brought up by the informants. Many of the women who had done internships spoke in a very neutral way about their experiences, some were satisfied with working their way up in the company by doing a good job. Gemma was the only one who more profoundly explained her feelings about doing her unpaid practice. She needed to turn down paid shifts that were offered through her employer while doing her practice at another location, because she does not have enough time to combine everything. She felt that even a little compensation could motivate students to perform better.

It's a challenge of course because I am working for seven hours, so almost a full day of work because the other person is working for eight hours a day and getting paid. So I was thinking maybe they might start paying just a little bit of money to even motivate the

person. Because when you are in a place for almost two months and that is a lot of time. I don't know if it is the law in Finland…But it would really help to motivate people. / .../ It affects a person's moral because sometimes you might encounter people who really don't appreciate you and what you are doing, then you are asking yourself 'I am here practicing, I am doing my best' and of course you want to excel. But no, nothing coming back to me in that way. Of course I am learning and practising, but motivating people in that way [paying them] would be nice. (Gemma)

5.1.2.4 Thoughts on transitioning between contracts

The results show that women are open to transitioning between employments and many have also experienced transitions inside the companies they have worked in or currently work in. A more extreme example of moving between employments is the work Veliane does, working as a personal assistant some of her employers might pass away or relocate and, therefore, she needs to find a new job quickly. When asked how she felt about these more unusual circumstances she explained how she always tries to see the positive side of things; she has the opportunity to meet new people and she has received a lot of good energy from the people she works with. But of course, sometimes it is difficult, especially if many unfortunate contract endings happen after each other and if she got along well with the person she assisted.

I feel it's like a part of life. Somethings are not set in, in a way it also gives me the opportunity to meet new people. My other boss who moved to Oulu, he was so positive. He could not speak or do anything, he was answering with the eyes. / .../ That really motivated me, like somebody who can't even talk and this person is so positive. And when they told me that he has plans of moving I felt very bad because I was very comfortable with that job and we really clicked well so I couldn't believe that I have to set out to look for another job again. (Veliane)

Regarding moving between contracts, Stephanie believes that it is good to stay in the same position for a bit longer and she also sees opportunities for internal transfers if she would feel that her job had become repetitive. This is the exact opposite of how Marianna is feeling at her current job, where she does not have the opportunity to grow and get a pay raise. She feels her employer does not believe she is easily capable of finding a new job and does not value her as an employee, she feels she could easily be replaced.

I think any job you want to learn and be good at it you should stay in that position for at least two years. And after that if it feels very repetitive I could think of moving internally, we have other departments I can move to or change the title or the job description or something like that to make me less bored. (Stephanie)

I don't think they really promote young talent that's also why I don't like it, and I think that's also one of the main reasons, not necessarily the money only. For me it's also about personal growth. / .../ But I think the main reason for me is that I am not given more responsibility just because the company does not see potential in me and I know that this is not who I am. (Marianna)

5.1.3 Transitions between studies and work

Working while studying was a common factor for all the women. The extent of work varied between having zero-hour contracts up to a few shifts a week or working full-time during holiday times. The reasons for choosing to work while studying were many. An obvious motivation for many was receiving an income and some also felt it was important to start gaining work experience early on to be able to find a job more easily in the future. A flexible part-time job was seen as a good option for many so that there would be enough time left for studies. Veliane had been able to combine work with her studies because of her flexible employers. In addition, Anya brought up the fact that studies are not the same as 'the real world' and it is important to be able to prepare oneself for work.

I've decided to study and work because my bosses are flexible, they can adapt my time table to fit when I don't have classes or in the evening or on the weekends. (Veliane)

Well of course money [laughing]. And then well just studying, it doesn't… If you study for five years and then you get out of university then it's quite hard to get a job, so I definitely wanted to work and find out more things about the real world. Not just studies. (Anya)

There seems to be a downside to having the freedom that comes with flexible employers; it can lead to a guilty conscience. Veliane carried on explaining how her current type of employment offers her flexible opportunities but she dislikes how her employers need to compromise their wishes to fit her busy schedule. Problems might arise when the schedules do not match, for example times when the person she is assisting would like to have help with

her grocery shopping earlier on, but Veliane cannot come earlier since she is in school. One of her current employers had even discreetly suggested that maybe Veliane would be better off quitting and returning to work after she is finished with her studies. The fact that Veliane is on maternity leave at the moment from her work makes it even more difficult.

> *Yes I think he's flexible enough, but sometimes it's also not a good feeling because it's like… They have to compromise for my benefit. / .../ And when we want to go for shopping I'll ask okay could be maybe go five o' clock and I know by that we won't have any school and she'll say yes but it will mean that even though she would have maybe wanted to go in the morning, because of my studies she has to wait. And last week she sent me a message if I am still studying, do I think it would be good that I complete my studies before I come back to work or what do I think. And I could see that I am on maternity leave and maybe she's making that kind of suggestions because she is compromising, that's why she was making that suggestion. / .../ It was not a good feeling, because it's like they are saying 'take time to study and concentrate on your studies and when you are done maybe you can come back to work' or something. But she cannot say that, so she wants me to say it for her, that's the thing and that I get but I don't blame her. It's me who had created that kind of situation, if I was not studying and wouldn't compromise that would not have been a suggestion for her to make even in the first place. (Veliane)*

The informants who had completed their studies had experienced a full transition from studies to work. Stephanie and Anya both felt that there is a difference between studies and work. Anya referred to how her social life was richer during her studies and she still lacks those kinds of social networks in the business world. Stephanie felt that studying was more worry free and there was a stronger focus on personal goals and now the focus is strongly set on company goals.

> *It's quite different, also in terms of your networks. When you are in the university it's very easy to meet new people and you are always invited to events and can have a very rich social life. But then when you start working you realize that first of all you don't have networks for that… I mean other than you school network. But it's kind of… I think my experience is probably the same as anyone else's. Work takes all of your time. (Anya)*

> *Yeah maybe I miss studying time a bit. Worry free, you don't have a goal that is ready made for you. You can just work with your own goals, that's the big difference. Working*

with a company you have your own goals of course but that's the minor thing. The important thing is company goals and you have to reach that and that's what the company expects of you. (Stephanie)

Elena and Marianna had both thought about studying a master's degree after already being employed for a few years but none of them ended up making the transition. Marianna believes that her employer would not be happy about her taking a study leave even though it is allowed. The decision to continue studying after already having a full-time employment seems to be a difficult transition to make.

I do plan to go study master's but currently since I have full-time job it would have to be evening. I don't think that many employers appreciate if you are like "oh I'm going to take study leave", even though you are allowed to. I think they'll be thinking like what the hell… (Marianna)

Esra knew that she wanted to move to Northern Europe to study a master's degree, so while she was working full-time in Turkey she started saving up money to be able to focus on her studies again without worrying about her finances. She struggled with the decision to make this huge transition that required her to quit her well-paying job and resuming student life in a new country.

I had this good job that paid well but I continued to live very low cost, like a student because I wanted to save money for here. And it is very wrong way around to save up money in Turkey to come to live in Finland, so in that sense I had saved up a lot of money for Turkey and I could easily afford a house for example. And then to decide okay I'm going to go to Finland and that will be my sole income, so I would spend all my saving and what if I didn't get a job… It was a very tough choice, but I wanted to try it and I thought I would not regret having a house, but I would regret not coming. (Esra)

5.1.4 Combining family with studies and work

Out of the eight informants three women had children; Gemma, Adhiti and Veliane. All three had many experiences to share about combining family with studies and/or work. The other informants also reflected on what combining family with studies or work would feel like. Combining all three was mostly regarded as a challenge, therefore, thoughts on what kind of challenges arose when combining family with studies and work will be discusses in the

chapter that addresses challenges the women have encountered. In general, it seems hard to be able to make a smooth transition between all the different roles that are acquired from a working mother, and it is even more difficult when combining work with studies alongside taking care of a child. However, there seemed to be a common factor that makes it easier to combine all roles; the support of a partner. Adhiti explained how she finds it easy to combine family and work because of a supportive husband and a flexible employer.

> *Even my husband, so we both have planned our week in such a way that we both can spend time with him [the son] because my job, I sometimes have to go to another town further away and then I come home very late so then my husband takes care of him. We are managing it. And even my organization and my husband, they are quite supportive about child care and those things. (Adhiti)*

Some women who do not have children reflected on when the right time to have children could be. Elena felt that there is an age pressure and, therefore, she needs to pursue her dream of starting a company now because soon it will be too late. A male co-worker was implying the same, it is now or never. Furthermore, some of the women expressed how it is also important to be financially stable before having children.

> *He said, "now you are 24, this is pretty much the only time when you can pursue this dream", since as a woman I want to have family and kids before like thirty, because of like health reasons. Even though I live in a nice environment in Finland my body is still Russian… And you know for me it's important… Well you are a woman, you understand me. / .../ So obviously you need to get everything ready for that and also financially you should be ready for it. (Elena)*

Both Elena and Marianna believed that it would be easy to combine their careers with children when the time comes. However, Elena believed that there are negative views in society on being able to combine different areas of life, such as children and work, successfully. She has a plan on how to grow her business and employ people she can trust before devoting more time to family life.

> *They say that you have to choose family or career, but then they also say you can't combine studies and career and I did this and I see other people doing this and I also see women managing business and family, it's all about setting goals and priorities. So no, I*

can't be like a housewife. But at the same time I want to have a family, especially because of my Russian values. Family is the most important thing in the whole world because government doesn't support you. / .../ So now I have like these three to four years of building a team that I will know is ready when I am willing to invest more time to family, so that nothing will go wrong. (Elena)

Marianna felt that living in Finland is like living in a utopia, were you are able to leave the children at day-care and leave a bit early from work to pick them up and finish work at home, or then take a maternity or paternity leave. She felt it is possible to combine both in Finland, but that things are very different in Russia.

I think for what I have seen from even at my work about how easy it is to balance in Finland, leaving at three and picking up your children from päiväkoti and then finishing work from home. I could never imagine doing that in Russia and sometimes I tell this to my mum and she's like "no way, are you kidding me?". It just sounds like a utopia. / .../ For example, I was positively shocked that you have paternity leave, not only maternity. I feel very safe. (Marianna)

Finland's strong family policies were well-known and appreciated among the informants. Especially the long leaves and day-care system was highly appreciated. Day-care has enabled the opportunity to combine work and children and many women compare the situation in Finland to their home countries. The women's possibilities to make easy transitions between maternity leave and work or studies would not be as flexible. Stephanie feels that the Finnish society would help her to provide better care for her children, if she has children in the future in Finland. Adhiti has been very satisfied with the services her family has been offered and is especially grateful and satisfied with the day-care system.

