



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Social workers with borders

Finnish social workers' perceptions of transnationalism in the practice
with unaccompanied minor migrants

Master's Programme in Social Work and Human Rights

Degree report

Fall 2018

Anna Joutsijoki

Supervisor Ingrid Höjer

Abstract

Title: Social workers with borders: Finnish social workers' perceptions of transnationalism in the practice with unaccompanied minor migrants

Author: Anna Joutsijoki

Keywords: Social work, unaccompanied minor, asylum seeker, refugee, transnational migration

The aim of this paper was to study the perceptions which Finnish social workers hold of transnationalism in their practice with unaccompanied minors. Seeing how they perceived it as part of the minor's lives, how they took into consideration the transnational family ties, and how transnational was their own practice were the questions that this study intended to answer. The data in this qualitative research was collected through seven semi structured interviews with professional social workers. The approach of the research was interpretivist-constructionist, and the data was analysed with thematic analysis. Transnationalism was the leading theory of the study, which navigated between inductive and deductive approaches.

The findings indicate that social workers recognize transnationalism as part of unaccompanied minors' realities to varying degrees. The recognition is tied to aspects of silence, perceptions of agency, and the constructions of the minors as either same or other, both by social workers and the wider structures where their care is organized. The social workers consideration of the transnational family ties is fairly good, but the inclusion of the family is voluntary, weak, and inconsistent, and depends on the different constructions of the family. The transnational activities the social workers undertake shift between moderate and intermediate, varying between different respondents and focusing on individual situations. The overall practice is thus still weakly transnational and the transnationalism is weakly institutional, which may be influenced by the perception of social work practice limited within Finnish borders. The initial awareness of transnationalism and its impact is however a step towards the right direction. In addition to the results related to transnationalism the findings revealed the unobtainability of family reunification and the structural othering of the minors. Increasingly transnational and rights-based social work practice is thus needed, along with changes in policies regarding family reunification and the othering of the unaccompanied minors.

Acknowledgements

“Oceans separate lands, not souls”

-Munia Khan

I want to first of all thank all the people who have enabled me to accomplish this thesis. The social workers that shared time with me from their hectic schedules to interview them, the university of Gothenburg, the great lecturers of the department, and the inspiring classmates. Special thanks belong to my supervisor Ingrid Höjer, who has assisted me through the different steps of this thesis.

I want to also have a space to acknowledge the influential people I have encountered in my life. Those people, teachers and other adults, who have encouraged me at times when the thought of being in this position felt too distant to even dream about. Through their encouragement they have given me the confidence to be where I am now and most importantly – seek to go even further. What inspires me to head to this field of work is the wish that in my adult life I will, perhaps unbeknownst to me, have such an impact on another person looking for their way. In addition, as an inspiration within this field of social work and human rights, I want to acknowledge and thank all those people who fight for the realization of social justice and human rights throughout the globe.

Finally, I want to thank all the people in my life who have made me understand the importance of transnational ties in my own life. The people who have provided me with love and care that exceeds borders, the ones who are and will be my on-going ties that are not limited within nation states. I want to thank my family for the unconditional love and encouragement you have shared with me, my friends for always being there for me whether we are close or far, and my dear husband in whom I found a home oceans apart. You all see the good in me that I aspire to be. Rakastan teitä! Te amo!

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“A tip of the iceberg”, popular phrase referring to a situation where only a small portion of an entity is visible to the eye, while a significant, perhaps a defining part, lies below the surface. I believe this to be a fitting image of unaccompanied minor migrants living transnational lives. A social worker or other official may only see the tip of the iceberg, an individual in their current context constructed as a migrant in need to be assimilated (Boccagni, Righard, Bolzman, 2015), or a child in need to be rescued (Kuusisto-Arponen, 2016). While below, behind a deeper investigation, may lay an array of “life spaces, attachments and needs” (Boccagni et al. 2015) which impact not only the life of the individual client, but also their transnational networks and family ties.

Within this study *unaccompanied minor* and *unaccompanied minor migrant* are terms describing those minors who have migrated to Finland without their legal guardian to seek asylum and are either waiting for decision on their claim or have already been granted asylum or subsidiary protection. They are a heterogeneous group that seek asylum for variety of reasons, often due to conflicts and unsafety in their home country (Mustonen & Alanko 2011). Even though they have arrived without their official guardian, connections to family and friends are kept transnationally (Kutscher and Kreß 2016) and family life is continued beyond borders (Turtiainen 2012). Albeit many of them wish to be reunified with their family (Fingerroos, Tapaninen & Tiilikainen, 2016), and children’s rights related to family life are brought up in multiple articles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child [CRC] (UN General Assembly 1989), the continuous separation may be escalated by the state who place national interest ahead the child’s best interest (Parsons 2010), while disregarding that “the child’s best interest” is seen as one of the primary principles in relation to children’s rights (UN General Assembly 1989).

The interest in studying unaccompanied minors is prevalent. In the literature reviewed for this study the studies related to vulnerability and resilience, agency and contradictory labels, silence, reception system, culture and othering, and children’s rights. Research relating to transnationalism and unaccompanied minors was however extremely rare (Schmittgen, Köngeter and Zeller 2017). Scarcity was also found on research about social work with unaccompanied minors, especially in the Finnish context. Luckily however the theme has been more studied abroad and within the reviewed studies the focus was on the practitioners’ roles, the contradictions they face, relevance of human rights, and to some extent also transnationalism. This study thus seeks to fill the gap of combining together unaccompanied minors, social work, and transnationalism in the Finnish context.

Originating from Finland I have always perceived the social work practice there as connected to the state. Buchert (2016) has stated that Finnish social work is based on national resources designed to respond to national issues. This is done in the spirit of Nordic universalism and the idea of heterogeneity, even though, ethnic minorities and foreigners have lived in Finland throughout its independence. Universalism has in this context meant the idea that “all pay and benefit” and the building of welfare state has happened alongside the building of a nation state (ibid). The asylum seeker influx of 2015, the tightening restrictions on migration policies, and their impact on family reunification, and therefore family ties (Rask et al 2016), inflicted an interest into this study. There is a necessity to know how social workers manoeuvre in their practice which is restricted by state borders while the lives of their clients are not (Chambon,

Shcrörer, Schweppe 2012). Connecting to the theme is also the debate on how the social workers practice with migrant clients may be in contradiction between state-led migration policies on the one-hand and human rights and ethics on the other (Turtiainen, 2012).

Transnationalism, meaning the connections happening across nation states (Vertovec 2001) will be considered in utilizing the concept as the main theory of the research at hand; a qualitative study concerning the Finnish social workers perceptions regarding the transnational childhoods and family ties of unaccompanied minors, and subsequently the level of transnationalism of their own social work practice. To be reflected against the theory of transnationalism are thus the main concepts of the study: unaccompanied minor, family and social work. The study is based on interpretivist-constructionist position. Looking to understand how this phenomenon is constructed by the social workers, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews with seven Finnish social workers working with unaccompanied minor migrants.

The thesis will begin here in chapter one by presenting the aim of the study along with the research questions. In chapter two the background of the study will be presented; introducing unaccompanied minors and social work practice with migrants. Ensuing in the third chapter will be a presentation of the theoretical framework, followed by chapter four and literature review. In chapter five the methodological issues will be discussed, before moving into chapter six and the findings and analysis. Finally, in chapter six a concluding discussion will unfold. Finnish language interviewee invitation, along with an interview guide in both Finnish and English are found in the appendix.

The aim of the study

The aim of this study is to understand how the Finnish social workers perceive and construct transnationalism as part of the unaccompanied minor's realities in regards of planning and executing their care. Family ties and the utilization of them are an important aspect of this. Thus, also the aspect of how transnational the social work practice itself has become is discussed.

Beyond the aim of the study the intention is to gather information that may be used in improving social work practices with unaccompanied minors and therefore increase their wellbeing as well as the implementation of child rights.

The research questions

The research questions of the study are:

1. How do Finnish social workers view transnationalism as part of unaccompanied minor's realities?
2. How do Finnish social workers take into consideration transnational family ties when planning and executing the care of the unaccompanied minors?
3. How transnational is the social work practice with unaccompanied minors?

CHAPTER TWO

Background

This chapter will take a deeper look in to the aspects of unaccompanied minors in Finland and social work and migration in Finland. These topics seek to increase the readers contextual knowledge within these areas, contributing to the need and justification for this study.

Unaccompanied minors in Finland

This subchapter will explain who the unaccompanied minors in Finland are. An array of numbers and definitions will be looked at first, with a continuation to the principle of “the child’s best interest” and its relevance to the minors. Following will be a view to the family ties of the unaccompanied minors, along with a look into the practices of family reunification.

Defining unaccompanied minors

Globally 65,6 million people are being forcibly displaced. Among them 22,5 million are refugees, of which over half are under 18 years old. (UNHCR, 2017.) Refugee is someone who according to the Refugee Convention of 1951 has:

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

While refugee is someone who has been granted the status based on the convention, asylum seekers are migrating in search of said protection (Unesco, n.d). By agreeing to international human rights conventions, such as the Refugee Convention, Finland has agreed to grant asylum to those in need. The immigration policies of Finland are thus largely defined through these conventions, but also through EU legislation and government migration strategies. (Anis, 2017). In comparison to many countries in Europe, the number of asylum applicants is small in Finland (Mustonen & Alanko, 2011). The peak was in 2015 when 32 476 applications were received, 3024 being from unaccompanied minors (Intermin, n.d.). In 2017 however altogether 5059 people applied for asylum, out of which 142 were unaccompanied minors (Migri, 2018).

In Finland asylum seekers may be granted asylum or subsidiary protection. This provides them with a continuing residence permit that is renewed after four years. In addition, asylum seekers can be granted temporary residence permits, which are permits of one year. (Kotouttaminen.fi, n.d.) Asylum seeker and refugee are thus not synonyms, yet they are used interchangeably. Kohli (2006) states that the reason to do so is that even though asylum seekers do hold a more uncertain position in the state they have arrived to, the two groups do face other very similar issues in their situations. For the people themselves however, the debate does hold more value than pure semantics, since the choice of label granted will determine not only their status, but what it entitles them to in the new country (Byrne, 2017). In Finland following the increase of refugee claimants in 2015, unaccompanied minors at the edge of turning 18 have been increasingly given the one year permits instead of international protection. This has caused

questions on whether they are given these permits so that as the youth turn 18 they could more easily be deported. This has been denied by the immigration office (Kerola, 2017).

The UNHCR (1997) defines unaccompanied minor asylum seekers as “a *person who is under the age of eighteen (...) and who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so.*” In addition to the term unaccompanied minor the term separated children can be used. In this paper I will however use the term ‘unaccompanied minor’ since it is the term most commonly used in Finland and in research. By this term I will describe all those people that have arrived unaccompanied by their guardian, are placed at residential care, are under the age of 18 and have applied for asylum in Finland. This includes unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and those unaccompanied minors who have been granted asylum or subsidiary protection.

In 2015 to 2016, the majority of the unaccompanied asylum applicants were boys from Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia (Migri, 2018) According to Mustonen & Alanko (2011) The unaccompanied minors are mostly 15-17 years old but cannot always prove their identity due to id-cards being difficult to obtain. The lack of id-card causes challenges for legally leaving the country. Whereas one must seek asylum while physically present in that nation, there is no legal way to arrive in Finland. Many asylum seekers must thus resort to illegal ways of traveling, even though seeking asylum is legal (ibid). Mustonen & Alanko (2011) see that the routes to seek asylum are differing and challenge the minors both physically and mentally (ibid). The unaccompanied minors are a heterogenous group resonating with childhood being a construction, as well as with children being social actors (West, 2008) that are “being” and not only “becoming” (Qvortrupe, 1994). The minor’s agency, “the capacity of individuals to act independently” (James & Adrian 2008, p. 16.), is however not always recognized, as in the Western world the conception of childhood is seen to generally lack agency (Björklund, 2015).

Finland has agreed to all the human rights conventions that safeguard the rights of children and unaccompanied minor asylum seekers. In theory therefore, Finland has for example agreed to place “the best interest of the child” as the primary motive in asylum seeking cases by children. In reality however, economic motives often exceed the child’s best interest, or the interest is not properly interpreted or considered (Parson, 2010).

Child’s best interest

As mentioned in the previous chapter the statement of “the Best Interest of the Child” is the main principle regarding asylum seeking children in all Finnish legislation. The “Principle of Child’s Best Interest” (article 3) is one of the main principles in the CRC (UN General Assembly 1989). The three others include Non-discrimination (Article 2), Right to life, survival and development (Article 6) and Respect for the views of the child (Article 12). The Convention has been ratified by 196 UN member states, latest member being Somalia. The only state not ratified it is the United States (Unicef, 2015). CRC is an international instrument which is legally binding to its member states.