Let's say my children who grow up here would have… I wouldn't say better life but like better care. There I would need to spend much of my time to care about them but in here I feel the society partly helps me to do that. (Stephanie)

I am very much happy about the services that we are getting, at least for the kids and families. So even though the day-care I am very much happy with all of the care takers. Because if I compare this to India it is much, much better than India. /.../ I don't know but then I am sure that I would not have kept him in day-care, or then I would have maybe call my parents or someone to take care of him if I am working (Adhiti)

There were mostly positive views on family policies, but Veliane stated that she had felt that the implementation of the policies can differ between families and that they are not always very clear. She has been struggling with understanding how some benefits are distributed, the system is not always easy to understand even though it is working.

> *Yes they are working but they are not very clear, it's a bit complicated. When they explain it, when it comes to the implementation of those policies it's somehow different from what is written. For example with these maternity packages and these things, even though I have three children I never understand how it is being completed. And some things like that… I don't know. Sometimes the same situation might be different from family to family. (Veliane)*

5.1.5 Experiences of unemployment

The position of unemployment was not a very clear position since many of the women had for example been actively part-taking in integration programs or studying while being unemployed. Some of the women started the integration program or language courses because they were unemployed and, therefore, it was still a beneficial time in their life. Marianna wanted to point out that she was not just sitting at home doing nothing and some of the other women made similar statements, as if their position of unemployment needed to be defended and assuming people would believe they just sit at home. Marianna also felt that her period of unemployment did not last that long and compared herself to other immigrants who were seeking jobs in Finland, who had clearly struggled more than her. She spoke about remembering that someone has it worse even though she had had her moments of doubt while looking for jobs.

> *Then maybe for one year I was unemployed, but I was really intensively studying Finnish, so I was going to those day courses every day, so yes it was being unemployed, but I meant that I was not just sitting at home and making some gloves and coat for dogs you know [laughing]. / .../ So I don't think I was that much unemployed because for example I was subscribed to that group that I already mentioned, international job seekers in Finland, and some people say "oh my god only now I found a full-time job and I've been here for six to seven years". (Marianna)*

From a self-efficacy perspective all women who to some extent had struggled with unemployment had felt negative feelings and maybe even questioned their ability to cope at some point. However, even though Marianna earlier described how her unemployment did not last very long it clearly affected her self-efficacy beliefs. She referred to how she has learnt from her unsuccessful efforts to find jobs and has grown a tougher skin and learnt not to take everything so personally now.

> *I wasn't really disappointed [when I got rejected], but maybe two or three years ago it would have broken me in to tears because then it was very sensitive for me that I can't find a job without a higher education and I was an A student and socially accepted everywhere. (Marianna)*

After being dismissed from her previous job without a reason, Elena had also felt a brief moment of uncertainty on how to move forward with her career. The thought of unemployment was not tempting but neither was the thought of looking for a new job. Her idea to start her own company was born from this despair.

> *I was thinking like okay what am I going to do now? Am I looking for a new job? What was it going to be? I am too good for being just a marketing specialist, but I am not good enough to be like a middle… like a manager because I don't have… I am just 24 years old. / .../ I started checking full-time positions and I felt like I can't do this, I just can't. (Elena)*

There seems to be a common factor that leads to changes in how the women believe they can cope with negative feelings and failures; it comes from feelings of success, quite often from successful feelings after finding a job. Esra explains how she felt much more confident after finding a job and confident she wanted to stay in Finland. She had been afraid that she had risked her good life in Turkey for an unsuccessful and unhappy life in Finland. Marianna shared similar feelings and felt a change in her attitude after finding a job, but it is not like it happened over night.

> *Well I didn't have that feeling [that I wanted to move] once I got the job offer, then it was very clear for me that I was going to stay here. / .../ I was much more stressed that I wouldn't get a job. So that was the fear scenario in the beginning that I risked; my master's here wouldn't really be valued at all in Turkey and instead if I stay in my job for*

two more years I would be quite senior. I was very panicking about that actually, but I got the job very early on so that was fine. (Esra)

Of course it wasn't easy, I think I more or less started doing it [changing her attitude] when I got my current job at the company. / .../ It was very hurtful for me that I wasn't recognized but I think this is in the past now (Marianna)

For some of the women it is a sort of inner motivation and belief in their capabilities that also kept them going through the tougher times. This sort of dialogue is strongly present in many of Elena's experiences. She has been able to push forwards despite obstacles and clearly saw how her negative experiences had affected her in a positive way. Elena explained how she felt that by nature she will always keep on trying and she is hungry for new experiences.

We have this very nice phrase in Russian; whether you are desperate from day one when you are born, you are desperate for taking up new challenger or trying new things, you are active and all the time pushing, pushing, pushing harder. Or then sometimes your environment becomes desperate, you have no choice but to take action. And I always consider myself by nature being half desperate, I'm always wanting to learn more, do more. (Elena)

Veliane described how the apartment she owns with her husband motivates her to stay employed, she needs a job to be able to pay for the apartment and being unemployed is not an option. This outer motivation of the apartment combined with her inner attitude keeps Veliane thoroughly motivated.

I think one is because of my attitude and two, I also have this some kind of motivation. This apartment is our own, when we decided to buy this apartment some colleagues were like it's not advisable for you to buy what if you are unemployed, that would give you a lot of pressure. Then I said that will also be another motivation to look for another job. / .../ So even though I might lose one job I always have this kind of feeling that I can never be unemployed, no matter what I will always find a job. And with that attitude it's like I'll always get a job. (Veliane)

However, even though Veliane felt motivated she mentioned how at some point it was smarter for her to be unemployed than to work part-time since the unemployment office was giving her better benefits than what her pay was from the part-time job. Therefore, she quit

her part-time job and continued looking for a full-time job. There seems to be a glitch in the unemployment system and Veliane found this to be confusing.

> *With a part-time job the employment office will supplement me money, but it was a bit confusing. / .../ It was better that I don't work at all or I get a full-time job. So I was like okay I am not going to do any part-time job, I'll look for a full-time job. So I also stopped that one and devoted my time to look for a full-time job. (Veliane)*

5.2 Challenges Encountered in the Labour Market

The results of what kind of challenges the women have encountered in the Finnish labour market will be presented in this chapter. First, a brief summary of the informants' experiences of job seeking in Finland will be presented. Thereafter, the main challenges the women had encountered in the labour market will be presented. Most of the challenges were associated with challenges to entry. Some obstacles kept the women from successfully transitioning onwards from unemployment and had momentarily felt like hindering barriers, but in the end, they turned out to be manageable obstacles that could be overcome. First, the results regarding the problem of acquiring good language skills in Finnish will be presented in closer detail. In addition, the challenges connected to being a foreigner in Finland followed by results regarding the transference of skills and downward mobility will be presented. Lastly, results focused on a gender perspective regarding combining children with work and studies and, furthermore, being a woman at work will be discussed.

5.2.1 Experiences of job seeking

All of the informants had at some point actively looked for a job and, therefore, had many experiences regarding job seeking to share. They had experienced both moments of success and defeat, but all were able to find employment sooner or later. Many of the informants shared experiences of sending in many applications and receiving few replies and interviews, which could be seen as a challenge when trying to enter the labour market. However, the interviews the women landed often yielded job offers and the overall employment situation looked quite bright for all the women.

Adhiti had looked for a suitable position in her field of work for approximately 9 months after her son had started day-care before finding employment. Meanwhile, she took part in the integration program at the TE-office and practiced her Finnish. She had also done some active

job hunting before the news of her pregnancy but not been very successful. Gemma managed to make a good impression at one of her practice places for her nursing degree and has ever since been offered shifts there when she can find the time to work. Elena found her first employment through the TE-office, and after this she has landed a few other positions and after events out of her control she ended up finding the push she needed to start her own business. After a period of unsuccessful job hunting Esra was approached on LinkedIn and got her first job offer in Finland, after this she got a position at another company and she has worked her way up from a graduate program position. Anya was actively looking for jobs for approximately two months before she got the offer from her first employer in Finland. She was also able to find her second job very quickly and was joking around about improving this study's statistic regarding immigrant jobseekers. Veliane took her job search very seriously and actively searched for a month sending out many applications before landing her first job in Finland. She explained how her job at that time was to look for jobs and she sent out hundreds of applications.

> *So my main job I said to myself was to find a job, my main job is to look for a job. I would wake up in the morning and sit by the computer and all that I am doing is sending in applications and out of hundred applications that I sent only five responded. I think it will be less than one month, then I had a job. I just kept on sending in the applications and no responses were coming. But the five that responded, one of them had me an interview. I went for the interview and I had a job then. (Veliane)*

Out of all the informants Marianna seemed to be the one who had emotionally struggled the most because of her negative job seeking experiences, and she was very analytical about why she had been unsuccessful in finding jobs on the open market. Marianna later on realized that her approach of sending out hundreds of applications and not tailoring her applications was not working and, therefore, she adopted a new tailored strategy that worked for her. She has been having more success lately and she believes it is because of her new strategy.

> *I was following this kind of advice that everyone was following. Just send it out, maybe a hundred, and maybe one or two will reply. Now I know that it doesn't work. I adopted another approach, maybe send ten and get most likely seven replies back and get invited to interviews, so I think that works. (Marianna)*

Stephanie and Marianna expressed how they had been able to find jobs through networks they had established in Finland. Finding jobs through connections seemed to be about being in the right place at the right time, and it helped the women to start their careers in Finland. Marianna has been able to find all her internships and her current job through her husband's friends or through the company where her husband used to work. In like manner, Stephanie explained how she was able to land a cleaning job quickly after arriving in Finland and she also got her current job in the business field through hearing about an opportunity through a friend that was not even yet posted.

> *So when I came we had three Vietnamese in my class, including me, and one of them new somebody who was working in the ship at the moment and then they just introduced us to the leader and then we got hired just like that. / .../ So I followed with my master's and when I almost finished the studies I had a friend who worked in the company nearby in the city and he told me that there is an opening position that they are only planning at the moment. (Stephanie)*

5.2.2 Language skills

The lack of sufficient language skills was clearly regarded as the main challenge the informants had encounter in the labour market in Finland. A sense of frustration was present when the informants were talking about language skills and most of the informants felt that the employment opportunities for non-Finnish speakers were few. When reflecting on how the language requirement has affected their job search Marianna spoke of it being an obstacle to entry. Some women describe how they had moments when the lack of language skills was even considered as a barrier to be able to enter the labour market. Esra expressed how she in the beginning felt that she did not have a chance of finding employment because her options were very limited because of the Finnish language requirement. It was an exceptionally difficult situation for Esra since she already had a few years of very good work experience from Turkey and could have easily found a new job if needed there.