There is no definition provided for the principle of the child’s best interest, but it should be the primary consideration for all the actions affecting children (UNHCR, 2008) including decisions on protection, care or family reunification. It demands active measures to be taken in order to safeguard the rights of children, and the states cannot deny any rights from a child based on their interpretation of the best interest (Parsons, 2010). According to Mustonen & Alanko (2011) the child’s best interest is always individual and contextual and thus an expert of child protection issues, such as social worker, should always provide their statement on matters which concern a child. The authors state that the child’s best interest should always be measured from

the perspective of a child. The authors evaluated that the aspects which most affect the child's best interest are "safety, family and close interpersonal relationships, wellbeing, development and identity needs and the child's opinions and views" (Ibid).

In Finnish legislation the principle has been stated in the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010), the Act on the reception of persons seeking international protection and recognising and helping trafficking victims (746/2011), and the Aliens Act (301/2004). It is also the main principle in the Child Welfare Act (417/2007) which is referred by the two first mentioned acts. In the Act it states that "when assessing the interests of the child, consideration must be given to the extent to which the alternative measures and solutions safeguard the following for the child":

- 1) balanced development and wellbeing, and close and continuing human relationships;
- 2) the opportunity to be given understanding and affection, as well as supervision and care that accord with the child's age and level of development;
- 3) an education consistent with the child's abilities and wishes;
- 4) a safe environment in which to grow up, and physical and emotional freedom;
- 5) a sense of responsibility in becoming independent and growing up;
- 6) the opportunity to become involved in matters affecting the child and to influence them; and
- 7) the need to take account of the child's linguistic, cultural and religious background

Considering the integration of this principle in the legislation it is unfortunate that in a Unicef report of Nordic countries it was seen that the countries "understanding, interpretation and implementation" (Unicef, 2018) of the principle greatly varied. The report stated that even if the Nordic countries have the proper legislation at place to protect minor asylum seekers, the states often place migration law as the priority, leaving the children at risk in a situation where their legal position determines the entitlements they are permitted to (Ibid).

Unaccompanied minors, family ties and family reunification

As unaccompanied minors arrive without their guardian, many of them leave family members behind. Family reunification may be applied, which however means a careful inspection of the family ties: language and DNA tests, as well as medical age assessment as the applicant has had to be minor when decision of family reunification is being made ¹(Fingerroos et al, 2016). Age assessments are seen as "extremely contentious with a high degree of error" (Camlyn & Nye, 2012, p. 681). For the unaccompanied minors themselves the attitude of authority in relation to their separation from their family may seem to send mixed messages. On the one hand they are labelled as traumatized due to loss of their family (Björklund, 2015) on the other hand their family relationships spread doubt and fear in the public authority (Fingerroos et al, 2016). In any case, it is true that many of them miss and worry over their families (Honkasalo, 2017a), and do wish to be reunited with them (Fingerroos et al, 2016), which against all the conventions Finland has signed to, has been made ever more difficult. In a Finnish study by

¹ During the course of this thesis the Finnish migration office however changed its procedures, when the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that in case the unaccompanied minor has been granted refugee status the right to family reunification remains even if they have turned 18 during the process (Sajari & Teittinen, 2018.) It should be noted however, that this does not apply to the minors that have been granted subsidiary protection.

Rask et al (2016) it was found that family separation influences negatively the wellbeing and integration of Somali and Kurdi respondents.

Turtiainen (2012) states that against the public belief on “anchor children” that lure in streams of migrant family members, the reality is that family reunification can take years and may never actualize. There can be difficulties in seeking it due to the harsh restrictions, lack of money to move from one country to another, or having it granted to only part of the family, who are not able to leave other family members behind (ibid). In Finland the nuclear family is seen as the norm (Fingeroos et al, 2016) and as Turtiainen (2012) explains, this applies also to legislation on family reunification, where only members of the nuclear family are counted as part of a family. Care taking obligations or emotional bonds are, however, not always naturally limited to the nuclear family (ibid). Professionals working with unaccompanied minors have thus started to prepare the minors for long application times and the possibility of negative family reunification decisions (Mikkonen, 2013). The social workers role in these cases is to understand that even when the family reunification is not successful, the family life of the client continues transnationally, and thus the influence of the family cannot be forgotten (Turtiainen, 2012).

Many unaccompanied minors suffer from the separation of their family and desperation over not receiving them here. This may lead to psychological problems in children having to give up hope (Björklund, 2015). It should however be noted as well that the children’s will to be reunified with their family should not be taken for granted. Whereas for most it is true, there are children who seek asylum *from* their families, in which case it is naturally not in the child’s best interest to be reunited with them (Boosin and Demirdache, 2012). Even when this is not the case, family reunification may cause new issues that need support even after the minor is not unaccompanied anymore (Björklund, 2015). Turtiainen (2012) states that due to the lengthy family reunification process the once so close family members may suddenly feel like strangers. The influence may be even more visible due to the different integrational levels. This should however not be seen as a justification of migration control to restrict the right to family for any child in whose best interests it is. The role of the social worker in these situations is to remain culturally sensitive and focus on integration, parenthood and the child (Ibid).

The Convention on the Rights of The Child (UN General Assembly 1989) provides the child’s right to family relations (ibid, art. 8.1), right to not be separated from parents unless it is in their best interest (ibid, art. 9.1), right for personal and direct contacts with parents in case such separation occurs (ibid, art. 9.3.) and right for applications for family reunification to be dealt with by the state in a “positive, humane and expeditious manner” (ibid, art. 10.1.). Yet because of not being granted family reunification or for not seeking it, many minors remain unaccompanied by their families, pushing them into transnational childhoods where lives are lived within and beyond nation state borders.

Social work and migration in Finland

This subchapter will describe the relation of social work practice with migration in the Finnish context. The connection of the concepts will be discussed first, followed by a look into social work with asylum seekers and refugees, and a view into the practice of reception-stage social work and integrational social work.

Migration has always been of relevance in social work and it is seen as a contributing factor of international and transnational social work practice (Lyons, 2015). Both social workers and the clients of social work may come from migrant background (Anis, 2017.) Social workers have

subsequently obtained major roles in working with a variety of migrants (Valtonen 2008). Danso (2016) however argues that even though social work has claimed its international nature through migration, the social work professionalization has made it a profession where migration is “over-practiced and under-theorized”. Humphries (2004) on the other hand has critiqued social work for being an extension of unjust migration policies.

Social work with asylum seekers and refugees

Anis (2017) has divided Finnish social work roles with migrant clients into three. The first is *reception-stage social work* which refers to work with recently arrived migrants. The second form is *integrational social work* which refers to work done with migrants who have arrived for various reasons and have been granted a residence permit. The final form of social work with migrants as categorized by Anis is *multicultural social work* which can be understood as the multiculturalism of the social work environment, and the social work competences needed in multicultural work, thus the wider context of the practice (ibid). Turtiainen (2004) states that social workers working with migrants should have 1). Knowledge of migration processes, 2). Knowledge of the client’s backgrounds, 3). Knowledge of cultures and societies through cultural sensitivity and 4). Knowledge of one’s own prejudices and cultural ties. According to Anis (2017) the social worker needs to differentiate what issues are part of the migration process and the changes it brings along, what are part of the cultural tensions, and what are part of the current life situation of the client provided by the surrounding structures. It is important that not everything is explained with cultural differences (ibid).

Cultural competence is one of the aspects that has been employed to describe competency needed in cross-cultural situations. It is however a contested concept. In a study by Harrison & Turner (2010) the respondents appreciated the term for what it stands for, but also critiqued it. They saw the concept to hold a good value base and showing respect to diversity while seeking to include marginalized people. They however also worried over the potential “othering” it might produce through viewing culture as something static and simple that could be learned (Ibid). Othering can be defined as “placing a person or a group outside and/or in opposition to what is considered to be the norm.” (Harris & White 2018). Another term that has been employed is cultural sensitivity which is an important aspect of social work with migrants. According to Anis (2017) it means the ability to reflect upon one’s own values as well as understand and recognise the values and cultural meanings of the clients. This includes the understanding of cultures being dynamic rather than static.

Social workers are challenged by their position in between national immigration policies, clients’ needs, and human rights (Turtiainen, 2012). Social work has traditionally been seen as having a double mandate of “care and control, given by the agency and the client(s)” (Wonka, Staub-Bernasconi, 2012). In addition to this, Staub-Bernasconi (as cited in Wonka, Staub-Bernasconi, 2012) has suggested that social work should have a triple mandate, the third one being based on science and ethics, basing the ethics on social justice and human rights. This holds relevance especially in working with asylum seekers and refugees, in situations where social workers have to make difficult decisions for conflicting goals. These include the quest for the client’s best interest according to human rights, implementing national legislation, and ethically driven position in forwarding social justice (Turtiainen, 2012).

Berg (2012) states that successful work with refugee clients is based on sustainable migration policies, sufficient municipal level resources, and professional social workers. The practice thus calls out the responsibility of not only individual social workers but also the meso and macro level actors. Social work with refugee clients demands the profession to develop to better

respond to the needs of the clients both at individual and collective level. This calls for a will and a way to develop also the professional practice through multicultural studies (ibid).

Reception-stage social work

When unaccompanied minor asylum seekers reach their countries of destination they are looking to find their sense of home assisted by proficient helpers (Kohli, 2006). Pentikäinen (2005) states that even though the people have arrived to what is deemed as safety, they are feeling unsafe between insecurity on whether they get to stay, and guilt on having left their home countries and relatives. The feelings are emphasised by the negative attitudes that Finnish people and society holds of the newcomers (ibid.)

In Finland unaccompanied minor asylum seekers are placed at group homes or supported housing units. Private accommodation can also be considered if the minor has friends or relatives in Finland. What is provided on article 59 of the Child Welfare (Act 417/2007) applies to the group homes, determining the number of residents and staff of the units. The purpose of the group home is to provide protection for the minors. Individual plans will be constructed to guide how the group home should provide age appropriate care, upbringing and support. Reception services are provided according to the “Act on the reception of persons seeking international protection and recognising and helping trafficking victims” (746/2011). These include social-, health care-, and interpretation services, as well as allowance and work or educational activities. The minors will be appointed a representative who according to the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers (493/1999) safeguards the minors’ best interest and uses the guardians right of action in personal, financial and residential matters.

The type of social work provided at the reception stage may be defined as settlement work (Valtonen, 2008) or reception-stage work (Anis, 2017). The asylum seekers are often residing at the reception centres or group homes until receiving an asylum decision, which can be either positive or negative. According to Moghaddam (2012) The reception-stage work with unaccompanied minors involves psychosocial support, initial mapping of the minor’s life and their needs, and a statement to the migration office on child’s best interest. The social worker in the group home should have a child-centred perspective with knowledge on child protection and multicultural work. They should oversee that the child’s best interest is always taken into consideration and see that child rights are put into action (ibid).

Integrational social work

After being granted a permit unaccompanied minors become residents of a municipality and are placed at family group homes (Parson, 2010). Here they can stay until they turn 18 years old and, then are to move from the group home to the municipality and start their independent life. Their care at the group home is regulated by the Child Welfare Act and Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration. (Työ – ja elinkeinoministeriö, 2014) Integration and becoming independent thus play a major role in this stage of the minors’ lives.

Integration can be seen as one of the four types of acculturation strategies defined by Berry (1997):

1. Assimilation - individuals seek interaction with others while disregarding their own culture.
2. Separation - individuals hold on tightly to their culture and avoid contact with others.

3. Marginalization - individuals have low chances in either maintaining their culture or interacting with others.
4. Integration - culture is maintained, but contact is also sought with others.

Even though the model does offer multiple variables to showcase a variety of ways of acculturation, the model is rather essentialist in its view of cultures.

In Finland the national policies intent is to integrate migrants, which in turn becomes a part of the social workers duty. The Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010) defines the work, stating that “*integration means interactive development involving immigrants and society at large, the aim of which is to provide immigrants with the knowledge and skills required in society and working life and to provide them with support, so that they can maintain their culture and language*”. This is in line with the formal use of the concept in the rest of the European Union (Valtonen, 2018). Valtonen (2008) states that the term has not been static, but it has changed its form from the migrant’s coercive conformation to majority society to participatory two-way-street where both the individual and the society play a role in integration. Buchert (2012) however claims that as the welfare services are based on national universalism it has to this day meant that the migrants have tried to adapt to fit the services, and not the other way around. The author believes that the unified and uniform nation-state building has brought along issues in the diverse world, and integrational attempts could only be successful when universalism is seen as the pursuit of equity, not equality.

According to Berg (2012) the work with refugee clients is guided by the same principles as with any other client, but there are also special needs and issues related to being a refugee. Not all refugee clients have issues that would demand social work intervention, but the clients who do often share similar issues related to living situation, social networks and family life, worry over left-behind family members, health and financial issues, language issues and idleness (ibid). One of the most challenging issues for integrational social work with asylum seekers and refugees is family reunification, as worry over family members may hinder integration, which is essentially a learning process (Turtiainen, 2012). The left-behind family can mean a lack of rootedness to the new society. Their focus has been on care towards the family members back home, and only once the family members have joined them have they started to integrate to the new society and show increased interest i.e. public policies (Rudiger & Spencer, 2003). The migrant family can in fact be seen as a significant resource in the integration process (Valtonen, 2015). Social workers should understand the impact that prolonged or negative family reunification may have on the integration of the client and execute the third human rights mandate by raising awareness on the obstacles standing in front of the integration. (Turtiainen, 2012).

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical framework

In this chapter the theoretical basis of this research is discussed. The guiding theory of this research is transnationalism, which has influenced everything from problem formulation to research questions. Transnationalism is reflected throughout the paper in relation to the background material and empirical data. Various aspects of transnationalism relevant to this study are discussed, including transnational migration, transnational families and transnational social work.

Transnationalism

Transnationalism means the on-going connections and exchanges happening between non-state actors residing across national borders (Vertovec, 2009). It is a counterpart to the term “international” which refers to the system that is based on the interconnectedness of nations (Rauhala et al. 2016) but appears rather one-directional. Where globalization refers to wider processes and diaspora to more specific and influential dependency between two or more locations, transnationalism falls between them referring to relationships, networks and actors that happen independent of nation states (Martikainen, Sintonen, Pitkänen, 2006). Transnationalism looks at globalization from the perspective of civil society (Vuorela, 2002).

Martikainen et al (2006) exemplify transnationalism through macro, meso and micro levels. According to the authors transnationalism at macro level refers commonly to the structures that either obstruct or open possibilities of transnationalism for individuals and communities through international agreements. Meso level on the other hand refers to the communal transnationalism referring mostly to different organizations - be it companies, non-profit associations or congregation among few. Micro level refers to the individual, non-institutional transnational relations of people and families that they may have to other states (ibid).

Transmigration

The construction of nation states has been seen to be based on the constructed myth of “a single people defined by their residence in a common territory, their undivided loyalty to a common government, and their shared cultural heritage” (Schiller, Bach, Blanc 1995). Giddens (cited in Wimmer and Schiller 2002) defines nation states as national containers protected by borders. It is these nation-state building processes that have also shaped the thinking on migration and migrants (Wimmer & Schiller, 2002). The idea of migrants sedentarism is based on methodological nationalism, which is an “assumption that the nation state society is the natural social and political form of the modern world.” (Wimmer & Schiller, 2002, p. 51). As nation state processes have folded the way in which migration is seen, so in turn has the social sciences discourse on immigration and integration been impacted. The social sciences and studies on migration and integration are thus criticized for not seeing past the nation state (ibid.). Transnationalism in turn is seen as a way to think beyond the container concept (König, Schaur and Perumadan 2016) and a step away from methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Schiller, 2002).

Transnationalism saw its rise in migration studies in the 1990’s (Faist 2013) to describe how “immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relation that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Schiller, Basch, Blanc 1995, p. 48) The practice itself

is not as new, but its history has been influenced by the assumptions of migrants cut ties to their countries of origin (ibid.). Nevertheless, there are also many new ways in which it is manifested and justified as a term. Communicating across borders is easier due to technological advances, transnationalism is influenced and influencing forms of globalization (Vertovec, 2009), flow of remittances is significant at \$574 billion (USD) in 2016 (Pew Research Center, 2018), and there is less stigma associated with displaying transnational ties (Vertovec, 2009). Technology closing gaps between people should however be seen as facilitator of transnationalism, rather than the producer of it (Schiller et al 1995). This is especially relevant since even still there are gaps between the connections of people, and class, gender and geographic region continue to play a role in accessing or affording technology (Furman et al. 2008). There is also criticism towards transnationalism, the criticism being based for instance on incorrect or excessive use of the term, the terms dependency on technology, or the reach of the term within generations of migrants (Vertovec, 2009).

There has been an attempt to limit the use of term, reserving it only for certain types of migrants, but what should be understood is that transnationalism is not static, binary, or practiced only by the transnational migrant but also by non-mobile family members (Faist, 2013). The degree of engagement to transnational activities thus changes from person to person and time to time (ibid). The focus of transnational migration studies has been seen to be on voluntary and economic migration (Weima, 2017) and this has thought to bias the view of it being relevant for all the migrants (Mascini, Fermin, Snick 2012). Al-Ali, Black and Koser (2001) stated that refugees were forgotten from transnational migration studies, even though they are involved in an array of transnational activities and should thus be included. The authors have defined the possible transnational activities as consisting of *economic, political, social and cultural* transnational activities. While the authors studied the experiences of Bosnians and Eritreans in Europe, the situation of the refugees differed from some of the current day refugees and asylum seekers. They had obtained permanent residence permits and the war in their countries of origin had ended. This most likely had an impact on the results and forms of transnational activities they engaged in. The authors did however claim that the case studies implied relevance beyond the refugee concept, at showcasing how transnationalism is a dynamic process instead of a static one. Mascini et al (2012) agreed with them on the variety of transnational activities that refugees may undertake yet argued whether transnationalism of refugees was self-evident at all.

It is important to note how transnationalism can be viewed differently by the surrounding society depending on who is the one engaged in transnational activities. Transnational ties and activities of so-called high-skilled migrants are admired, whereas low-skilled migrant's transnationalism is seen as self-inflicted exclusion and segregation (Faist, 2013). For transnational migrants' home can exist in multiple locations (Arnold, 2016), and in whichever way the effects of transnationalism are seen, it is undoubtable that it will continue to reform the culture and economy of many nation states and the lives of individuals within (Faist, 2013).

Transnational family ties

An important part of this study are the transnational family ties of the unaccompanied minors. Bryceson & Vuorela (2002) define transnational families as entities that remain connected and united even through distance and spatial separation. The phenomenon is not new, but the families are affected by globalization; increase of information technology, transnational capitalism, and international trade, through which they maintain their "family-hood" (ibid.). According to Baldassar & Merla (2014) transnational families are in many ways recognised by the circulation of reciprocal, yet uneven care practiced within them. Most researched of these ways are care chains where female care labour is commodified and flowing from South to North (ibid.). Families as micro level relationships are often overlooked by migration and diaspora

studies that opt to focus on wider communities (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002). Equally, research has tended to see families as the sole unit, again disregarding the individual experience (Mazzucato, 2013). This experience could vary greatly within a transnational family where each individual may have unequal access to resources, mobility or lifestyles (Vuorela, 2002).

The existing research presents a negative picture of the effects of transnational family ties especially for children. It can however be argued, whether this is influenced by western perceptions of family (Mazzucato, 2013), which are increasingly seen as socially and historically constructed and morally influenced ideologies or symbols as opposed to a natural state (Pine 1996). In reality, transnational families are as diverse as any family (Baldassar & Merla 2014, p. 9). As families are treated as nation-state projects (Righard, 2009) transnational families are however seen as threats both to the ideal of a family and the state (Vuorela, 2002). In this the transnational families are also challenging the concepts of assimilation, integration and an idea of longing to their home countries (ibid.). The restriction in turn can be seen in immigration policies which in defining what consists a family also dictate who has the right to access a nation state (Grillo, 2008.) The challenges for familial co-presence in refugee contexts come from “forced displacement, uneven opportunities of resettlement, the precarious situations of those remaining in camps and in transit, and the limited access to travel and communication technologies.” (Robertson, Wilding & Gifford 2016, p. 232).

In studying circulation of care among unaccompanied migrant youth from Guatemala Heidbrink (2018) depicted that even if the receiving country U.S treats them as simultaneous victims and outlaws, and their parents as abusive, neglectful and ignorant they themselves believe to be agents of caregiving, which they implement through collective and historical care strategy of transnational migration in order to bring about familial survival. The transnational migration is thus a strategy of the familial network, and rather than abandonment signifies reciprocal care systems (ibid.). One important form of transnationalism are the informal reciprocal care systems that affect both the giver and receiver of the care beyond borders (Schweppe, 2011). These systems can be called care circulations, where the transnational families manage distance and separation by continuing to exchange communication and caregiving (Baldassar & Merla, 2014).

As the transmigrants engage in care beyond borders they undertake transnational informal social protection (Faist et al., 2015) and may in example opt to seek help and support from their informal networks rather than from formal support (Withaekx, Shrooten, Geldof 2017). One of the ways of informal social support can be remittances, a way in which migrants can alleviate poverty for their family members in their home countries (Schweppe, 2014). International Organization for Migration [IOM] (n.d.) defines remittances as “monies earned or acquired by non-nationals that are transferred back to their country of origin”. By large, this money is sent between family members and spent to alleviate the poverty of the family, being thus a form of family care (Schweppe, 2014). The remittances do however have a positive impact on communities and states as well (Mahon-Santos 2010). As a downside at times they cause unfair expectations and pressure on the sender (Schweppe, 2011) and variety of effects on the receiver, from positive poverty reduction and decreased internal migration, to negative ones such as inflation and income inequality. The practice may also impact social work, in that transmigrants who are receiving welfare allowances intended for one may be sending parts of it to their families (Withaekx et al 2017) and thus social worker needs to take into consideration the transnational situation of the person who may receive formal social protection while themselves providing informal social protection.

Social work in European context is highly institutionalized within the nation state (Righard & Boccagni, 2015), and as social work education is also exceedingly focused on the national context (Schwarzer, 2016), social work has been worried to turn from welfare provider to extension of state migration control (Hayes et al., 2004). Within these dilemmas social workers are trying to navigate the work with mobile clients who cross borders and live transnational lives, and with whom the traditional nation-state related support is not sufficient enough (Chambon, Shcrörer, Schweppe, 2012). The clients are emotionally, socially, economically, and politically dependent on their transnational networks, which cannot be consequently ignored in social work (Turtiainen, 2016). As the globalization literature in social work has related to internationalisation of issues – of how an occurrence such as war in one location might have significant consequences elsewhere such as refugees, transnationalism provides an understanding on the multidirectional connectedness of everyday lives in multiple locations. (Righard & Boccagni, 2015.)

Righard and Boccagni (2015) claim that transnationalism challenges the pre-existing ontologies of social work by questioning the national borders as the natural borders of social work, and social work embeddedness into the nation-state building project in the first place. The questions arise from the mobile everyday lives of people as well as transnational ties of the clients. The authors call this a debate between sedentarism and mobility, evaluating the social work responses to client groups who have been increasingly acknowledged as mobile clients whose lives may take more than one direction. The authors encourage social workers for the avoidance of essentialized assumptions of the migrant client's mobility or rootedness and call for an increasingly sensitive and self-reflective practice that may also be increasingly transnational in nature (ibid.) According to Furman, Negi & Salvador (2010) transnational social work relates to the idea that as migrants and families are interconnected beyond national borders, so should be the social work working with them. Transnational social work differs from international social work in involving several states in solving the cases of transnational migrants, instead of looking for solutions within one nation state. It may take a variety of forms, from 1.) Working with transnational populations, 2.) Operating transnationally, or 3.) Dealing with transnational issues (ibid).

Righard & Boccagni (2015) have mapped out the social work-migration nexus by explaining the variation in degrees of transnationalism present in social work practice and by the changes in institutionalization of transnationalism during an intervention. According to the authors the low degree of transnationalism means that client's transnationalism is acknowledged and perhaps talked about, but the intervention itself is not transnational. Intermediate transnationalism of social work means that the intervention is transnational at nature, but instead of face-to-face communication it takes a holistic approach to the client by intervening transnationally with client's family members through i.e. wraparound program (Furman, Negi, Schatz 2008) or through communication technology such as skype (Righard & Boccagni 2015). Wraparound program is normally used within child protection or children's mental health services, with clients with multiple needs and thus multiple service providers. In a transnational context it could be used to enhance a holistic approach to transnational clients. (Furman et al. 2008). According to Righard & Boccagni (2015) high-degree of transnationalism in social work is present in face-to-face interventions that happen trans-locally. It means cross border mobility from a client and/or the professional. Examples of this are accompanying a child to the country of the parents or assisted return migration. The authors explain the varying degrees of institutionalization of transnationalism by stating that transnational practices may hold a high degree of institutionalization as i.e. embedded to the program practices, or they may involve a

low degree of institutionalization by being self-inflicted by the social worker relying on their own discretion (ibid.)