> *Of course the positions that I could apply to were very limited because of the Finnish requirements so a lot of companies were just not a possibility for me because I didn't speak Finnish. / .../ I felt like I had a very good experience, very relevant in my field from Turkey. And that was like… Every time I talked to someone they thought I did a very good job and I had very good experience for my level of student but, however, I wouldn't even*

be able to apply for jobs to a lot of companies so that was kind of off-putting and I didn't feel like I had a chance. (Esra)

However, Anya also reflected on the fact that it is possible for non-Finnish speaking foreigners to find jobs if they try hard enough. She also felt that there are English speaking jobs in Finland because her friends from the university who do not speak Finnish had been able to find jobs. She was the only one who brought up a positive outlook on the subject of language skills. It should be noted that Anya studies IT, which as a field generally offers more job openings in only English than for example in the fields of marketing or nursing.

I think it's a very common thing among foreign students in Finland to just nag and do nothing and be like "oh my god Finland is so… it's so hard to get a job in here and no one wants me because I don't speak Finnish"… Well maybe that's also true but then honestly all of my friends who put in enough effort in to this found a job. (Anya)

Anya also hinted that it is not easy to apply for Finnish speaking positions because then the applicants you are up against are often mostly native speakers. Some women had reflected on if their Finnish language skills will ever be good enough for positions that require native-level Finnish, Gemma sometimes feel the language requirements are impossible to meet as a foreigner.

The position was in Finnish and all of my friends always tell me like "don't apply for positions in Finnish because you know how many Finns apply for them". (Anya)

Yes, it is not easy to find a practice place in Finland, it's not so easy. And then of course the Finnish language is a hindrance because at some places they ask you for full language skills, which is not possible to learn in 3 or 4 years or even 10 years. Them themselves will tell you Finnish is a hard language, but at the same time they have put that prerequisite that you have to have that language skill. (Gemma)

Furthermore, some informants expressed unsureness about if it is even possible at all to become fluent in Finnish and if their accent will still hinder them somehow. Elena had experienced the opposite and did not believe that her mistakes or accent when speaking would affect the outcome of her business meetings. Marianna seemed to have a negative view on how native-speakers will view foreigners who are trying to speak Finnish and she has

experienced reluctant attitudes in native-speakers. The feeling of failing with learning the language and seeing it as a barrier was so overwhelming that Esra had already thought about moving away from Finland. It was clear to see how these difficult negative experiences affected the women's overall mood.

> *I actually would like to read some research on like how employers would see the people who really, really kicks ass in Finnish, still has an accent, not born Finnish. Like first generation immigrants. I must say I would be curious, but it probably really depends on the person. / .../ We laugh how Russian sounds from the mouth of a foreigner. But I am not sure if the Finnish people share the same feeling. I think it really depends, I know some Finns who are willing to talk to you in Finnish only if you are advanced user. They have no desire to talk to you like 'minä syön pullaa', they will think like oh my god she sounds so retarded let's switch to English. And I think there are a lot of people like that. For example in my case that makes it very difficult to learn Finnish. (Marianna)*

> *And I studied Finnish the first semester when I was here because I thought that okay I was going to speak Finnish, so it will help me. But I quickly realized that some Finnish won't help me get anywhere in Finland; either you are fluent or then you don't. / .../ I realized that I am not going to become fluent and I did not have any point in staying, like planning my long-term life in Finland if it was going to be tough for me, so I could easily go to Denmark, and their language is easier and it's more international. (Esra)*

Anya and Elena do most of their job in Finnish and were very confident that their language skills have helped them find jobs. Elena has founded a company and she stresses how crucial her language skills were when doing this. This is aligned with the thoughts of the other women, who believed that their lack of language skills has been the biggest obstacle or barrier for them. Esra had also observed differences in finding employment between her non-Finnish speaking peers and Finnish speaking peers.

> *Finnish language for sure. I'm sure it's my communication skills and my language skills. / .../ And now because of setting up the company and everything is in Finnish and the companies… obviously I write them in Finnish and then I go to a business meeting and I am thinking like okay I have to speak Finnish, and without that I wouldn't be where I am at. Without Finnish I wouldn't be able to start my own company. (Elena)*

I think almost all Finnish people had, like there weren't almost anyone in my study program because it was such a good field to study, who was Finnish and didn't have a job. And I don't think any of the international ones had jobs. So that was a very clear distinction between the Finnish speaking people and between the non-Finnish speakers. (Esra)

In addition, language skills also seem to have a highlighted meaning when there is a lack of a strong common language at work, even so that in some professions like nursing the lack of understanding can lead to dangerous situations at work. Gemma has experienced situations where she has not understood her supervisor and she has also been dismissed from practices because of weak language skills. She dreams of being understood and herself understanding more to be able to enjoy her work. A sense of frustration was strongly present in many of the women's experiences, being understood and understanding others is important.

Yes, at some places they have had to stop us from going on with the practical training because of the language. / .../ And in one place they stopped me when I was already in my third week so it's not so nice, they could have told me in the first week that your language is not enough for us, but they waited until the third week. It just doesn't feel good when something like that happens. / .../ You can't even practice your Finnish because most of the people there don't talk. Even the Finnish doesn't grow. I think being in a place where I can explain myself, even though I don't speak much or… but being in a place where I can speak the language that I know and learn more, that's a place I would like to go and work. (Gemma)

All informants had made some efforts to learn Finnish, mostly because they believe that good language skills would help them find wider employment opportunities. The learning experiences were very varied and there was a strong indication of how different life situations gives you different opportunities to focus on learning the language. Some of the women committed early on to learn Finnish. Anya has always been good with languages, therefore, she found it easy to learn Finnish and was very interested and committed during her studies. The lack of time is what Gemma is struggling with, when does one find time to study Finnish? She finds it difficult to combine the language courses with school and her child.

I think I had an easy time because I'm really good with languages. But maybe it's also the fact that I was really… There was a lot of people who were there maybe just to learn

something, but I actually wanted to learn. And also I guess I was at this age when you are kind of open to like studying… Because well there were people who were working and was going to the course in the evenings and obviously for them it was a different level of commitment but for me it was like really I was trying to get the most I could from that. (Anya)

I would say I've been learning in the practical places, I haven't done very well with the courses because sometimes it has to be at night and I have a child and then I have full-time school and I haven't had the time to go to Finnish courses. (Gemma)

Many of the informants have gone to courses at the university, taken private classes or attended language courses organized by the employment office. Adhiti's experience of the integration program was good and she learned some Finnish. Veliane described how the employment offices integration program's language course was not the right place for her. She disliked sitting down for long periods of time and would rather have worked, but she did acknowledge that the language course might have been beneficial for her chances of finding employment even though she is still struggling with the language.

I registered with the employment office and with their policy the first solution is always to learn the language, so that was why they put me in the language course and with that then I could apply for jobs. My Finnish is still not good, the language is still very difficult for me even though I studied it for one year. I think for me languages, even my own language, is difficult for me. (Veliane)

The understanding of the Finnish language seems to be an important factor for being a part of social settings at work and also outside of work. This affects many of the informants' sense of belonging and makes it harder for them to feel integrated. Gemma explained how it is easy to zone out and not be able to participate in the discussion if one's language skills are not strong enough. Marianna also brings up the fact that it can be embarrassing to say something wrong but the reaction from the ones listening can be worse than herself being embarrassed. People sometimes get confused and shut down completely instead of continuing a conversation. There was a clear indication that the lack of a common language that everyone feels comfortable speaking was troublesome.

You're just scared that everyone will judge you. Because for kids who come here with parents maybe even when they are seven, they just start speaking, they don't care. I am jealous, I am jealous that I am not that kind of kid anymore [laughing]. Because I am this kind of person, I am not afraid of criticism but when I don't know people and I feel like I am embarrassing myself and then I become red like oh my god, oh my god. And actually, some Finnish people they don't help you to fight this confusion, they get confused themselves. And sometimes I wonder like "cuucuu I'm still here, I can speak English too". But they just shut down, like just one click and it's really crazy. I must say that freaks me out mostly, not that I said a word that was a mistake but how they react. (Marianna)

5.2.3 Being a foreigner in Finland

As described in the earlier subchapter about language, the informants felt that the lack of language skills was a big challenge and the feeling of being on the outside that arouse because of this were expressed. Many of the informants had experiences where they to some extent felt that being a foreigner was a challenge for them both at work and outside work. Anya believes that her good language skills make her blend in and, therefore, others do not consider her a foreigner, making her feel more local, which leads to her having an easier time compared to other foreigners. Anya is Russian and her looks blend easily in with Finnish attributes.

Of course I have an accent and I don't speak perfectly and sometimes I don't understand anything, but I don't think people consider me as a foreigner in that respect so it's kind of easy. Especially in the beginning I don't think anyone at any interview asked me where I'm from or anything, so I think it's kind of like… It makes me local. (Anya)

When asked if Marianna feels foreign she explains how it is her lack of Finnish skills that give her away as being foreign and she does not feel like a local even though other people might think that she could maybe be a native Finn. She is however a bit unsure if she actually looks that Finnish with her Russian facial features, but she does feel that people who clearly look foreign will not have others start conversations with them in Finnish.

I think yes, mostly it is because of the language because 90% of the time I give myself away when I can't continue conversation. But I don't think I look that much… Like a lot of people start a conversation with me in Finnish and I don't remember when conversation started in English right away. / .../ I know that for example when some

Asian person stands before me in line everyone will always speak English, even if you are not a student they just think you are here for studying. Maybe they think I am more blended with the culture so most likely I speak Finnish and when a lot of people try to speak Finnish to me I say 'puhun vähän suomea' and they are surprised. Like I said, I am very aware that I don't look very Finnish, like facial features. (Marianna)

Especially Marianna had strongly felt like an outsider, struggling with bonding with Finns because of being 'a stranger' and felt that other people were affected by prejudice against Russians. She also felt that Finland is falsely advertised as being an international country and has sometimes thought about moving away from Finland to live in an actually international country, where she would feel more accepted and equal to her partner. These negatives feelings were strongly communicated throughout the interview, but she has experienced some improvements in the last few years. It could clearly be seen how Marianna's negative feelings about Finland and the treatment she had received affected her self-efficacy beliefs.

So my Husband thought that Finland is a very international country but he was also wrong. And a lot of Finnish people love Finland so much that they don't see the disadvantages I have learned. When we started going to the Poliisi to get residency permit and open a bank account… Like I don't want to say that I was treated like shit but because I am non-EU nationality the attitudes were very different. / …/ Like I said I wasn't exactly treated like shit, I wasn't, but somehow I was feeling that even though I look absolutely normal and I was saying that I have this normal Russian account people were like 'but you are from Russia, you are probably related to some Mafia'. I think that a lot of Finnish people think who have never been abroad, or met a foreigner… They are like very narrow minded, so I have suffered unfortunately from that. But I think once you have a co-partner and like an apartment or talo the situation changes a lot. You are treated more like, not well like a human… but an equal. So now I have this more role of a permanent resident permit it easies it up. (Marianna)

Elena had also felt the prejudice against Russians, but both Anya and Elena pointed out that the prejudice they have felt in Finland had happened in their personal life and not in the labour market. Esra was getting tired of answering never ending questions about her home country Turkey at her workplace. She means that questions of where she came from were more interesting for other people than discussing about her work, implying that this makes her

feel like she does not belong here in the same way and maybe in a way even undermining her identity at work.