Schmitt (2016) has developed a three-level approach to transnational social work with the youth. It involves 1.) Transnational biography work, which aims to comprehend the lifeworld and needs of the client, 2.) Diversity competence which aims to increase awareness of social workers own perceptions and 3.) Intercultural opening, with the aim of developing intersectional organizational structures. The transnational biography work implies that the social worker is aware of how the child's life was back in their home country, how was their journey from there to the country of destination, and what in that destination are their actual needs. Schmitt (2016) conceptualizes it to mean that social workers educate themselves about "global migration movements, their conditions, and their consequences" (ibid.). Diversity competence signifies that social workers obtain "reflexive and critical diversity competence" that is "guided by human rights and anti-discriminatory perspective" (ibid.). This means to be sensitive of one's own ideas and values. The clients should not be othered and while their challenging experiences should be acknowledged, so should their resilience and agency. Intercultural opening refers to compatibility of the institutions and social services with the lifeworld's of the refugee youth (ibid.). Along these lines are also Withaecx et al (2017) stating that social workers should act beyond borders, not only physically but rather as a state of mind. They advocated for "transnational awareness" recognising the impact of transnational lives and experiences on the clients. In addition to change in the social work practice they advocated for a change in organizations and policy.

CHAPTER FOUR

Literature review

In this chapter I will discuss previous research in the area of the study, in order to establish what is already known in the field and provide a context and justification for the research (Bryman, 2012). The literature was mainly reviewed by using the search engine of Gothenburg University library. Search engine Google was used to support this search and to help find grey literature as well as literature in Finnish language. Finnish language literature was also searched through local university library search. Search words of transnationalism, migration, unaccompanied minor, family, and social work were used with different combinations and synonyms. Books, peer-reviewed articles and reports were considered. After defining pieces of relevant literature their reference lists were used to seek and formulate a coherent literature base combining literature that was suitable, current and frequently referred to. Great care was used to select contextually relevant literature. The literature review was first written as a draft, but after the data collection was done and analysis began the review was revised to suit the overall perspective.

Literature on unaccompanied minors

Not quite here, not quite there. This is how many of the lives of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers are lived - in liminalities; the state in between (Kaukko, 2015). Many of them are manoeuvring between being defined and treated as children or migrants, between being categorized as vulnerable or resilient (Björklund, 2015), between “hope and rejection” (Kohli, 2011) between childhood and adulthood, and between spatially “here and there”, (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004). These contradictions can be visible in the previous research on unaccompanied migrant minors.

Even though interest in studying unaccompanied minors has increased over time in Finland, research on the field does not seem as established as in some other contexts such as Sweden or the UK. Reason for this is most likely in the numbers, since Finland receives significantly less unaccompanied asylum applicants, than the above-mentioned states. Most of the Finnish literature seems to also consist of reports (i.e. Lepola, 2011, European Migration Network, 2009, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2014), article collections (i.e. Honkasalo, 2017b, Heikkilä, 2014) and student theses, rather than published research. The themes recognized in the literature reviewed for this subchapter relate to liminality, contradictions between being defined as a child vs. migrant, silence, reception system, othering and culture, agency, child rights, and transnationalism.

Unaccompanied minors have been recognized in research as a vulnerable group whose needs have been widely studied. The research attention has however shifted to include their strength and resilience as well (Smyth, Shannon & Dolan, 2015). The latter approach was apparent in the studies reviewed for this thesis. In this literature review most of the studies are from social work or sociology perspective, the psychiatric and medical perspectives have been left out. Majority of the studies used are also fairly recent. It might be for these reasons, that even though vulnerability, trauma and separation were frequently brought up, they were often accompanied with the agentic, participatory and resilient perspective, that highlight the constructs, dynamic natures and relativity of the individual lives of the minors. At times, even the transnational nature of those lives was brought up. Hopkins and Hill (2008) highlight the need to know of

the minor's life and migration experiences, including the impact transnationalism has, so that services targeting the minors can be improved.

Presenting unaccompanied minors as victims would indeed be ignoring the bigger picture. The minors have active roles in their migration, which is often based on self-protection (Hopkins & Hill 2008). Faced by adverse conditions the minors calculate risks and benefits to ensure survival. They have tactically navigated their flight, and even though the challenging circumstances surrounding them should not be ignored, they should not be the sole focus of their narratives either (Denov & Bryan 2012). Smyth et al. (2015) define unaccompanied minors as vulnerable but resilient group with individual needs. They have limited networks which carry over borders, and the minors need strengths-based social support. Carlson, Cacciator & Klimek (2012) see resilience rising from protective factors, which may buffer different risks factors, such as traumatic history, from turning overpowering. For unaccompanied minors these may mean individual protective factors such as good coping skills or faith, family protective factors such as strong family background, and community protective factors such as connection to mentors or social communities (ibid.).

Crawley (2009) explains that unaccompanied minors are portrayed as vulnerable child victims protected by soft law, other policies, and organizations working with them on one hand, and as migrants who are threatening migration controls on the other. If they show any agency they might be faced with a lack of care. These experiences may cause them to deliberately act as the vulnerable victim they are expected to, in order to receive the care that they need (O'higgins, 2012). If they do not fit into the image of a proper childhood it is not only their care, but even their asylum decisions which are at risk (Crawley, 2009). Unaccompanied minors are thus faced with contradictions in their host countries. According to Gustafsson, Fioretos & Norström (2012) they are encouraged to be independent, but at the same time have limited influence on their situation. It appears hard to grasp whether they are being cared and protected or controlled and subordinated. The authors thus state that the unaccompanied minors are marginalized as asylum seekers and as children. They are living in liminalities, waiting to be recognized as equals. Even though Sweden is supposed to provide freedom and equality of opportunities the minors are still othered and lack in power (ibid.) Doná & Veale (2011) state that this conflict between childhood and migration is based on the inherent issue that nation state has in combining nation and state, and in this case a childhood and citizenship. They see solution to thus be beyond a nation state. They do however see human rights conventions such as CRC as a tool to overcome some of these issues (ibid.).

Considering the issues which unaccompanied minors might face when speaking about their experiences or showing agency, it is no wonder that they sometimes resort to silence. Silence may be the response to any authority from migration official to social worker. Kohli (2005) states that this silence is apparent in the existing research contexts that have focused mainly on the point that unaccompanied minors arrive, and the suffering that they endure. Even though staying silent can be completely normal trait for any adolescent, in the case of unaccompanied minors the reasons for it are sought from their refugee positions. In this context silence can be a reaction in the face of grieving and trauma, obedience to advice given by others to stay silent to not jeopardize their asylum or put their families at risk, focus on the future and the now instead of their past, and a fear about the future due to their unsecure status as asylum seekers (ibid.). Even though sometimes the minors did not know their full stories or had forgotten them, often it was also a sign of agency. Chase's (2009) research findings indicate that in addition to Kohli's findings, the silence might mean a wish to distance themselves with the intruding label of asylum seeker and the stigma brought along with it. In addition, it showed a sign of resistance. In the face of someone else deciding and controlling over their processes they show

agency, coping, and a look forward by withholding information and choosing what to share (ibid).

Björklund has studied the integration and reception of unaccompanied minors in Finland (Björklund, 2014) later reflecting and discussing the results in a Nordic context (Björklund, 2015). Björklund's (2014) study concluded that the minors received sufficient support and the biggest issues facing them were related to education and finding a job. The author did however find that due to the difficult family reunification process many of the minors do not get their families to Finland, causing them worry and often also pressure of taking care of them. The author concluded the Nordic reception systems to be well functioning, but also found them to be dispersed and inconsistent (ibid). In the Swedish reception system context Lundberg and Dahlquist (2012) found that the minors they interviewed had all their focus and concerns on the unclear asylum process. At all the stages they wished for clear, correct, and continuous information sharing. The children lacked information on family tracing and family reunification. The contact to their families was seen as important, and they missed them greatly. Sometimes they however kept silent on the family matters, in fear of it affecting the asylum decision. The children thus need long-term, trustworthy companionship (ibid.).

Kauhanen (2017) studied the private accommodation system of unaccompanied minors through interviews with professionals. The study found that in justifying private accommodation for unaccompanied minors, the emotional connections and child rights to culture, language and religion are favoured over other rights, creating a conflicting environment of positive preferential treatment in one hand, and structural racism on the other. The latter is manifested by lack of support and control and separate system from other children in need of special support (ibid.). De Graeve and Bex (2016) on the other hand compared the transnational adoption and care for unaccompanied minors in Belgium. The two groups are seen as deserving different sort of care. Whereas the adoptees are seen as children in need of saving, the unaccompanied minors are seen too traumatized, too old, too rooted, and too agentic, turning them from children to migrants. This means that instead of the emotionally contested care available for adoptees, the care is more bureaucratic relating to basic needs and fundamental rights. What for adoptees is seen as a child's right to family, for unaccompanied minors is disrupted and official relations where professionalism is encouraged over else (ibid). Studying care-leavers Söderqvist (2014) found out that the refugee youth defined themselves to be transmigrants - connected to many places and people at the same time. The young refugees however defined culture as rather static, relating different cultural ways of belonging to different geographical locations. The same static view was held by the reception staff who taught Swedish culture to the minors. This naturally had an impact on them feeling othered. This, and the transnational connections made them vary of their identity. When leaving care, they were faced with general issues of care-leavers, such as re-integration to society, but also additional issues, such as questions of belonging, identity, and becoming Swedish (ibid.).

Relating to the CRC (UN General Assembly 1989), the child's best interest is a relevant concept connected to unaccompanied minors. In Finland a report was conducted in the non-discrimination ombudsman office (Parsons, 2010) on the concept. The findings stated that the child's best interest is often not the first concern as it should be, but financial motivations are seen as primary. The process is defined by doubt by officials and the greater public, and the minors are seen as asylum seekers first and as children after. Their treatment is dependent on where they are placed. Family reunification is a luxury that is decreasingly achievable for the minors (ibid.). The national migration policies are seen to rule over the child rights also in Sweden (Lundberg 2011; Eastmond & Ascher 2011). The policies are claimed to be based on the CRC, but nevertheless place child rights secondary. Worry prevails also over appearance of humanitarianism, where children are seen as victims and granted temporary permits on

humanitarian basis, which are not lawfully claimable and can eventually cause more harm than good (Eastmond & Ascher, 2011). A suggested solution is a right-based approach on asylum process and reception where especially the best interest principle is emphasized, and the child rights are seen as legitimate and placed as a primary concern (Lundberg, 2011).

As research on the transnational activities of refugees and forced migrants is rare (Al-ali et al 2001; Weima 2017) even less researched are the transnational activities of unaccompanied minor migrants who are refugees or refugee claimants (Schmittgen, Köngeter and Zeller 2017). Schmittgen et al (2017) sought to fill the gap by studying the transnational networks and border-crossing activities of young refugees. Their findings indicated, that the most relevant transnational activity for the minors was their on-going cross-border relationships. Although Schmittgen et al (2017) were able to find similarities between the young refugee's transnationalism with that of transnational migrants defined by Pries (cited in Schmittgen et al. 2017) there were also categories that differed greatly. While the level of transnationalism for transmigrants was high, for young refugees it was low. (Ibid.) The authors find support to these claims from Al-ali et al. (2001) who explained the differences of economic migrants and refugees through obstacles such as legal status. They however argue with Mascini et al. (2012) notion of refugees "weak transnationalism" as well, stating that in their meaningful on-going cross-border relationships the transnationalism is not as weak as assumed. It simply differs from the transnational activities of adult refugees, which are economic and political in nature (Schmittgen et al., 2017). In this they come to the same conclusion as the fore-mentioned authors, stating that transnational activities of refugee youth are not either self-evident (Mascini et al., 2012) nor static (Al-ali et al., 2001), but it does not make them any less important (Schmittgen et al., 2017).

The importance of the transnational ties in the minor's lives is apparent in the study of Kutscher and Kreß (2016) where unaccompanied minor refugees described access to internet to something as essential as food. Their study found that access to digital media was indispensable access of transnational communication with family and friends (ibid). The relevance of the ties was also apparent in the thesis of Patrikainen (2017) who studied the transnational family ties of unaccompanied minors and their lives in Finland without family. In her study she concluded that unaccompanied minors' value and miss their families. They uphold regular connection with family members transnationally and the care between family members is reciprocal. The author concluded that the wellbeing of the unaccompanied minors is weakened by the separation from the family and the difficult family reunification process, where as it is improved by execution of human rights, resilience, networks and faith in good future (ibid.).

Literature on social work with unaccompanied minors

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are contradictions that face unaccompanied minors in their destination countries. The contradictions vary from being perceived as vulnerable or resilient, refugee or a citizen, or child or adult. These contradictions are also impacting how the minors are received and treated by the social workers they encounter. O'higgins (2012) concludes in their study with young refugees in the UK that these sorts of binary definitions might not be needed, if the young people were given the chance to exercise their agency, and thus articulate their own experiences and feelings in the social work contexts. This would allow the youth to be simultaneously vulnerable and resilient, hindering the unequal power relations (ibid.).

Previous research on social work practice with unaccompanied minors is almost non-existent in the Finnish context. The situation of Finland in relation to lack of studies on social work

practice with unaccompanied minors reflects the situation internationally. The studies appear to be far less than studies on unaccompanied minors in general. Luckily it has nevertheless been a matter that hasn't gone completely unstudied abroad (Huegler, 2016.) The research on social work with unaccompanied minors has concentrated on social work practice, the contradictions between ethics and policies, relevance of human rights, and transnationalism. Both negative and positive features of social work practice with unaccompanied minors were present.

Looking at social work practice in multiple contexts it appears that social work practice with unaccompanied minors in the UK and Australia borders more closely with migration control than in Finland. In the UK the social workers have to prepare the children for a possible removal (Wright 2012) and conduct age assessments (Camlyn & Nye, 2012), in Australia some of them even represent the migration office (Nelson, Price & Zubrzycki 2017). This differs from Finland where social workers focus is on different modes of support, plans and networks, and a statement to the migration office on the child's best interest (Moghaddam, 2012). Regardless of the approach and level that social work takes in conducting immigration policies, and the level of harshness these policies take, the social workers are bounded by them and their fluctuations. Nelson et al. (2017) suggest a model in combatting the challenges this causes. Inspired by Foucault's principle of resistance they developed a social work practice model to improve the wellbeing of the minors and reconnect with social justice and human rights - key values in professional social work. These practice dimensions include "encompassing critical social analysis, counselling, advocacy and social activism." (ibid. p. 610). Social workers are to some extent powerless in their position in between national policies, but they are also seen in a position where they can bring about social justice and the actualization of human rights through both their day-to-day practice and by raising awareness on different policies and their impacts on the lives of the minors (Cemlyn & Briskman, 2003).

Gustafsson (2015) studied different professionals working in the reception system of unaccompanied minors. The theories of differences and similarities (Gilje & Grimen; Johansson as cited in Gustafsson 2015) were used, inspired by methodological collectivism and individualism as well as an article on the matter by Johansson (as cited in Gustafsson 2015). According to Gustafsson methodological collectivism refers to people being viewed through collective differences, as mere parts and products of their group, collective, or culture. Methodological individualism on the other hand refers to people being viewed through individual similarities. The people are seen as individuals, inherently the same as anyone else (ibid.). In the study Gustafsson found that professionals were viewing minors as "any teenager" - disregarding their experiences of migration and what it involves, or as "the other" - seen through their culture with a need to be assimilated to mainstream. Neither of these approaches are good on their own but work when accompanied with ethics of grace where the minors are met through recognition, humility, and knowledge, and the collectively different and individually similar are combined into seeing normal teenagers with different experiences, cultural backgrounds, and universal rights (Gustafsson, 2015).

Some positive findings regarding the professional perceptions were discovered by Huegler (2016), who focused particularly on human rights in their study comparing social work practice with unaccompanied minors in Germany and UK. The findings indicate that the social workers motivation comes often from social justice and both personal and professional experiences. Seeing the minors mainly as ordinary youth, they resolved to generic practice but acknowledging also the migrant aspect they did consider specialized knowledge useful as well. They did not want to see the minors as solely vulnerable victims, but vulnerable and resilient at the same time, acknowledging their agency. Multitude of human rights issues was recognized by the professionals, highlighted by the impact that migration policies have in the lives of the

minors. The dilemma of functioning between human rights and migration policies and seeing them as conflicting were especially brought out by the social workers from England. The work included both subtle and political (in Berlin) ways of resisting these policies (ibid.). Working in these contradictions, Huegler, states that living in liminalities does not impact only the unaccompanied minors, but also social workers. Their liminality comes from being between the professional aspect of inclusion and the policy aspect of exclusion. The social workers may be involved in both processes (ibid.).

In the UK context, Kohli has been a prominent researcher on unaccompanied minors matters, including social work with unaccompanied minors. Kohli (2006) studied social work resettlement practice with unaccompanied minors, stating that being neither social worker or unaccompanied minor is an easy position to be in. Reflecting their results to the “largely simple and negative constructions” (Kohli, 2007) of previous UK-based research on social work with unaccompanied minors, their findings appeared far more complex than that. The results indicated that the social workers valued trust very high in their work with the minors, seeking the reciprocity it might bring along. Subsequently they wanted to be seen as helpful guardians rather than interrogating guards. Through these findings Kohli defined three types of social workers. 1.) Humanitarians, 2.) Witnesses, and 3.) Confederates.

As per Kohli’s (2006) definition:

1. *Humanitarians* were working in the “domain of cohesion”. Their first and foremost goal was the “here and now”, and their service provision was based on fulfilling practical needs. They hired many local networks in building of a good citizen, but were strict on consent and information sharing, never contacting anyone or doing anything unless justified to the minors. They saw themselves as realistic and pragmatic authority figures, advocating, protecting and mentoring the minors. As their focus of practice was in the here and now, so was their interaction with the minors defined by their avoidance of probing issues from the past. This contributed to scepticism and suspicion, which did not however actualize into interrogation. The workers took what was told to them as the truth, in part so because of wanting to concentrate on the current needs and capabilities of the minors, in part for avoiding the emotional distress it might bring along. At the same time, it however created vagueness and forgetfulness on issues such as “basic biographical information, the details of the asylum claim, planning regarding future plans on either independent living or return to the country of origin” (ibid., p.5).
2. *Witnesses* were working in the “domain of connection” They understood silence, but they also attempted to connect to events of the past, not absconding from the distress of the minors. They thought that the past had an impact on the minor’s capabilities to live their daily lives. They acknowledged the lost or absent people of the minor’s lives and thought that the past and present were connected. In their minds accepting both worlds would help the resettlement, not hinder it. The near therapeutic work and encounters with the distress were however emotionally challenging on the social workers themselves.
3. *Confederates* worked in the “domain of coherence” The social workers saw the minors as traumatized but extremely resilient and respondent with protective and at time subversive optimism. With their fondness of the minors, the boundaries between professionals and friends became unclear. As collaborators and companions, they were first and foremost loyal to the minors over other authorities. This was present in them helping the minors share thick descriptions that they were understanding of even if they conflicted with the migration policies or asylum claims. They saw the minors as children in need and deserving of support. Their trustworthiness spread among other clients and they became liked, sharing the feelings themselves, and wishing to keep contact even after the clientship ended.

Even among these varying ways of encountering the unaccompanied minor asylum seekers as well as in between moving from one to another position Kohli (2006) states that the social workers were not either saints or inept, but people seeking through their own methods and mistakes to care for the minors well.

Differing results from Kohli's study were found by Herz & Lalander (2018) who studied unaccompanied minors' perspectives on reception system social workers in Sweden. Their findings indicated that positive experiences regarding social workers were more of an exception to the rule than day-to-day practice. Social workers were seen as abstract figures representing the abstract system and popping up to make powerful decisions from the position of power. The authors discuss whether bureaucracy, control and the challenges of work life may be to blame. They view the youth yearning for acknowledgment, information, participation, care, and dialogue. The authors call for the supportive and caring side to be brought along the bureaucracy of social work with unaccompanied minors (ibid.).

In their study with social workers working with refugee care-leavers Söderqvist, Bülöw & Sjöblom (2015) state that transnationalism is present in the care-leaver framework, seeing that the youth are mobile and live transnational lives, and the knowledge of past and present assist in looking forward. In the practitioner's accounts however, transnationalism was rarely explicitly discussed in practice. Söderqvist et al. (2015) ponder whether this could be because transnationalism is something taken for granted and thus not brought up, or because it has no room in the day-to-day practice, even if it is recognized. The organizational practice is seen as ambiguous and conflicting between ideals and practice. Christie's (2003) answer to mobility and the contradictions within the practice is a critical perspective which encourages the whole profession of social work to be re-imagined, claiming that social work should look beyond the nation state in serving the mobile clients, who could "provide opportunities for the social work profession to pose new questions about its role and how its 'expertise' might be deployed in less regulatory ways even within the confines of the national welfare state." (Ibid, p. 225).

Summary

From previous studies it is clear that unaccompanied minors live their lives in liminalities and contradictions. They are a heterogenic group with great resilience and agency. They do however also need support that is based on their individual needs and child rights and that takes into consideration their transnational ties. Wells (2011) claims that weak, formal ties are of use for unaccompanied minors by helping them to connect useful change driving networks and access material and cultural resources. A provider of these ties may be a social worker, who has a tough job in providing the right kind of support in liminalities and contradictions of their own sort. A need for studying both social work practice with unaccompanied minors, and the reflection of it to transnationalism can be thus seen as extremely relevant and necessary.

CHAPTER FIVE

Methodology

This chapter is devoted for the discussion of the methodology. First the epistemological and ontological positions will be discussed, followed by a look into the data collection methods, respondents, method of analysis, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness.

In the initial steps of this study I returned to the philosophy of research. In a quest to construct the methodology of this paper I first defined the epistemological and ontological considerations. In order to distinguish what sort of knowledge is perceived acceptable in a discipline it's necessary to consider the epistemological issues (Bryman, 2012). According to Bryman (2012) the main opponents; positivism and interpretivism can be divided by the first looking at explaining the social issue and the latter at understanding the social issue through the interpretation of those who take part in it. The two main rivalries of ontological considerations, objectivism and constructionism, on the other hand refer to social reality either as existing on its own or by it being constructed by the different social actors (ibid.). This research is seeking to analyse how an issue is perceived by specific social actors, in this case social workers, hence falling under the interpretivist point-of-view. I as a researcher also believe that many of the relevant concepts; childhood, family and nation state are constructions, thus placing this research under constructionism.

Alanen (2015) has critiqued the excessive and uncritical use of the term social constructionism. One of the forms of critique has been against simply announcing one's position alongside the term, without reflecting it further (ibid.). In this study constructionism is seen in line with Bryman (2012) as viewing social reality as constructed. I do not believe that an objective reality exists, but I do believe that independent reality exists. The latter is however interpreted by social actors, thus how the independent reality is seen and described is constructed (Haslinger 1995). For instance, nation state borders can be rather tangible and their influence on people cannot be wished away (Haslinger, 1995). Within this study constructionism is thus seen mainly as a useful tool to be critical towards what is deemed as natural (Burr, 2015). This ontological position reflects the epistemological position of interpretivism, where also no external truth is tried to be sought, but rather the analysis is a tool for the trying to understand something (Denscombe, 2012). Within this position it is thus acknowledged, that the social context impacts the study. I believe the choices of interpretivism as well as constructionism to be reflected throughout the study and choice of methods, which will be explained in detail in this chapter.

Effort was made to use gender-neutral language in the text. Instead of referring to people as she or he they are referred to as they or them. Gender of the authors whose texts have been referenced or gender of the interviewees are of no relevance in this study. There is also no knowledge of the gender of all the authors referred here. According to the Linguistic Society of America (2016), assuming a particular gender when it is unknown or irrelevant is undesirable, and thus a gender-neutral pronoun such as they is accepted and even recommended.

Data collection method

The study at hand is a qualitative research, a natural choice for studying descriptive human experience over multitude of topics under one main theme, as qualitative research is often

described to be “broadly inductivist, constructionist, and interpretivist” (Bryman, 2012). The choice of theory prior to findings refers to deductive approach (ibid.), in this case however a hybrid of deductive and inductive approaches was employed. The process began with a deductive approach in the sense that the relevant theory was chosen in the beginning steps of the research and utilized in the formulation of the study. The study however remained inductive in its openness’s to connect the findings to other theories or concepts such as agency or cultural competence, in case such theories were found in the data. It indeed was not until the data was collected, that all the concepts and theoretical perspective were finalized. The theory remained the same, but the focus and concepts changed.

The empirical data of the research was collected through individual semi-structured interviews. Interview is a good choice for collecting in-depth information, as was the purpose in this study (Denscombe, 2010). The choice of the interview being semi-structured, as opposed to structured or unstructured, was that it was seen as the best approach to obtain enough relevant data to answer the research questions, but also remain with some level of flexibility. With semi-structured interviews the interviewer often has the same set of questions that can be more general in nature. The interviewer may also change the order of asking these questions or include or exclude questions during the interviews (Bryman, 2012). In this study the same interview guide was used in all of the interviews and same themes were followed. Discretion was used in choosing which individual questions were deemed relevant in each interview situation. The aim was to collect data on certain themes, but the way to get to that data changed between interviews.

The interview guide was based on four themes: background, transnationalism, family ties and social work practice. Background included questions on the professional background of the respondents and the details of their current employment and job description. These were used as icebreakers and in defining the respondent profiles yet used less in the actual data set. The theme *transnationalism* included questions on the respondent’s knowledge of the concept and their views on how this was present in their client’s lives, as well as questions on how the client’s backgrounds were viewed and dealt with. The *family ties* theme included questions on the client’s family ties, their meaning, the connections they created, and family reunification. The final theme of *social work* practice included questions on how social work practice was conducted with unaccompanied minors and how transnational it was. The guide can be found at the end of this study as Appendix 2. in both Finnish and English. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to an hour, and they were recorded. The interviews were conducted at the respondent’s offices.