> *It's nothing discrimination wise but, not in per say that people wouldn't respect… Nothing in an official way. But in social circumstances it does feel in a way, you get in a position of having this embassy feeling of any questions about Turkey or… I feel like lot of the time people talk to me more about Turkey than my job for example. So if in a company event I meet someone then they wouldn't ask detailed questions about what I am doing but they would ask so many questions of where did I come from, how was it. But I don't think it's discrimination per say but it's about living abroad. And I think in Finland it's because people are not used to having international people around. So it doesn't happen in the same way for example when I am in Sweden with the company, same company. But if I am in Stockholm no one starts asking about it but like here it's all about where I am coming from, why did I come here, these kinds of questions and I kind of need to explain myself over and over. I understand, but it's kind of boring. And I feel that it takes away from the actual job context talk. (Esra)*

Marianna had times when she even experienced Finns to be racist, she felt like Finland has not lived up to her expectations of being a welcoming international country. She also believes that coming here for studies is easier than moving because of a spouse, it can get lonely sometimes.

> *I think overall Finland is a very good country, but I understand that when you come here… Maybe I mentioned at the beginning of our discussion that for foreigners it is advertised very well as a country; Nokia was born here, and everyone is so cute and technologized, and everyone is smart and speaks English. But when you come here, to Helsinki. Like in my case I came just for a spouse and not to like hang out with a lot of buddies so for me it was like yeah oh my god it's nothing like that. And then especially when you try to get a job, even knowing anyone, without the right approach that's when you start thinking oh my god these Finnish people are god damn racists. (Marianna)*

Veliane had felt that her dark skin colour and her name have been a challenge for her when looking for employment. She had experienced times when she had already felt low because of not finding employment, and then she felt even worse when she actually got interviews because the employers were clearly discriminating her when they saw her dark skin colour. Veliane had experienced discrimination because of her name, she felt that the threshold for

employers to call her was higher since her name is not a typical Finnish name they recognize. She believes that the positions she has worked in she has successfully landed because the employer has worked with black people previously or is well travelled.

> *It felt very… I felt very bad. And some of the interviews I went to worsen the situation. Some of the interviews, when I got there looking at the situation I knew that I might be the best person for the job. But I think with some of them as soon as they saw me, and they saw that I am black, that changed the whole situation. / .../ Yes, I felt discrimination because I was not given those jobs I thought I could have gotten. I registered with this company and they will send people, people will tell them they need an avustaja. / .../ Whenever people need someone the company will still ask you are you still available, if you say yes they say that some people need avustaja and we will give your name to them. So in the moment from now they might contact you and no one will ever contact you. I'm like… As soon as they see the name and they know that it's not a Finnish name they just leave it out. There was a time I was asking them that is it possible for you to only send them my name so they don't have any options. But when you send them like 2-3 names they have an option and they will not call the names they are not familiar with. / .../ The people that I've been working with are native Finns but some of them have had experience with working with black people, so that might be one of the reasons they would employ me and some of them have travelled also. (Veliane)*

Gemma, who also has darker skin, did not bring up nearly as strong feelings of discrimination as Veliane did. She had only felt more subtle actions and many other informants also stated that they had not openly felt discriminated, but they were able to read it between the lines.

> *Not really, not really. Because if people do have some opinions they don't show it, they would not show it. Except sometimes somebody might use a tone of voice that you know shouldn't happen. But they will not come out openly and tell you something. But sometimes someone might speak to you in a way that you… (Gemma)*

Many other informants with lighter skin mention that they can imagine that they would have a tougher time if their skin colour would be different and they know that their friends have been discriminated because of their appearance. The fact that a foreign name can also impact the experience in a negative way is brought up and Esra also believes that it is easier being a foreign woman than a foreign man. Furthermore, Esra took it one step further and analysed

from where discriminatory behaviour could arise from. She believes it comes from fear and women are often less feared, therefore, foreign women have it easier.

> *I think it would be interesting to have my life in Finland with a different name. Or a different skin colour. / .../ I think it's different if you are a woman or a man, males have it tougher being a foreigner. I think it's because both men and women are intimidated by men, but no one fears me. I think a lot of discrimination comes from fearing. And then I think women in a way being weak or not as tough or impressive or whatever. (Esra)*

Furthermore, informants reflected over cultural differences between their home countries and Finland. Some had a hard time adapting to the withdrawn Finns and felt like the locals were disliking them. This in turn affected their feeling of belonging in the beginning. Both Marianna and Esra thought they smelled bad because everyone was avoiding them. Furthermore, Marianna had later on realized that the Finns withdrawn and silent way of being does not mean that they dislike you, it is only a cultural difference.

> *And I thought I was smelling bad because everyone was so far away from me [laughing]. It took me a month to realize that "no, you don't smell bad, this is their fault". (Esra)*

> *What I also have learned is that if Finns are silent with you they actually respect you, they don't want to bother you. And this is the opposite to the Russian culture; if people don't talk to you in Russian they don't necessarily have a disgust for you but they dislike you, they don't want to spend time with you. That's why it was very tough in the beginning. / .../ But I understood now that you don't need to feel this awkward silence. I think for most foreigners and in many other cultures you need to talk otherwise it gets awkward and you might feel incompetent. Like social manors. (Marianna)*

Some informants have also observed these cultural differences when applying for jobs. Marianna realized that she was using the wrong approach in Finland by adapting a very American way with thank you notes and self-promotion, which does not fit the Finnish culture at all.

> *I've had most success when the hiring managers were not Finnish. And I am not saying that they are biased against me being Russian, but I think they are just looking for a*

different kind of person. How can I say… Who is ready to submit more, who doesn't brag, who is humble – kind of the opposite to the American culture. / .../ I have also learned that a lot of Finnish employers freak out when you send them a thank you note. Of course since I don't have a lot of contacts in HR or recruitment I don't know so I do a lot of research myself and I found a lot of guides I trusted, so I've picked most of my knowledge from American culture so I understands that sometimes I can be very bragging and off-putting for Finnish employers, like she's so young but so full of shit. For other cultures it's normal; you promote yourself, you push yourself, the competition is enormous. (Marianna)

There is also a difference in what kind of emotional pleas are appropriate for the applicant to make towards the employer. Veliane explained how in her home country in Ghana someone might employ you because your family will otherwise starve but in Finland the welfare state will look after you, so the same kind of pleas are not appropriate and effective.

Yeah over here it's different compared to where I come from. With where I come from I would say that people can really feel compared to here. If I walk to somebody and explain my situation that maybe I have three kids and I have my family somewhere and because of that I need more financial assistance and because of that I wish you could give me the opportunity to work here or something like that, it's more likely I might get the job but here no. In some rare situations it's possible but in most situation that will not affect the decision that person might make. I think because of maybe the social system here, because over here no one will want, when I say no one will want you won't go without food, the person will think that even if I don't give you the job you will survive. From where I come from, maybe if I don't give you this you might not survive, and you will starve and because of all these things they might give in. (Veliane)

There was also some discussion about a lack of Finnishness, some felt that at the end of the day it comes down to the fact that a foreigner will never be Finnish enough. There was not a certain thing that could be pinpointed as the problem, for example language skills or their looks, it was just the fact that they were not Finns. Esra explained how you get a stamp of not being a Finn and she does not belong to the Finns club. Especially Veliane had felt that the employers will try to disguise the reason for not hiring her and blame it on language skills even though she could not understand why the task required fluent skills in Finnish.

I think I am not a Finn, that's also the stamp you get. I don't feel Finns accept certain categories like clearly Muslim person, or a black person, or a middle eastern male. Other than those I think it always comes down to are you a Finn or not a Finn. / .../ Somehow other than these groups it's not about that. Are you a Finn? Okay no. I don't think I belong to the Finns club. (Esra)

I will do the interview but it's just kind of formality. It's like "I want somebody who is a Finn, I want somebody who is like…", and most of them will use the excuse that you don't speak good Finnish and with some of them it was humiliating because they speak themselves. It's not like I am going to speak for you, I am not your voice. So if I don't speak good Finnish it's not even a big deal. Some of them speak English and they can speak to me in English but it's like… "If I have somebody who speaks Finnish why should I take somebody who doesn't speak Finnish?". And sometimes I just interpreted it to be not really the Finnish language but like not being a Finn over somebody who is a Finn. (Veliane)

Another aspect of being away from one's home country is the fact that friends and family is often left behind. Feeling lonely and missing home are feelings many of the informants had encountered during their stay in Finland. Stephanie reflects on how she believes that everyone who come from a safe country will miss their home. None of the informants had a refugee status, therefore it was not possible to deeper reflect on if a possible difference could have been observed between the women. Veliane expresses how she misses her parents who are back home in Ghana, many other women shared experiences of missing their family. In this context it is important to see the bigger picture and understand how for example the presence and support of parents and friends could make it easier for women with children to be able to work.

I am not sure about different countries, like warzone countries… Maybe their opinion will be a lot different than mine, but everyone who comes from a peaceful country will probably miss their home a lot. (Stephanie)

It's a bit difficult yeah to have them in another country. They visited when I had the second one, but they were here for only a short while and they went back and actually worsen the situation. When they went back we really felt that we are really alone without no support and these kind of things. (Veliane)

It was clear to see how feelings of loneliness have affected the women's self-efficacy and as stated earlier there were situations when the women felt they were not able to cope and be successful. At these points of their stay in Finland the individuals' personal resources were few and leaving the country was seen as the final solution if the situation does not improve.

> *It's also about spoiling your own mood, if you concentrate on only that it will haunt you. / .../ So of course some impressions were very bad, I was just feeling very lonely and because Finnish people don't approach you right away, they are very off-put and they can also be… How should I say, like a fist in the forehead, like hard to someone. But overall now I don't want to concentrate on the negativity and I have a very positive impression and it's of course a different impression when you come and as I said you feel very lonely and then of course the impression of the country really gets worse right away. Once you get yourself on the right track I think everything gets in to the right place. (Marianna)*

When Marianna was presented with the questions of what got her to continue pushing forward and not giving up during those very low moments she explained how she through willpower decided that this mental state and life was not the one she wanted to live.

> *Yeah I think at some point I decided that this is enough, this is the end. I am still so young and I am thinking like some awful grandma so I just step by step… / .../ So it was hard of course but I think when you just don't think too much about the negatives but think about the overall picture, there's always… Again maybe a bad comparison but there is unfortunately always someone who has it worse. (Marianna)*

Stephanie, Adhiti and Gemma stress the importance of so called communities that consist of people from their home country that have moved to Finland. Stephanie strongly feels that the friendships she has made with Finnish people are of a different character than the ones she has with Vietnamese. Furthermore, the women feel that it is important to be able to speak their own language, celebrate national holidays and do activities together.