Respondents

The respondents were chosen through purposive sampling. This meant that the participants were selected according to their suitability to answer the research questions, and there was no intent to generalize the results to wider population (Bryman, 2012). The suitability was defined by two aspects: their qualification as professional social workers based on the Finnish legislation and their current position of employment. The chosen respondents were qualified social workers working in Finland with unaccompanied minors that were either seeking asylum or had been granted a permit, and who were placed in group homes, family group homes, or supported housing units. Some also worked with minors in aftercare. Some of the respondents were still finalizing their master’s studies in social work, while some had been in the field for decades. All social workers were employed by the municipality, but the clients were placed at both municipal units and private units. The social workers worked in different municipalities

scattered around Finland. Municipalities both smaller and bigger in population were presented. Research permits were obtained from the municipalities accordingly.

Between restrictions of time, limited number of interviewees, and obtaining enough empirical data to present interesting results, the aim was set to interview 8-10 participants. In the end 8 participants were interviewed, but the data of 7 of these interviews were included. One was excluded due to not fitting the respondent profile. The respondents were contacted through social media groups, my personal connections and by emailed invitations to the organizations. Had there been more time also additional social workers could have been interviewed. The different respondents were named with a code, varying from H1 to H8. These codes are used in the data extracts to differentiate between respondents. Of the codes H5 is missing due to the code being assigned for the interviewee not included in the study in the end.

Method of analysis

The recorded interviews were listened to and transcribed. Transcription was denaturalized discarding for instance non-voluntary sounds and concentrating on the content of the interview. For this research importance was found in what is said, not how it is said (Oliver, Serovich and Mason, 2005). The importance of this transcription style was ever more relevant due to language issues. The interview data was collected in Finnish, and in translating it for the extracts some of the expressions might have gotten lost, but the essence of what was said remained. In the end there was 126 pages of data, written in Times new Roman font size 12, with 1,5 spacing.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is a method that is often used but which has been lacking in clear branding or definition. It is a flexible method suiting well with novice researchers like myself as well as those who do not wish to be confined through the strict rules of a research method. There is thus a great freedom with this method, but as evident, with the freedom comes responsibility to be clear on all the choices that have been made in the analysis (ibid).

The basic process of thematic analysis as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006) includes:

1. Familiarizing oneself with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

The process is done in order to make sense of and interpret the data. The purpose is to derive themes; commonalities within the data which can be interpreted as concepts. Another purpose is to reveal the context-related phenomenon, that accounts for differences among participants. This way the researcher can present findings which are descriptive, beneficial and meaningful (Given, 2008).

The analysis of this study was performed along the guidelines above. At the first stage the transcribed interviews were read and reread. No initial codes had been developed, but they were

all picked from the data. In the process some comments were first made into the side-lines of the printed transcript pages, and after that some initial codes were written at the end of each interview. These codes were enough to bring some themes to mind, but as the coding got more specific and detailed, also the themes and subthemes started getting more complete. The coding was done in a simple manner, by utilizing the comment function of word. First each relevant sentence or paragraph was given a code word in a comment - which ever word or sentence that best described the extract.

After coding all relevant parts, initial themes and subthemes were produced based on the codes. In line with Braun & Clark (2006) as well as constructivist position, the *choice* of these themes was an active process by the researcher, and the themes did not solely “*emerge*” from the text. In addition, a general set of codes was produced, that were fitting under each subtheme. One theme was reserved for miscellaneous extracts. Each main theme was given a number from 1-4, each subtheme a number that related it to the main theme such as 1.3, and finally each code was given a numeric code relating it to the theme and subtheme, such as 1.3.1. This final number was then used as a fast, numeric code to cover the data set.

H4: Mmm yllirajaisuus ehkä perheenjäsenen kanssa. Se näkyy voimakkaimmin ja se on se tärkein asia ja se on tietysti ollut nyt tosi paljon, kun tota on ollut niin se oli niin hetkinen se 2016 ja oikeestaan toi koko viime vuos koska poikia oli niin hirveesti et mul on ollu tän vuoden aikana yli sata poikaa asiakkaana. Ne kaikki täys-ikäistvy nyt, 2015 tulleita poikii ku niit oli niin paljon nii ne oli kaikki niinku 16-17 ja nyt ne on kaikki niinku täyttämässä 18 vuoden loppuun mennessä viimeisetkin. Niin se on ollut hirvee volyyymi, niin sitten siinä oikeestaan se mihin on nyt ruvennut pystyy keskittyyyn on se perhe ja ne on aina keskusteluissa, nyt varsinkin niiden poikien kaa jotka on

With these codes I then went through all the data again, giving each the relevant numeric code. This was done in order to have coherency in the codes. After this process was done, it was easy to match the different extracts with the generic code, subtheme and theme it related to.

Table 1. Example of coding process

Theme	Subtheme	Generic code	Original text code	Extract
1. Transnational minor	1.3 Unaccompanied minors and transnationalism	1.3.1 Ways of being transnational	Family ties	H4: “Transnationalism with family members. That is the most visible and most important matter. “

The generic codes were used for organizing purposes, while the themes and subthemes were intended as the front of the data analysis. The subthemes and themes were revised multiple times. First, they were too general for the data set, then they were too detailed, and only at the third time they were correct, making it easy to match the codes into themes and have the whole data set match the themes and subthemes. Even after the final step, some subthemes were deleted while some were combined into one to form the final themes and subthemes, which best cover and describe the full data set.

Table 2. The final themes and subthemes

Transnational minor	Unaccompanied minors as same but other
	Unaccompanied minors and silence
	Unaccompanied minors and transnationalism
Transnational family	The role of a transnational family
	Transnational families together apart
	Family reunification
Transnational social work	Social workers role
	Social workers scope and resources
	Social work competence
	Social work and transnationalism

Even though the process was started with inductive approach, an idea of constructing the codes from the data with no pre-set codes in mind, the influence of the research questions and interview questions that followed cannot be denied in the themes and subthemes. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that one pitfall of thematic analysis is that data collection questions are used as the themes. The authors state that in such case no analytic work has been done. Even though it would naturally be problematic to directly pick the themes from the data collection questions, I believe it to be only natural that the themes reflect the questions and positions taken in the research. If they did not reflect them, would the data be responding to the research questions? Or would the interview questions be constructed correctly to receive correct answers? Or would the study have any basis on existing knowledge? I believe that no matter how inductive the approach has been, every step of this study has been influenced and shaped by the previous one. In this study the themes and subthemes are a result of vigorous analysis and are chosen to best describe the data set.

Ethical considerations

Research ethics are an essential part of guiding decision making in research. Researchers in designing their study are supposed to portray integrity, consideration of participants, and follow ethical conventions in reporting their findings (Given, 2008). The choice of the area of study is already a moral choice (Mäkelä 2005). I began drafting this research from the perspective of studying transnationalism of unaccompanied minors. I was however concerned how ethically that could be done in such a short time frame. When I in addition noticed that a similar study had been done in same context (Patrikainen 2017) I wanted to avoid possibly burdening the same (active) minors with related inquiry. These moral and ethical choices were thus pondered already when choosing the study topic. Because in the study at its current form there are no apparent power disproportion, or the respondents of the research are not deemed particularly vulnerable, the ethical ponderings concentrated on the basic ethical principles. In order to conduct ethical research, the researcher needs to make sure the interest of their participants is protected, the respondent participation is based on informed consent and they take part

voluntarily, the study is conducted with scientific integrity and honesty, and it is conducted in a legal manner (Denscombe, 2010).

Because the research was conducted in Finland, I followed the ethical guidelines provided by Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity [TENK]. In line with the first set of guidelines “Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland” (TENK, 2012). I conducted the research by following relevant research literature from the appropriate discipline. I applied for research permits from the municipalities where I acquired data from. The university rules are very strict when it comes to plagiarism, thus extra attention was given to correct citation and respect for others work. In addition to following these guidelines, the second set of ethical guidelines “Ethical Principles of Research in The Humanities and Social and Behavioural Sciences” (TENK, 2009), relevant to this as consideration of social sciences was followed.

The first principle of “Ethical Principles of Research in The Humanities and Social and Behavioural Sciences” (TENK, 2009), is the respect of autonomy of the research participants. This was obtained by approaching the participants directly with summary of the research proposal that provided them with relevant information. The purpose of the research and the respondent’s rights were explained in the beginning of the interview. This, and the voluntary nature of the research lead to informed consent. There was no personal gain for the participants, and since they are contacted directly there was no pressure by anyone to take part. The research participants could also withdraw from taking part in the interviews. The second principle by TENK is to avoid harm. Regarding this research harm was avoided by obtaining informed consent and by treating the research participants with respect. The results will be published in a respectful manner, and the data reported in a comprehensive and analytical manner. The final principle by TENK is the privacy and data protection. In this research, any confidential information and data was handled and stored so, that no other person will have access to it. The research material will be properly disposed of after the thesis process has finalized. No confidential or identifying information was included in the research data. This was done in order to prevent the participants from being identified from the published research. It is however possible that other staff member of the organizations will recognize the participant from certain stories. Therefore, absolute anonymity will not be secured, but this was told to the participants beforehand, and as the researcher I have taken all the appropriate measures and considerations to avoid this from happening.

As the main areas of ethical concern are “harm to participants; lack of informed consent; invasion of privacy; and deception” (Bryman, 2012) I believe that in this study the ethical considerations have been properly made by:

- obtaining research permits
- following the research literature of the discipline and respecting the work of others
- obtaining informed consent for this voluntary research
- treating the participants with respect and publishing results in respectful manner
- storing and handling the data securely, and excluding any apparently confidential or identifying information from it

Trustworthiness

The quality of a research is often measured through validity, reliability, generalizability and objectivity. These are however not the easiest ways to measure the credibility of qualitative research as they are quite positivist in nature, not often compatible with the social setting and researcher influence present in many qualitative studies (Denscombe, 2010). Even though there has been the recognition of unsuitability of the objectivist quality criteria on qualitative studies, there has been no consensus over a better way to measure the quality. Several different criteria have thus been developed (Bryman 2012). One that has been often utilized and is seen more suitable especially in relation to the chosen position of constructionism is thus to seek for trustworthiness as a quality criterion (Guba & Lincoln 1994). Even this approach is however not fully accepted as most suitable, as it can be seen as still falling under the same rigour criteria borrowed from the positivist tradition (Tobin & Begley 2003). There are however also positive experiences in combining together thematic analysis and the trustworthiness criteria (Nowell et al 2017).

Guba (1981) developed four phase evaluation criteria of trustworthiness. These criteria are seen better suited for naturalistic inquiry, which qualitative study also falls under. The first criterion is *credibility*, referring to the rationalist validity, seeking to investigate whether the findings are true. As this cannot be as easily measured in qualitative research where multiple realities and truths exist, the credibility can be increased by different methods of cross-checking. According to the authors one of the methods is to check the credibility of the findings and interpretations from the sources of the data, in this case the interviewee respondents (ibid.). Within the time frame reserved for this study, such measures were however impossible. The validity was thus tried to achieve solely by conducting the study in a manner which is methodologically appropriate and transparent. The second criterion is *transferability*, referring to rationalist generalizability. In transferability no generalizations are tried to be made, but there is still an attempt to conduct research in a way that could be applied in other contexts as well (ibid.). Within this study I have also made no attempts to generalize the results. I however believe that through the transparency of the study methodology the study formulation could be applied in other relevant contexts. The third criterion is *dependability*, referring to rationalist reliability. It is seeking to investigate whether similar results would be produced in the same context consistently. In qualitative research the understanding is in multiple realities, and thus the main importance is in recognizing what shifts the consistency (ibid.). I believe that in regards of this study it is acknowledged that the social setting has impact on the results and how they are interpreted and constructed, I however believe that in a similar context with similar respondents and similar instruments, the findings would not differ greatly. Even though I have conducted only a limited number of interviews, I do claim that I have in fact obtained quite large, heterogeneous and representative sample and could thus easily imagine the results to be somewhat applying to the whole population of social workers working with unaccompanied minors in Finland. The fourth criterion is *confirmability*. This term is referring to the rationalist objectivity (ibid.). The relationship between objectivity and the researcher in qualitative studies are another disputed matter, where the researcher is often seen to have an influence on the research (Denscombe, 2010). Confirmability is seen as an alternative where it is recognized that the research may not be completely objective, but the author has not let their personal standpoint completely alter the study design and findings (Bryman, 2012).