> *Okay in Asia if you have a friend they are pretty much involved in your life, sometimes they even make decisions for you. But it's a nice thing but it's also a bad thing. In Finland if you have a friend, let's say I have a Finnish friend, they are not so often interested in your life story. It's like everyone has a holy personal space, I don't care*

about yours and you don't care about me and I am happy with that. It works in Finland. So as a girl being here I would feel like I don't know if anyone listens to me but having a community, a Vietnamese community, or any other nationality community is a very good thing. Because I can speak my language I can speak to someone who comes from the same country as me. / .../ I think it's a good thing to have when you are alone here. You come there and then you meet people from your country and even with some volunteer Finnish person who study psychology or something who talks to you is really good. (Stephanie)

Despite some clearly bad experiences and feelings, many of the women expressed a sense of feeling at home in Finland. Many refer to the fact that they have stayed here for a while already and that they feel integrated. Anya felt like moving back to Russia would be like moving to a completely new country again, she knows how everything works in Finland and feels at home. Especially Adhiti had felt that things had worked out very well for her family and she does not feel like a foreigner in Finland.

When I was in Hongkong travelling I realized that Finland is the only place where I feel at home. Because I moved here when I was seventeen. The thing is in Russia I have no idea how things are done. In Finland I know how to get money, how to apply for jobs, I know how the government services work, I know everything. In Russia I have no idea. / .../ So moving back to Russia for me would be just like moving to a third country for me right now because I am not familiar with anything. (Anya)

I think we are going to stay here for a longer time, so for us, even our child was born here and he is very nicely adapted to Finnish culture and he is going to Finnish day care so it's kind of... we are quite integrated to the culture very well. And we are even liking this place so I think we are going to stay here longer. / .../ Even the people here are quite supportive, I've never had any bad examples so whenever I needed I had a helping hand. So for me I've never thought about that thing that I am a foreigner here. (Adhiti)

Furthermore, Elena and Esra ponder upon Finnish citizenship and what it meant to them. Many of the women feel that the bureaucracy is tiring but obtaining citizenship gives them the possibility to have a better passport in terms of being able to travel freely around the EU since all the informants are originally non-EU citizens. Elena considers herself Finnish through obtaining Finnish citizenship, likewise, Esra believes that obtaining citizenship could be a prerequisite for making her feel like she belongs here.

I wouldn't consider myself as an immigrant now, I am a citizen now. So I am Finnish. (Elena)

I don't think just getting the permit or passport would make me feel anything. It would be kind of a prerequisite for making me feel that I belong. Because you need to think about am I allowed to live here or not. If I had a passport, and if I became fluent in the language so that I wouldn't have to make the switch and then I was more integrated… I can see that happening, if I live here maybe 4-5 years, I have passport, I've been working here, I have the professional network, even now I have it to some extent, why not? (Esra)

5.2.4 Transferring skills and downward mobility

Some of the women expressed that they had felt that their education and previous professional experience from abroad were not transferrable and appreciated in Finland. Marianna was especially shocked that her double bachelor from both Russia and the Netherlands was not appreciated. She strongly believed that the Finnish employers prefer applicants with degrees from Finland. In addition, she was surprised by the Finnish employers' fixation with master's degrees.

I think we were very naïve with my husband that we thought that with my two degrees in bachelor and with international experience I would be more appreciated on the job market. / .../ I think if you do have a Finnish education you are treated better. For example in Russia, if you have a Swiss education you are like worshiped, or even any other international education. I think here Finnish people value mostly Finnish education. They don't care that much about international standards. And so that was a problem. / .../ I have missed so many job applications because I was just not eligible to apply, they say don't apply if you don't have master's degree and I am like oh my god, they want no experience but the masters. I think that's what they want. (Marianna)

Esra had similar feelings as Marianna about the fact that her education was not acknowledged. For her it was an especially difficult since the university she attended in Turkey was a highly credited one and everyone appreciated her educational background in Turkey. Stephanie explained how she has realized that her previous professional experience is worth nothing in Finland, on the other hand she understood that the circumstances are different here and that makes it difficult for employers to transfer the experience.

I don't think it's acknowledged at all. And that was I think also a bit tough because in Turkey I got used to having this stamp or like brand of the university attached with me when I apply for jobs, but here it's like "oh okay this is some Turkish university we don't care about". But I think my luck was my master's at Aalto. It was a highly credited university, so I did get a similar experience but nowhere near high as my bachelor's. I don't know, it was kind of interesting. (Esra)

I realized throughout the years of living in Finland that my history in Vietnam doesn't matter, three to four years of working equals to zero when I am in Finland. Because the culture is different, the customers are different, and I get it. (Stephanie)

A kind of downward mobility could therefore be observed in some of the informants' professional life. For example Adhiti took up a trainee summer position as her first job in Finland even though she had worked in a much more demanding position back in India for four years before moving to Finland. She still felt very happy about the trainee opportunity and especially about the fact that it was in the same field that she had worked in previously. She has now been able to work her way up in the company from her traineeship.

5.2.5 Findings focused on a gender perspective

Some women had experienced challenges that could be considered to be quite specifically connected to the fact that they were women or mothers. Gemma had reflected on the fact that since she is a woman she is responsible of the child in a different way than a man would be. In addition, she feels that as a woman and a mother career cannot be prioritized in the same way it can be for men.

If I would be a man I wouldn't have to come home and take care of a child. Then I would probably be having a job even when I go out to practice. But now because I have to take care of a child in that way I have to prioritize as I said. And you know what comes first, so work tends to take a back seat when you are a woman and have to take care of the children. (Gemma)

Gemma and Veliane had found it difficult to combine children with their ongoing studies and jobs. Veliane has three young children and the support of her husband at home; she feels it would be impossible to juggle work, studies and taking care of the children alone all at once without support.

You must have a thick support before you can be able to do that because all three are full-time jobs. So for one person to do all three at the same time is like impossible. So if you don't have a support that is thick it's not possible for you to do it. (Veliane)

Gemma takes care of her only day-care aged child alone and shares the views that Veliane expressed, it is not possible for her to combine all three at once. She does some gig jobs when she has the time but at the moment her unpaid practice for her nursing degree is making it impossible for her to take up paid shifts. Gemma spoke strongly about it being a matter of priorities for her, and her child will always come first. She dislikes feeling torn between school, work and her child and constantly feels like some part is left hanging. However, Gemma believed that the situation will become easier soon since she is about to finish her studies and her child is growing older.

I did do some keikka, but I haven't had full-time work because of school and home and I can't have three things at the same time. It is not possible. / .../ I could get more hours through them and even through other employers. I could register through another company and then get more hours, but the hindering thing is that I have school and I have a child. So it's not so easy to combine three things at the same time, something will go wrong. It is a matter of priorities (Gemma)

Adhiti had her child a while after moving to Finland with her husband and, therefore, postponed continuing her job search until her son was ready to start day-care. She had already been looking for jobs for a while before the news of the pregnancy and was enrolled quite far in a recruitment process. She dropped out of the recruitment process when she got the news of her pregnancy. She was also afraid of starting to apply for jobs before her son had a day-care spot since she was at home with him. Without the safety net of her family and friends it would be difficult to find anyone to take care of her son while both parents go to work. Transitioning from maternity leave back to employment can be a difficult transition to make because the right timing with the children's day-care place makes it harder and leaves little room for flexibility.

Back in India we had support from family and friends, but here we had to do everything alone. But I was very sure once my son starts his kindergarten I would start a job, I

wasn't much in a hurry to start a job. / .../ I didn't want to take any chance because he didn't have kindergarten and I would need to start working. (Adhiti)

When the informants were asked if being a woman has ever affected them in any way at work some had experiences to share. The experiences were very different to their character, but a common factor was that they happened because of the informants' gender. Elena brought up how she had been falsely accused for being a gossip just because the stereotype of women loving gossip exists.

Yeah for example just because I am a woman I was accused of being a gossip. Like that I love gossiping. There was no accidents like this, just because I am a woman I am definitely a…. I was just feeling like because as an HR Manager I was spending more time with people and people were coming and telling me how they feel but I was not sharing it anywhere, but because they saw that… Just by the fact that I am a woman. (Elena)

Esra explained how she felt that being a woman is more of a thing in Finland than in her home country Turkey. She was referring to lack of respect and feeling underestimated because of working in Finland as a woman in a man dominated technical field. She could for example be explaining something mathematical to a male and he might say "oh honey that is wrong", even though she clearly has more knowledge and expertise than the other person and was not wrong. There was also a strong presence of sexist or dirty jokes that many women expressed experiences of, while this does not seem to be a problem for many women there is still a difference in who makes the jokes and what tone is used. Stephanie felt like she wants to fit in and be a part of the team and did not mind the dirty jokes that much, but she felt like she cannot participate herself in the jokes because they are for men who joke about women.

I think surprisingly here I feel like being a woman is more a thing than in Turkey. Which is very surprising because I thought when I was in Turkey that if you look at the overall general equality stuff Finland is way ahead, and it is true but not in a professional life if you are very technical. / .../ So I work in a team without any women but I grew up like that. I went to science high school – almost no girls. Engineering – very tech place, no girls. So I am very used to this. I am usually the cool one, they can joke, and I am fine with the jokes. But sometimes I do get comments about me being pretty or something and I do feel very weird about that. (Esra)

We had a little discussion with the guys in my company because they always make jokes and with a team like this I don't want to be treated differently and they should see me as a co-worker and a person they can share things with. Sometimes it's very hard to control a bunch of men from having dirty jokes and they got used to it. So now I appear in the picture and they can't change it immediately, they are really trying. I told them well then you can just go ahead, see me as a man. But they said no, no if we see you like that you will report us for sexual harassment. / .../ Yeah they don't want me to feel weird. Like awkward, because of course I cannot participate in those dirty jokes for men. But first I thought they would make me feel awkward and weird being in the team or feel isolated or however they think. But now it's better, I don't mind. (Stephanie)

Esra goes on with explaining how she has a male friend in her team who she feels comfortable with and they joke around a lot, the comments he makes might even be considers sexist sometimes by others, but these comments do not offend her, and she would openly tell him if he crosses the line. Esra feels that the problem is other people making comments like this who she does not know. She met a colleague of this good friend of hers at an event and a situation evolved that made her furious. She felt that her credibility and skills were undermined, and she was reduced to being a pretty object.