In regards of objectivity my view here goes along the same lines with Denscombe (2010) and Bryman (2012), seeing that no matter how objectively I treat the data, some parts of the process are influenced by the social setting and the fact that I am the one conducting this research. Burr (2015) in fact states that objectivity would be simply impossible within the social

constructionist position this study has taken. They state that the questions we ask and theories we use already reflect our perspective, and thus to view anything outside our humanity would be impossible (ibid.). Denscombe (2010) says that a researcher can take two stands. To either acknowledge the issue and distance themselves from their “identity, values and beliefs” or acknowledge the issue and express what the identity, values and beliefs are. I wanted to do both. I acknowledge I have an impact on this research, so while conducting the thesis I was extremely reflective throughout the process on my own thoughts, and extra cautious on the analysis and the representations I made, to make sure they reflected the data and not what I wanted them to reflect. I often double and triple checked what I was doing and kept myself on lines when it came to a possibility of bias. For this reason, I wanted to also be really transparent on all the methodological choices I have made in this study. In conjunction, I also wanted to be very clear on what is my background coming in this study.

The other way to try and combat objectivity is to express the researcher’s identity (Denscombe 2010). This can also be called *reflexivity*, sensitivity to one’s own contextual position (Bryman 2012). The reason I wanted to undertake this study was due to my interest in international social work and child rights, and my work experience with unaccompanied minor asylum seekers. The reason I had come to study to Sweden was due to the fact that I saw the Finnish social work programs as too closely connected to the state and wished for a more international approach myself, which would be tied to something international such as human rights. There has thus always been a sort of resistance towards the state connected social work of Finland, which I have seen as extremely bureaucratic, and deriving from the needs of the state and not the people. I have also myself seen what it is to move abroad and live transnational live (even if from the position of privilege) and can thus understand both some of the difficulties faced in a new country, and the wish to remain connected to another beyond the geographical location. At the same time, I have felt myself to be a product of this same state, a person who regardless of the critique and resistance is quite easily overpowered by the bureaucratic nature and order, conforming to normative assumptions instead of rising to advocate for another way. Even though I have worked with migrants, migrated myself, and studied migration, and thus understand that migration is a process that cannot be controlled (Withaexc et al 2017), the ideas discussed here along transnationalism - such as borderless states, seem scary and unordered to me, and a social work system beyond nation state as almost incomprehensible. So where as I see the wrong in the world and want to fight against it, I see myself in a form of mental shackles, held down by the fear of the unknown. So, could I then be objective, faced with resistance on one hand and fear on the other? I believe the answer to be yes. My keenness to stick to the rule of the book has made me extremely cautious of the conclusions I make and the transparency I undertake, and my position between resistance and fear and national and transnational allows me to be critical towards both perspectives in equal manner.

CHAPTER SIX

Findings and analysis

This chapter presents the findings of this study, while analysing them in reflection to previous research. The findings are divided into three main themes and ten subthemes. The three main themes are called *transnational minor*, *transnational family*, and *transnational social work*. These themes that were chosen to best describe the data also reflect the research questions of the study:

1. How do Finnish social workers view transnationalism as part of unaccompanied minor's realities?
2. How do Finnish social workers take into consideration transnational family ties when planning and executing the care of the unaccompanied minors?
3. How transnational is the social work practice with unaccompanied minors?

Here the main themes act as umbrella themes tying the findings together, while the subthemes are more descriptive and hold the actual findings. Under the first theme *transnational minor* are the subthemes 1. Unaccompanied minors as same but other, 2. Unaccompanied minors and silence, and 3. Unaccompanied minors and transnationalism. Under the second theme *transnational family* are the subthemes of 1. Constructions of a transnational family, 2. Transnational families together apart, and 3. Family reunification. The third theme of *transnational social work* includes the subthemes of 1. Social workers role, 2. Social work scope and resources, 3. Social work competence, and 4. Social work and transnationalism.

Related to the study's position as interpretivist-constructionist it is important to keep in mind that these findings portray the perceptions which the interviewed social workers hold and construct of unaccompanied minors and their families. The findings are thus more reflective of the responding social workers and their practice, and even the interpretation of the researcher, than an objective truth depicting the lives of the minors and their families.

Transnational minor

This theme reveals findings about the perceptions that social workers expressed of unaccompanied minors, and how these views relate to transnationalism. This theme can be seen responding most directly to the first research question of this study: "How do Finnish social workers view transnationalism as part of unaccompanied minor's realities?". This theme is combined of three subthemes: 1.) unaccompanied minors as same but other, 2.) unaccompanied minors and silence, and 3.) unaccompanied minors and transnationalism. The first two relate to more general findings of the perceptions that social workers hold of unaccompanied minors, and the last subtheme is a direct look into the transnational ways and activities of the minors. All of the three subthemes together however weave a comprehensive picture on what, if any, part transnationalism plays in the realities of unaccompanied minors, as perceived by social workers.

Unaccompanied minors as same but other

The findings indicate that there are two different ways that the minors were constructed by social workers. One way was a minor defined by cultural norms and past experiences, while

one was the minor as an ordinary teenager. These views can be seen as reflecting the division between methodological collectivism and methodological individualism used in Gustafsson's (2015) study, viewing the minors through collective differences or individual similarities. For most of the social workers the minors were not either or but showcased both features.

In the first case of collective differences the minors were seen to hold special cultural perceptions, norms and backgrounds. In addition, they were defined by their lived life, undealt trauma, and past experiences.

H3: It is [background] present, when it affects the presence and future too very strongly. You cannot separate it if a person has lived 15 first years of their life somewhere completely else than in Finland, probably it greatly influences what there is now and how one knows the society and the bureaucratic twirls. And how one can become independent and the choices one makes as well.

Due to their adverse past experiences they were seen to have taken lot of responsibility early on and grown into an adult faster than Finnish youth. They were for those reasons often seen as more mature than what their chronological age indicated.

H7: They have had to be responsible and will have to at 18 years old. And they have the kind of experiences behind that many seem older. Probably due to circumstances, so that they will cope. It has been a coping strategy for them.

Their maturity and endurance of hardships was also seen as a form of resilience. They were seen as even more eager to make it due to their past hardships, but their personality and family background were seen as influencing the process. These can be seen reflecting the individual protective factors and family protective factors defined by Carlson et al. (2012) which are seen as increasing resilience.

H2: And well what I have noticed and heard from colleagues is that you can see from the children which of them has lived their childhood in the home country in a safe family. Even if there were hardships from the outside and under a war, but the family has been important. And that leaves its marks. And it can be seen as the strength of the child, even after the problems have arrived and the separation from the family has happened. So, the perhaps basic feeling of safety is in the childhood.

As opposed to a minor defined by culture and past, there were also accounts of seeing the minors as typical teenagers going through the ordinary growth phases, not explainable by cultural differences.

H4: I have in certain way with the boys experienced, my clients are only boys, that in some way all the people are extremely similar, that what these boys need the most is love and boundaries. [...] And I think it's exactly same with the majority population. That in some way human life within is the same for everyone.

Rebellion was seen as part of being a teenager and was worded in their cases as a rebellion against being treated like a child, when they had already lived independent life. In other words, their rebellion could be also interpreted as showcasing of agency. There were many accounts of agentic behaviour in the data, that was not named as such. The reason may relate to the Western concept of childhood where childhood and agency are not frequently connected (Björklund, 2015). It may however also be related to use of the word within different languages such as Finnish and English.

H4: In one way they are at their age level, and on another they rebel, because it is funny that you have went through 15 countries and then you cannot go overnight to

someone unless the place has been inspected, so it is conflicting for them. That when they are here they are treated at their age level.

The interplay of concept of childhood on the one hand and the goal to make independent youth on the other were seen as contradictory in some sense. While the minors were seen and treated as children, at the same time they were expected to become independent fast, which was apparent in the services they were provided.

H6: They are treated as underaged youth in most parts, but there are parts where another matter is highlighted. For example, these permit practices are rather pettish. If you have for instance just turned 18 then you are suddenly a completely civilized world citizen that can live anywhere.

The provision of services was also one of the questions arising from the treatment of the minors as either ordinary teenagers or the cultural other. The first case indicated a need for equal treatment in the services, meaning that the minors would have the same services as any other youth. The other case meant that they would get special treatment due to their special background. A social worker speaking in favour of specialized services stated, that:

H8: If you think about child protection, if these youth of ours are taken into custody, then I feel that it's really hard to get them accustomed to the Finnish child protection... Because the Finnish youth, who are the same age, are in such a different position than our youth. That in my opinion it's just not... They are so different. They have such different needs. [...] if you think about Finnish child protection child then there often is drug abuse, school absence, and these can have that too, but often they have the trauma in the background. That. They are not like that... The services should be thought according to their needs.

When asked whether they should then be seen first as children and youth or asylum seekers, the respondent continued by saying, that:

H8: They are first and foremost children. They are, they are, they are. Absolutely they are children and need to be treated accordingly. But those services, it needs to be taken into consideration what sort of services they need. That they anyway need specialized services in addition to being children and youth.

The specialty of service provision can however also come to mean vague, undefined practices where the minors do not receive the services they should be entitled to. So that instead of receiving specially tailored services, they are faced with a lack of adequate services that they would be entitled as Finnish youth, and lack of consistent services throughout Finnish municipalities. One respondent gave an example, stating that:

H6: [...] for some strange reason their position is quite vaguely determined, when you compare to the Child Welfare Act, and how strictly the child's matter has been determined there. So, then the position of the unaccompanied minors is quite vague in many ways. And then that means that there are no clear rules or instructions to anything, but you have to do what you see as best.

Thus, in the end they were by many social workers seen as individuals with individual needs.

H4: Well in a way there has to be a balance between preserving what is their own and treat them so that they have special features of that culture, but at the same time they are here and should be treated and given the same rights as others. It has been sort of surprising that I have had to fight to get them the same services when everyone says that not them these are like this, but they are just similar as other people and teenagers.

This subtheme has shown the findings that fall under “unaccompanied minors as same but others”. Other than the main finding of sameness and otherness; resilience, childhood, and agency are concepts found within the theme.

The sameness and otherness as the main findings are viewed through the perceptions and constructions which the respondents held of unaccompanied minors, but also in how these constructions impact service provision and policies. The results are tightly reflective of the findings of Gustaffson’s (2015) study on methodological collectivism and individualism, where the minors are seen through collective differences or individual similarities. In which way they were seen in this study seemed to depend on the individual respondents. A part of the social workers perceived them through their collective differences and easily explained any difference with culture or background, while others saw them as ordinary teenagers, perhaps overlooking their background experiences as more than that. At times the interviewees did seem to include fairly static or simplistic views of culture and its impact, which according to Söderqvist (2014) may cause the minors to feel othered. In a positive note, many respondents were however also critical and reflective of drawing simplistic notions of a static culture. In most cases the respondents made sure to look at the matters from many perspectives, recognizing the youths as individuals who were children and teenagers on the one hand, and influenced by their background and experiences on the other. The minors were thus seen as having “particular problems, but also particular capabilities” (Schmitt & Homfeldt, 2014). By looking at them in this way, the worst pitfalls of othering or overlooking the minor’s background were avoided.

The concepts of sameness and otherness were however present also in policies and legislation, thus impacting the service provision. Where pitfalls in social work practice might have been avoided, they seemed to be present in discussing the structural matters, where it appeared easier to either other or homogenize the minors. Within this study especially the othering in care became apparent (De Graeve & Bex, 2016). On the one hand it was seen that the minors could not be made to fit the generic child protection services, seeing that these would not respond to the needs arising from the special situations of the minors as unaccompanied migrants. On the other hand, the way it was translated into practice appeared to signify vagueness and a lack of legislation and guidelines, which would provide the same rights to care and protection for the minors, as for the native Finnish children. The specifics of care were left to the interpretation and discretion of individual municipalities. It has in fact come to my attention during this study from interviews and legislation, that the unaccompanied minors are not by law entitled to meet social workers, unless they have specific child protection needs, and not always even then (Kosonen, 2018). This means that it depends on the municipality where the minor has been placed whether they will 1.) Not have access to meetings with a social worker, 2.) Have access to social worker meetings in official matters or when there are serious disruptions in day-to-day life, or 3.) Be defined as a person requiring special care according to the Social Welfare Act (710/1982) and be thus deemed as entitled to regular social worker meetings. The findings thus indicate that in legislation and guidelines defining service provision the minors are at the very least living within contradictions and marginalized as both asylum seekers and children (Gustafsson et al., 2012), and at worst as othered through structural racism (Kauhanen, 2017).

The results reflect aspects of transnationalism by describing the way the social workers construct the minors in relation to past or present. Through this they are thus either recognizing or acknowledging the connections that reach beyond the immediate context of the minors (Withaecx et al., 2017). Within these findings these connections were acknowledged, thus transnational social work was practiced at a moderate level (Righard & Boccagni, 2015). Transnationalism also has an impact on the minor’s agency which might have inflicted their migration journey (Denov & Bryan, 2012) and could influence the upkeep of transnationalism in the minor’s lives.