I once met his colleague at an event, a professional gathering and I had one of my team mates next to me as well. Then when I said, "oh yeah, I work with him". And then he said, "oh yeah, he probably enjoys some pretty girls". Like what?! Then I was like okay I hope that's not why he enjoys working with me. And I know it's not. And when I mentioned this incident to my friend he was very furious about this. And then in this certain event we met a lot of people and my friend actually was with me and then when we met with some guys and he saw some comments and behaviour and he was like this is insane. (Esra)

5.3 Summary of Main Results

The results show that the informants have experienced many different transitions between positions. The experiences connected to transitions in general vary; an interest for new places and curiosity to make new experiences was a uniting factor when observing the women's stories. The backgrounds of the women vary but all come from countries where they had the choice of leaving and were not forced to leave their home countries. Some had already

established lives and were settled down in their home countries, while others were still trying to find their way. The big transition that started the cycle of transitions was the move to Finland, were the most common reason for moving was because of studies or because of a partner. Free education of high quality clearly attracts students to choose Finland, and they do not seem to be in a rush to move away after their studies have been completed.

The women had experienced transitions between different types of employments. The experiences consisted of transitioning between part-time and full-time contracts, temporary and permanent contracts, and unpaid traineeships and paid employments. In addition, all of the woman also had experiences of moving between contracts inside the company they worked for, or experiences of looking for new opportunities in the labour market while already being employed. Furthermore, experiences of transitions between studies and work were very common; the extent of work varied between having zero-hour contracts up to a few shifts a week or working full-time during holiday times. Many shared experiences of having flexible employers that enabled them to work during their studies. The decision to continue studying after already having a full-time employment seems to be a difficult transition to make. The motivation to work alongside studies were for quite many obviously the need to receive an income, and some also felt it was important to start gaining work experience early on to be able to find a job more easily in the future after finishing their studies.

In addition, three of the eight women had experienced combining family with studies and/or work. The fact that it is impossible to do all three at once alone is an opinion that is strongly present, but a strong support system enables it to some extent. Children are a priority and sometimes they need to be prioritized at the expense of giving far less focus and effort on studies and work. Opinions varied on if children are an equally shared responsibility or not between the mother and the father. The women who were not yet mothers wanted to feel prepared before having children, especially being financially stable was viewed as something important. Finland was regarded as a country that has made it easy to combine family and work because of strong family policies. Many women compared how the opportunities in Finland to combine these two would not be possible in their home countries. Lastly results of experiences of unemployment were discussed. The position of unemployment was not a very clear position since many of the women had for example been actively part-taking in integration programs or studying while being unemployed. Many wanted to make a point out of the fact that they had not just been unemployed and sitting at home, they had taken actions

to find employment in for example the form of language courses or done active job seeking on a daily basis.

It could be observed how unemployment and feelings of rejection affected the women's self-efficacy beliefs; moments of self-doubt and questioning ones' ability to cope were present in many of the women's stories. On the other hand, the women had also learned from their previous experiences and a clear turn in the women's self-efficacy beliefs could be observed after successfully finding employment. The self-efficacy beliefs could be seen as narratives that followed throughout the whole story, starting with the experience of moving to a new country until being in the position were the women were today. The self-efficacy narratives were mostly visible when the women were explaining how they had encountered failures that momentarily had felt like hindering barriers, but in the end, they turned out to be manageable obstacles that could be overcome and after all lead to successful outcomes. Furthermore, statements connected to self-efficacy beliefs were also strongly present when the women had felt overwhelmed when faced with challenges in the labour market such as lack of language skills and feeling like a foreigner with all that it entails, such as experiences of loneliness in a new country and feelings of discrimination, problems with transferring skills and downward mobility.

In general, this kind of frictional unemployment did not last very long, and the women had experiences of both success and defeat when seeking jobs. Many of the informants shared experiences of sending in many applications and receiving few replies and interviews, which could be seen as a normal challenge when trying to enter the labour market. However, the interviews the women landed often yielded job offers and the overall employment situation looked quite bright for all the women. Even though the outlook was quite positive, the previously mentioned challenges the women encountered in the labour market, lack of language skills and feeling like a foreigner with all that it entails, were identified as challenges in successfully finding employment. In addition, some challenges with combining children with work and studies were expressed, and some of the women felt that them being women had also to some extent affected the atmosphere at work and some had experienced being treated disrespectfully because of their gender, which could also be viewed as a challenge. The main challenge was clearly the lack of sufficient language skills and sense of frustration was strongly present in the women's experiences. Most of the women felt that the employment opportunities for non-Finnish speakers were few and that a native-level of

Finnish was often required but very hard to achieve as a foreigner. The women had also experienced feelings off being on the outside and not belonging because of not being able to express themselves well in Finnish. The women who were working in jobs that required Finnish were very confident their good language skills were the reason why they had successfully found a job, and those who had struggled more were quite confident it was their lack of Finnish skills that were creating barriers for them.

Many of the women had experiences where they to some extent felt that being a foreigner was a challenge for them both at work and outside work. Most described how their lack of good Finnish skills give them away and how people get uncomfortable and switch to English, which leads to few opportunities to actually practice their Finnish. Feelings of being 'a stranger' and being faced with prejudice was something some had been confronted with. Having an appearance that did not look Finnish, such as a darker skin colour and having a foreign sounding name was also something some women had struggled with when looking for jobs. The discrimination some had felt was more subtle and the women could not always explain why they think they got rejected from a job. A lack of Finnishness was seen as a possible problem. Furthermore, the results show that many of the women had felt lonely at some point and lacking a strong support system. Some women explained how so-called communities consisting of people from the women's home countries were a strong source of support and friendship; it is important to speak their own language, celebrate national holidays and do activities together.

Another problem connected to being an immigrant is the fact that some had already acquired degrees or work experience abroad that needed to be transferred to Finland. Some of the women expressed that they had felt that their education and previous professional experience from abroad were not transferrable and appreciated in Finland. It was like their skills had never existed. Some women felt that Finnish employers prefer Finnish degrees over foreign degrees and this was hurtful and upsetting. A kind of downward mobility could therefore be observed in some of the informants' professional lives. Some had to take up jobs that were not equivalent to what they had been doing before they moved. Despite many challenges and negative experiences, there seemed to be a feeling of home in Finland that had developed throughout the years of living here and building a life through different transitions and both good and bad experiences. As a final summary, all the main themes regarding the results are displayed in figure 3.

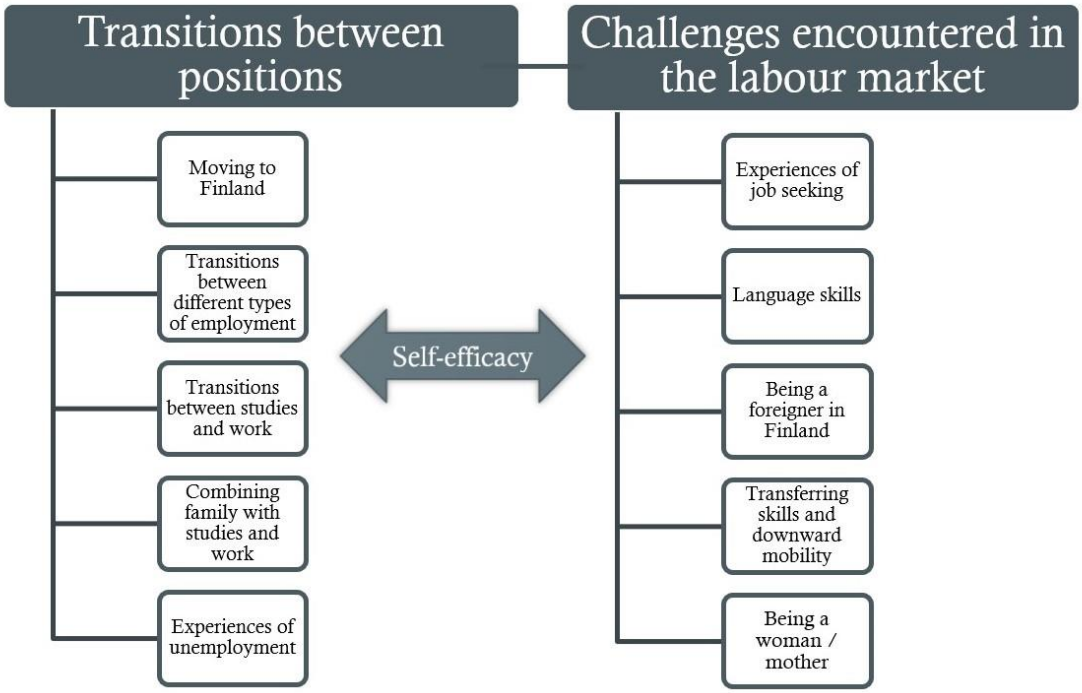

Figure 3. Summary of main themes regarding the results

6 Discussion

The main results of the study will be discussed and linked to the theoretical framework with references to previous research in this chapter. A claim for how the results can be applied more generally will be made, potential limitations and weaknesses will be identified and recommendations for further research will be included. This thesis set out to study the labour market transitions of immigrant women and the challenges encountered in the Finnish labour market. In order to achieve this aim, experiences of labour market transitions and challenges to become employed were studied through a qualitative research design by conducting interviews with eight immigrant women. Two main research questions and two sub-questions were outlined as following:

1. What kind of transitions have immigrant women encountered?
    a) How have the women experienced these transitions?
2. What challenges have immigrant women encounter in the Finnish labour market?
    a) Are the challenges regarded as hindering barriers or manageable obstacles?

The first research question, focused on the transitions the women had encountered and how they had been experienced, yielded many interesting results. The findings show that the women had experienced several different transitions, both major and minor ones. The findings suggest that there is a clear need for flexibility in the labour market and that to some extent the women have been able to find flexible employers. These findings are in line with Schmid's (2001) early thoughts on what an increasing globalisation and mobility will lead to; a demand for flexibility to be able to answer to the individual wishes and situations. As described earlier, Gazier and Gautie (2011) see transitions as something complex and they are often sequences and not isolated events. The findings show that many women did not obtain clear transitions from one position to another and many intermediate positions and blurred lines between positions were found. Furthermore, these results are also aligned with Krutova's, Lipiäinen's and Koistinen's (2016) findings that immigrants' labour market positions are unstable and changing all the time. These findings are of significance since they underline the continued need to develop and make policies as flexible as possible to allow room for transitions.

The five types of transitional employment that Schmid (2001) distinguishes could all be found but one; the transition from employment to retirement was not a current position for any of the women because of their young age. From what the women stated, it could clearly be seen how Finland was regarded to be a welfare regime with good policies that enhance transitions. One of the main aims of TLM is to through a holistic approach take into consideration both the individual and the institutional level to be able to develop accurate policy (Brzinsky-Fay, 2010). The findings also suggest that Gazier's and Gautie's (2011) description of five big choices that young women face were quite accurate, and key decisions tended to pile up at once for the women in the study. Thoughts on buying a house, finding the right partner to have children with, the right time to have children and what kind of future career opportunities awaits were expressed.

Especially those women who had children and were still studying and working seemed to be in a whirlwind of transitions and facing many big life choices at once. Some challenges connected to this will be discussed when findings focused on a gender perspective will be presented later on. The women with children who were satisfied with Finland's family policies especially brought up the well-functioning and affordable kindergarten system as a factor that helps them balance both their studies and work with having children. Furthermore, flexible employers were also one of the main reasons some women had been successful at combining many different positions. These results are aligned with OECD (2012) identifying affordable childcare and flexible labour market conditions as the key factor to successful labour market participation of women.

A transition that was found to be especially difficult was the transition from work back to studies. A sort of routine has been built up that needs to be disturbed and taking time off work to study is not a preferred option because there is the fear of it being frowned upon by one's employer. Furthermore, if transitioning back into studies means that a full-time job needs to be quit, the fear of losing a steady income can also be a deal breaker. Employers should reflect on what added value their employees could bring to the company by allowing them to take a study leave. It should be seen as an asset instead of a burden for the company to have flexible policies, or is there a fear present that it will not be tempting for the employee to come back to the same position after receiving further education? Companies should create clear guidelines and openly communicate about the opportunities to their employees.

The second research question set out to examine what kind of challenges the women had encountered in the Finnish labour market. Most of the challenges were related to challenges to entry; moving from the position of being unemployed to being employed can be a difficult transition to make because of varied obstacles on the way. As the results show, the lack of sufficient language skills and feeling like a foreigner with all that it entails were identified as challenges to successfully finding employment. Furthermore, some interesting findings focused on a gender perspective will be presented.

The findings strongly show how the lack of language skills was seen as the biggest obstacle in the labour market; a result that is supported by other studies (e.g. Tarnanen & Pöyhönen, 2011; Nieminen, Sutela & Hannula, 2015). Some of the women had experienced rejection clearly on the grounds of inadequate language skills. It is more common to be rejected on these grounds if the competition for the position is hard, and quite naturally if there is a shortage of labour, employers often tend to be more flexible with their demands. (Tarnanen & Pöyhönen, 2011) It was clear to see how the negative experiences connected to language skills weighed down the women and affected their self-efficacy after having many bad experiences after another. Further discussions regarding self-efficacy will take place later on in this chapter.

One common criteria for all women who participated in the study was the transition of moving from their home countries to Finland, and there seemed to be some challenges related to this. As mentioned earlier, Scheffer (2011) describes some of the struggles related to the transition of moving from one country to another; the loss of social and cultural certainties, mastering a new language, finding employment and gaining control in unfamiliar surroundings. The women expressed very similar thoughts on what kind of difficulties are linked to the uprooting experience of moving to a new country. The results demonstrate how close communities and flexible opportunities to learn the host countries languages are needed and appreciated among immigrant women. Funding should be allocated for these sorts of activities and communities where for example national holidays can be celebrated and the cultural heritage can stay alive even outside of the home countries borders.

In addition, the women had experienced challenges that had to do with ethnic penalties, however, most of the women did not feel that they had experienced discrimination. As described earlier, ethnic penalties is a concept that is commonly used when examining

differences in labour market participation between immigrants and natives (Hasmath, 2012). It harder to observe and pinpoint than discrimination, and some women described it as lacking something that the natives have. The findings show that there seemed to be a feeling of "we" and "them", referring to how the women perceived the native population to perceive them. The common factor here could be described as the lack of Finnishness, a sort of country specific ethnic penalty. In a way it seemed as the women accepted that this is the way it is and there is nothing they can do about it.

Furthermore, some women described events that one could find discriminatory but added small comments implying they did not see them as such. The word discrimination seemed to have a very harsh meaning and was viewed as something very blatant, therefore, many could not identify behaviour like this. However, from the researcher's viewpoint after hearing the stories shared, it could be argued that some had most likely at least experienced subtle discrimination. Nevertheless, some feelings of overt discrimination regarding skin colour was also found. It should be noted that previous research has proven discrimination to be the main causing factor for labour market deprivation of immigrants (Kroll et al., 2008), therefore, these findings are partly not aligned with previous findings. Furthermore, a problem might lie in how people have different views on what the word discrimination entails and, as one of the women pointed out, it can often be impossible to know the real reason to why one got rejected. Another important factor that can affect the results from this study is that all the women interviewed had experienced relatively successful transitions into the labour market and can therefore not speak from the labour market deprived immigrants' viewpoint.

Another challenge closely connected to discrimination was how the women had encountered problems with transferring skills. Credential recognition is difficult because there is not always a clear equivalency in Finnish to the degree that has been obtained abroad, especially certificates received from countries outside of the EU. Clear HR guidelines on how to proceed with foreign credentials should be developed in companies; efforts should be made to understand what has been included in the degree and what kind of skills have been acquired. A problem also seems to lie in how employers perceive work experience gained abroad, some see it as a merit while others might feel uncomfortable with the thought of the fact that process and procedure might vary in different countries. It should rather be seen as a strength and showcase of the fact that the person is equipped to work in different environments instead of being viewed as something intimidating. It would be interesting to conduct a similar study

with immigrants from inside the EU, since Kogan (2007) argues that the level of educational opportunities varies in different countries and immigrants arriving from dissimilar institutional structures than the host country are less expected to successfully transfer their skills.

As Scheffer (2011) describes it, that at the end of the day native populations cannot ask for anything more of newcomers than what they themselves are willing to contribute. If immigrants are met with hostility and measures that exclude them from the labour market the ones doing the exclusion cannot blame the immigrants for not having jobs and not integrating into society. Finland allows affirmative action, the act of supporting individuals from groups that suffer from discrimination, to be able to support the integration of them into the labour market. This can be done by for example introducing a quota system or by giving preference to individuals who face labour market deprivation. The problem in affirmative action lies in the fact that an intervention in the actual mechanisms that produce inequality should take place, instead, addressing the real issue can be overshadowed by introducing for example a quota system. Employers should actively strive to face their own prejudice and work towards equal and prejudice-free recruiting. Furthermore, in my work as a recruiter I have noticed that the language requirement for Finnish is often more of a question of convenience than an actual need for the skill to be able to perform the job. Most of the companies' materials, the IT systems and the corporate language can be English, but a full Finnish speaking team will find it inconvenient to switch their discussions to English. The reason behind this can sometimes be poor English skills, especially in the older generation or in the countryside, and a mindset that does not want to see a change take place.

As a country, Finland still has some developing to do to be able to attract more international high-skilled jobseekers and to be able to provide jobs for the rising numbers of immigrants moving to Finland for varied reasons. Since the Nordic welfare state promotes integration through work and research has identified economic and social integration to be one of the main challenges immigrant face, this should be a top priority for policy makers. Especially the question of language skills should be addressed, and companies should be challenged more regarding the language requirement of excellent Finnish language skills for the majority of positions. Only small steps have been taken for example compared to Sweden, where they have a much larger immigrant population.

Lastly, the findings show that some women had experienced challenges that were quite specifically connected to the fact that they were women or mothers. Some had been met with stereotypical assumptions that women were gossips, less smart than men and liked as colleagues for their good looks. This was clearly something the women saw as a challenge and in a way undermined their professional credibility. These findings are aligned with the FEMAGE projects overall findings that women are made to feel inferior because of their gender (Community Research and Development Information Service, 2009). Furthermore, a sort of a traditional woman's role as the prime caretaker seemed to be adopted by the women themselves and thoughts on how mothers need to compromise their careers were present. On the other hand, some expressed how they had received a great deal of help from their partners. The fact that this is expressed as 'help' can in a way still be interpreted as the main responsibility still being the mothers'. It is similar to the discourse of saying that the father is babysitting while the mother is out, while the same thing would probably not be said about the mother when she is spending time with her children. A sort of imbalance and unfair work sharing strategies still seem to be present as statistics show that only 9.5% of the parental allowance was paid to fathers (Social Insurance Institution of Finland Kela, 2017). The TLM approach strives to offer gender equality through flexible policies for mothers and fathers and Finland is well on its way to offer more equal possibilities compared to many other countries, however, a change in the attitudes of the ones being offered these flexible leave opportunities needs to happen if we want to see a rise in statistics of parental allowance paid to fathers.

The second research question's sub-question set out to examine if challenges are regarded as hindering barriers or manageable obstacles. Even though some of the women were faced with many transitions at once the results still indicate that the women felt equipped to deal with the transitions they were faced with and the challenges connected to the transitions. Findings show that the women had encountered challenges that momentarily had felt like hindering barriers, but in the end, they turned out to be manageable obstacles that could be overcome and after all lead to successful outcomes. Bandura's concept of self-efficacy was the chosen theoretical framework to be able to answer the questions of if challenges are regarded as hindering barriers or manageable obstacles. Self-efficacy has been identified as a personal resource that enables people to contribute to their own lives (Bandura, 1999); in like manner, in this study the women reflected on what had made them keep on trying and why they did not give up when faced with difficulties.

It could be observed how the women used information from several sources to form their self-efficacy beliefs. The use of the four primacy sources Bandura (1994; 1997) describes, (1) performance outcomes (2) vicarious experiences, (3) verbal persuasion and (4) physical and affective states, could all to some extent be found. The performance outcome seemed indeed to be the most important source of self-efficacy; the women had through earlier experiences and through practice been able to have feelings of success. Furthermore, feelings of failure that took place early on, before feelings of success had been experienced, seemed to decrease the women's self-efficacy. It could also be observed how the women were able to cope better with challenges that they had to overcome after they had already established a strong self-efficacy. The vicarious experience source and verbal persuasion source was used by some women, they had for example turned to colleagues to receive advice or mirror their behaviour. Some had also used their physical and affective state as an estimation of their capability to perform a task. Some had felt anxious and irritated and monitored these feelings that were experienced as personal deficiencies. On the other hand, these bad states were also something that had made the women realize they needed to change something to be able to cope better, perform and through these changes become more successful.

As Bandura (2006) explains it, self-efficacy beliefs impact our goals and aspirations, and how long individuals will continue their efforts when faced with obstacles and the amount of stress that is experienced when coping with difficult demands. It also affects our thinking and how we are equipped to adapt to change and develop ourselves. The strongest feelings connected to high self-efficacy beliefs for the women were experienced after strong feelings of success, especially finding a job seemed to be an event that clearly changed negative thoughts to more positive ones. Furthermore, there was a stronger sense of believing in one's ability to find other job offers and to cope with other challenges after being successful at something the women had strongly focused on.

Furthermore, different attitudes towards the position of unemployment could be observed. The strongest feelings connected to low self-efficacy beliefs were found in the women when they were dealing with transitions that had to do with unemployment and feelings of being defeated. Some women clearly had experienced moments when they were questioning their ability to push forward when faced with challenges. On the other hand, an unexpected finding was some women's somewhat nonchalant attitudes towards unemployment. Schmid (2001) describes unemployment as a position that should be seen as a position among others and is

not necessarily something negative. These sorts of attitudes could be observed in some of the women's stories, the free time was used for other meaningful activities such as language classes to enhance future employment. One possible explanation for this could be the fact that these women had developed a high self-efficacy before they were confronted with the position of unemployment and, therefore, did not feel very stressed and believed they could control their lives by taking actions.

In addition, it was clear to observe how the women's thinking was affected by their self-efficacy beliefs. Some explained how they were either at some point thinking very erratically and pessimistically by believing that moving away from Finland is their only option at succeeding in their careers, or strategically and optimistically by coming up with a clear plan and believing everything will turn out for the better. The findings of this study are aligned with Bandura's thoughts. However, signs of social exclusion could not be observed in the women, a process that according to Schmid (2001) might be set in motion when critical transitions happen, where it feels like one door closes and another one is not yet open.

In summary, this study contributes to the pool of research concerning immigrant women, confirming and reinforcing previous research regarding labour market integration and transitions that has focused on immigrants of both genders and research specific to women. More generally, this study's results can be implicated within many different areas. Active measures need to be taken to reduce the gap in unemployment rates between persons with Finnish background and immigrants, and especially to reduce the high unemployment rates of immigrant women. Furthermore, it can be proposed that policymakers should take vulnerable groups, such as immigrant women, better into consideration and further develop policies that enhance their labour market situation. Further developing the content for activation programs for immigrant women is a good place to start. Lastly, generating more knowledge in the area by further research is an important measure that in the long run can support the labour market integration of immigrant women and improve the financial situation of the country.

6.1 Research Limitations

Research limitations derive from the conceptual framework and the study's design (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). This study is not supposed to be broadly applicable and by choosing the qualitative design limits to generalizability are acknowledged. An important question to reflect upon regards the chosen sample, what is lost by limiting the study's sample to first-generation immigrant women? Some factors such as lack of sufficient language skills are often not as prominent when examining second-generation immigrants and there might be another interesting complexity of problems that arise that are lost when only focusing on first-generation immigrants. Furthermore, a sample size of eight people does not yield in large amounts of data, but as stated generalisability is not the most important aim of qualitative research. The quality and depth of the conducted interviews were very good, therefore, the sample sized was of satisfactory size. However, the sample could have been more varied since all women were in their twenties and thirties and non-EU citizens.

Furthermore, the choice of focusing on immigrant women in Finland does come with some limitations regarding previous research. As stated in the introduction, there is a lack of research in the area which means that there are not many similar studies in the specific context of Finland that this research can be compared to. Since immigration is still a fairly new phenomenon in Finland, at least in the rising numbers we are seeing today, focus has been on researching immigrants in general instead of choosing focused samples consisting of one gender. This should however not be seen as an actually limiting factor, otherwise new research would never take place and small specified research areas could never gain ground.

The conceptual framework is built around the TLM approach and the concept of self-efficacy. Dealing with the concept of self-efficacy in a qualitative manner raises a few limitations that should be addressed. As stated earlier, the actual level of self-efficacy cannot be measured in this study and the aim is not to do so either. The concept was chosen as a support theory to be able to qualitatively discuss if the challenges the women had encountered were regarded as hindering barriers or manageable obstacles. It is acknowledged that these two options are a simplification of all the different nuances self-efficacy entails, but the previous discussion regarding the results of this research question prove that the concept was very useful in this context, even though it can only be used quite limitedly in qualitative settings.

6.2 Suggestions for Future Research

In the final stretch of finishing this thesis the Nordic Council of Ministers published a report with the title *The State of Nordic Region 2018: Immigration and Integration edition*, including a whole chapter on females labour market integration (Karlsdóttir, Norlén, Rispling & Randall, 2018). The Nordic Council of Ministers' report further strengthens that a research gap has been acknowledged and the need for further research has accurately been pinpointed. Through my own study, light was shed on many interesting topics that could serve as suggestions for future research. Especially the simultaneous transitions between different roles such as mother, employee and student is an area that would benefit from more extensive research. It would not only help immigrant women but all parents who are struggling to find balance in their lives. How does balancing between so many different crucial areas of life affect a person? How can further policy be developed at an institutional level that would support such transitions and create a more balanced life for the women? What kind of local policies can workplaces develop to offer flexibility to combine all three? Research targeted on these areas could benefit people in many different positions; help parents to be more present with their children, finish their studies on time, perform better at work and through that have more satisfied employers.

Furthermore, since there is a research gap regarding especially immigrant women, another interesting future research area would be to study if there is a difference in the challenges immigrant women and men face in the labour market, and to see how men's transitions differ from women's. This study's findings suggest that some women feel that some challenges, like the one mentioned above regarding combining children with studies and work, could be gender specific since the woman still seems to carry the traditional role of the prime caretaker in the family. In addition to this, a similar study with a stronger focus on immigrant women's self-efficacy that would be conducted using a quantitative research design could generate interesting results. As mentioned, using the concept of self-efficacy in a qualitative manner does come with some restrictions, and specifically measuring self-efficacy regarding the task of gaining entry to the labour market would be interesting. Lastly, since the question of language skills seems to be very prominent, further research regarding this should be carried out. Are the language courses that the employment office offers as a part of the integration program not effective enough? What kind of further actions can be taken to support the development of language skills? As proven, many areas are still acutely needing further research to be able to successfully support the labour market integration of immigrants.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Information about the study

INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY

1. Background and aim	This study is conducted as a part of my Master's thesis at the University of Helsinki, Faculty of Educational Sciences. The aim of this thesis is twofold. Firstly, to examine immigrant women's labour market transitions. Secondly, to examine what kind of challenges the women encounter in the Finnish labour market.
2. Method	A qualitative research method consisting of in-depth interviews has been chosen for this study. Your answers will be audio-taped, transcribed and used as material for this study. No harm should be caused through this method and you are not obligated to answer all the questions.
3. Confidentiality	Only I will listen to and process your interview recordings in their original form. The material from the interview will be presented under aliases in my thesis. Your name or your personal information will not be published. All your recordings and personal information will be stored so that unauthorized persons do not have access to it.
4. Right to refuse or withdraw	Participation is voluntary, and you can at any time without an explanation choose to cancel your participation. Any data or material concerning you will be deleted.
5. Contact information	I, Milla Hänninen, am responsible for this study and happy to answer any questions. My contact details: Phone: 0400 664 525 Email: milla.hanninen@helsinki.fi My supervisor Harriet Zilliacus can also be contacted in case of any questions. Email: harriet.zilliacus@helsinki.fi
Informed consent form and background information form	Please signed the attached informed consent form. Please hand in the pre-filled background information form.

HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

Appendix B

Informed consent form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have been invited to participate in a study conducted by Milla Hänninen, master student at the University of Helsinki, Faculty of Educational Sciences. The purpose of this research is to study immigrant women's labour market transitions and experiences of finding employment in Finland.

I have read the foregoing information and understood the information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and for the interview to be audio-taped.

Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

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Appendix C

Background information form

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FORM

Please fill in the information below. Do not leave any box unfilled; please mark the box with an X if you do not have any information to fill it in with or if you wish not to answer the question. This way the researcher can be sure you have acknowledged all the questions.

First name:	Last name:

Year of birth:	Place of birth:

Native language:	Other language skills:

Year when moving to Finland:	Reason for moving to Finland:

Questions regarding your education:

Education started or completed in country of origin:
Education started or completed in Finland:
Education started or completed in another country than Finland or country of origin:

Do you have a partner?	Do you have children?

Are you currently employed?	If yes, what is your position:

I agree for the information stated above to be used by the researcher in her study under an alias.

Name:_____ Signature:_____Date:_____

Appendix D

Interview guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Immigrant Women's Labour Market Transitions
– Hindering Barriers or Manageable Obstacles?

Small initial discussion around the background information form

1. Life prior moving to Finland (5 min)
- Where did you live?
- What did your life look like before moving?

2. Moving to Finland (10min)
- Why did you relocate?
- How did it feel to leave your home country?
- What were your initial thoughts when arriving to Finland?

3. Education (15 min)
- What have you studied? If not finished, how far along are you?
- Why did you choose that field of study?
- Was the application process difficult?
- If the informant already has a degree from abroad: Do you feel like it has been difficult to get your educational qualifications recognized in Finland?
- Did you work while studying?

4. Work (40 min)
4.1 Transitioning from school to work (if finished with studies/working while studying)
- Did you find it difficult to start working after being enrolled as a student?
- How did it feel to combine studying and work?

4.2 Finding employment
- What does you work history look like? (can include charity work, unpaid work)
- Have you encountered any challenges in finding employment?
- How did you feel when faced with these challenges?
- What thoughts and experiences do you have on job hunting?
- Have you actively been looking for job openings?
- What kind of positions have you been looking at/applying for?
- If employed: What do you think are the main reasons you have successfully been employed? How did you feel when you got your job? Are you satisfied with your job?
- Do you feel that your employer if flexible? (shorter days, time off, combining education, family life etc.)

4.3 Unemployment
- How long unemployment periods have you had?
- How does/did being unemployed make/made you feel? (Physical/emotional state)
- How did you react to not being chosen for the positions you applied for?

- If unemployed: What do you think are the main reasons you have not successfully been employed?
- What do you feel makes it difficult for you to find employment?
- Do you believe that you can successfully find employment? Have you had any moments of success?
- Do you feel like you can overcome the difficulties? Have you ever felt like giving up?
- If now employed and has struggled: How did you overcome the difficulties?
- What kind of actions have you taken towards finding employment? Do you think your actions will affect the outcome?
- Has anyone supported you or helped you to find employment?
- Do you have any friends that have struggled with finding employment? Have you learned anything from them?
- Have you ever felt that you have been discriminated in the labour market? Have you ever thought about how employers feel about hiring immigrants?

5. Language skills (5 min)
- Do you think it is important to learn the destination countries language (Finnish/Swedish)?
- Have you taken any actions to learn the language?
- Do you think your language skills effects your possibility to find employment?

5. Family (5 min)
- How many children do you have? How old are they?
- At what age did you have children?
- Do you find it difficult to combine studies/work with children?
- Do you feel like you have had to make sacrifices for your children? Do you feel like motherhood has affected your career opportunities?
- Transitioning from family leave to education/work
- Has your partner stayed at home with the children?
- Are you familiar with Finland's child and family policies?
- If no children: Views on combining children and education/work?

6. Being a woman (5 min)
- Do you think being a woman affects your chances of finding employment? What about being an immigrant woman?
- Have you noticed being treated differently because of your gender?

7. Thoughts on the future (10 min)
- What are your plans for the future?
- Do you feel optimistic or pessimistic about the future?

Anything else you would like to talk about? Any questions? Thank you!