Silence has been defined as an issue that is normal to teenage (Kohli 2005), but that has gained attention especially in relation to unaccompanied minors. It is a prevalent concept in this study as well. One social worker thought that the reason for silence might be due to an advice to not speak by another person, such as a smuggler. Trust in turn was seen as a necessary factor to get the minors to open up.

H1: But these can be related to the threats and advices by the smugglers on how to act, and then the truth might come out after years when the youth trusts the worker, or it will never come out.

Another social worker thought that silence might be explained with culture and more specifically a matter of shame or a wish to not burden the other person. The latter was relevant in the other social workers interviews as well, where a part of them stated that both the family and the child try to hide issues in order to not cause worry for the other person.

H2: They are private matters. In their culture they are very strongly matters that are kept within the family circle. And then they have had issues that are too shameful to talk about. Or issues that are so difficult that you do not want to talk about them so that you would not cause the other person to feel bad. It is often in those cultures that you do not want to burden the other person with your worries.

The social workers also pondered whether silence might be caused by an idea that if something is not spoken about then that something cannot bother that person. Silence was thus commonly seen to be used as a tool to avoid unpleasant issues. The focus was seen to be on the now and the future, while the past was attempted to be forgotten. The previously quoted social worker continued on the matter, stating that:

H2: But well. Maybe that and also in general, that people think, or children and youth, that when I do not talk about difficult things then they will be forgotten and won't bother me. So, it is tried... They try to themselves sort of forget about everything.

Not speaking about issues was not however the only way to not deal with them, as the minors were also seen to avoid thinking about them altogether, covering them with overly positive thinking and filling their days up with so much activity that there was no room to think. The social workers believed that the issues would eventually tend to push through.

H1: Once the youth move to this family group home they themselves often might think that all the old trouble is left behind now that the permit has been gotten to Finland, but it affects [them]. [...] You can for a short time bury everything by thinking that those issues do not exist, or doing it so that you study, study, study, practice, practice, practice; fill your day with so much else, that there is no time for the thoughts to appear. But then eventually the issues arrive as nightmares, sleeping issues, and others. And sooner than later, if not in here then in the after care, these issues need to be somehow processed for the day-to-day life to continue. Very few can go on so that the issues are forgotten.

The silence did not seem to concern only the minors and their families. The social workers recognised the silence to be unsustainable and at times harmful, and the silence caused some suspicion on whether the minors were hiding parts of their lives. Regardless of this, some of the social workers themselves were eager to focus on the now and the future. If the day-to-day lives were functioning, they did not want to keep intruding.

H6: And then when the youth think about their families then you need to ponder that how much of it is sufficiently, and how much in this work you also highlight the family, and how much concentrate on the things that carries one here.

The minors were seen to often choose silence, but sometimes in cases where the minors did talk about their lives, their accounts were seen as incomplete by many of the respondents.

H7: But of course, it is always dependent on what the youth has told, and there are gaps, and children and youth cannot talk about everything. That is kind of the challenge in this work compared to native Finnish youth. That we cannot know what has been there.

This subchapter has shown that social workers attach different meanings for the silence of the unaccompanied minors. These meanings show similarity to the meanings presented by Kohli (2005) and Chase (2009). In Kohli's study silence was explained by reaction to grieving and trauma, obedience to given advice, focus on the now and the future, and fear due to their unsecure status. Chase supplemented the list with agency. In the findings of this study the results indicated that silence was also connected to obedience to given advice, reaction to grieving and trauma, focus on the now and the future, and agency. There were no accounts of staying silent over unsecure status. There was however reference to silence caused by cultural reasons, which was not mentioned in the other two studies.

Even though the silence was at times seen as an issue and was seen as causing suspicion, some social workers supported or encouraged the silence by not seeking to probe in to the minors matters. This relates them to the Kohli's (2006) *Humanitarians*, social work types who focus on the now, avoid issues from the past, and in turn experience suspicion and scepticism to the stories of the minors, as apparent in here with some of the respondents seeing the minor's stories as incomplete even when they did speak.

Silence is a relevant concept for transnationalism because as it could be seen in this subchapter it is a multifaceted issue that firstly affects biographical work which is seen as important part of transnational social work (Schmitt, 2016) and secondly may hinder the processing of issues that in many occasions are related to the past of the minors. The transnational biography work by Schmitt means that the social worker is aware of how the child's life was back in their home country and during their flight, and what their needs are in the host country. This assists the social worker in understanding the minor's experiences and lifeworld's that exceed the national state, thus understanding their specific needs in their unique situations. Schmitt does however acknowledge that talking requires trust (Kohli, 2002). The process should not be therefore rushed, and the aspect of trust and the need for the minor to settle should be taken in consideration (Schmitt, 2016). According to Withaecx et al. (2017) from a transnational perspective there might also be a need to hide transnational family relations, in fear of this information affecting the asylum decision, and thus some social workers have been seen to not want to probe in to the matter due to that. As social workers are not migration officials this should not however be seen as an issue in relation to the minors, especially since family relations abroad may be integral in the life of the client and thus social work as well (ibid.). There should thus be a focus on trust, while seeking to learn of the individual experiences of the minor along with their transnational realities, in order to improve the services provided for them (Hopkins & Hill, 2008).

At the initial stages of this study there were some sort of preconceptions that the unaccompanied minors' lives would be influenced by transnationalism. This view was however based on the scarce research on the matter (Patrikainen, 2017; Schmittgen et al., 2017) of which the latter even stated, that the unaccompanied minors' transnational activities are not self-evident. It was thus beneficial regarding the study, that all of the social workers did in fact see transnationalism to be a part of the lives of the minors. To what extent it was seen to be a part of their lives however varied.

H2: It is an important part because you cannot completely invalidate and ignore it. But maybe it is regardless a sort of background influence in the situation of the youth, or a sort of a side-track. Because mainly the focus has to be on the here and on how to move forward.

The transnational activities were seen to be socio-cultural by the social workers. The minors were seen to undertake economic transnational activities through remittances, but also these were strictly limited to their personal social ties. No political activities were discussed by the respondents. The main reason for transnationalism was seen to be the personal relationships and family ties that the minors were upkeeping transnationally, similarly to the results by Schmittgen et al (2017). This was the most discussed matter related to transnationalism, and often transnationalism seemed to be directly connected and equated as family ties.

H4: Transnationalism with family members. That is the most visible and most important matter.

Also, the upkeeping of culture was seen to be relevant part of transnational activities. It was present through the importance of for instance consuming food and music from the country of origin. One way to partake in these activities were through different diaspora associations, which were seen beneficial for the minors in other aspects as well, such as integration and identity.

H1: Then there are these associations. There is an active Somali association, then Kurds and Afghans have their own thing, or mosque is a way to cultural and religious events, organising festivities and others, and so the youth can take part in whatever they find meaningful. But maybe I think that through those they also get the support and information related to their nationality. And they can be very good support in integration. In that Somali association they for instance have adults that have been here for long time and sort of know how things function here, and sometimes the guidance coming from there can be more valued than or the one coming from us. Or the message is accepted more easily when in here there is all kind of guidance coming from all kinds of aunties, which can sometimes get even annoying.

Apart from social ties and cultural practices, the minors were seen to stay connected to their countries of origin through news media, seeking to gain information of the events taking place there. It was seen to help the minors keep connected with their countries of origin, but at times the news consumption was however seen to cause worry and anxiety in the minors.

H1: Somehow it is difficult to understand how strongly it [transnationalism] is present in their day-to-day lives. That there are those [...] communication things that the youth

learn to use quickly and through which they get information from their home countries, even if they have no connection to their relatives they receive news. They follow very closely some bombing things and similar, which causes a great worry in them, in whether there was someone they know there, and some of them follow them even too much. Somehow it is so strongly present through the media, that they can find channels through which the other country is with them in the day-to-day life. I don't know if it's always a good thing, but...

The social workers were also asked if any events between different groups back in their home countries would cause issues between the different minors in the units. One of the social workers saw this different to others, stating that differences between ethnic groups and especially social class were blatantly visible in making friends and even in behaviour with staff members. The other social workers seemed to believe that the transnational issues affected them personally but did not reflect to group behaviour in any way.

H6: It could but it has not affected. I think in here we have quite well been able to keep the group together. I don't know, maybe the distance helps. There has been some scuffle between a couple of boys, but they have had scuffle for other reasons too, so I don't know what it's about. I wouldn't very easily go and blame it on the ethnic group, but it's more about the social problems that cause it.

Within this subtheme it is visible that social workers place sociocultural transnational activities as the primary form of the transnationalism of the minors. Even though neither self-evident (Mascini et al. 2012) or static (Al-ali et al. 2001), the unaccompanied minors' realities were transnational as seen by the respondents. Similar to the findings of Schmittgen et al (2017) personal relationships were regarded as the main mode of transnational activities. Culture is seen to be upheld through food, music, media and home country associations, and news are watched to keep up to date with the events back at the country of origin. Different media outlets from traditional media to social media are utilized to uphold these ties. The home country events may have individual effects on the minors, but according to majority of the respondents, not to the groups. Economic activities were present in the form of remittances, which were however another part of family care and thus social activities (Schweppe, 2014).

The transnational activities are seen to bring a lot of positive influence to their lives, but also anxiety and worry. Transnationalism was seen as a undetachable part of the minor's lives, but whereas some social workers saw it at the central stage in their lives, for others it was left at the side-tracks. As visible, the upkeeping of transnational family ties is seen as the most frequent and important transnational activity. This follows along the lines of what has been previously studied (Schmittgen et al., 2017) and what seems realistic for someone who is from a war-torn country, but it can be pondered whether the responses might be also influenced by a view of the child as non-political and non-agentic (Crawley, 2009; Doná & Veale, 2011).

Transnational family

This theme describes the social workers perceptions on the families of the unaccompanied minors. This theme is most related to research question two of the study "How do Finnish social workers take into consideration transnational family ties when planning and executing the care of the unaccompanied minors?". The theme is divided into the following three subthemes: 1. Constructions of a transnational family, 2. Transnational families together apart, and 3. Family reunification. The first includes data on the form and roles of the transnational family. The

second discusses the influence of family separation and family ties, the communication between the transnational families, transnational family care, family expectations, and the influence family ties have on integration. The third focuses on family reunification; the demands and impact of it, and its relation to children's rights. The two first themes are tightly connected to transnationalism, as the family forms are fully transnational. The last theme, family reunification, on the other hand influences the structural causes of transnational families.

Constructions of a transnational family

Even though in official sense the unaccompanied minors are not seen to have next of kin in Finland and are here without guardian, most of the minors are seen to have some sort of family ties either in their countries or origin, in Finland or in a third country. These include members of nuclear family; mother, father and siblings, and relatives such as aunts, uncles and cousins. There are however cases, where all or some family members may be lost or dead.

H2: Well others have relatives, or members of nuclear family here in Finland. Or mainly they are siblings who are of-legal-age, or underaged siblings. Then there are the families, or what are left of the families, in the home country or some third country. Yeah, or then they are completely missing.

The families are constructed in multiple ways by the social workers. They are by some social workers seen as partners in upbringing. This means that their opinions on rearing are valued and they are involved in the upbringing matters. Their support and care are seen as important part of the upbringing of the minors.

H8: Yeah and sometimes you can ask the families opinion on different matters. Take them along in the decision making. If in any way possible. And along in the upbringing of the child. [...] When I for instance think about these private accommodation placements, then if we have had, if we can have a contact to the mother or father in the home country, then we will discuss with them too, of their opinion over the youth moving to private accommodation for example with this relative. That it's really... They are actively involved in the decision making, if they think it is important that they live there then we will take it into consideration.

In addition to being partners of upbringing, the parents were by most social workers utilized as tools of upbringing. The parent's opinions were remotely utilized to both improve their behaviour and encourage and support their wellbeing, in a method of "what would your parents say?".

H8: If you see that the child's schooling starts going weakly and some other issues come... They are too tired to go to school and clearly the behaviour is quite spontaneous. Then I might bring out, appeal a little to the mother and parents; that what do you think your parents like about this, and have even done so that if all upbringing methods have been exhausted and nothing has helped, then I have said that now we will call your mother or father and discuss what they think, and at the latest then they will start stuttering that yes, I will go to school. I do use it quite a lot. Both as threats, blackmail and support. [laughing] Because they want to behave. They do not want to disappoint their parents. Nobody wants to do that.

Most social workers value the information that can be received from the parents and family regarding the minors, and some also see it as important to in turn inform them about the care and environment of their child. This is seen as a humane way to do it, and the parents are seen grateful for the information.

H4: Yes, I do feel that as the family is so important there should be more... That in some ways the family should be involved. And even in one case I remembered now, a case with one boy who had had severe challenges with his psyche. And then they have grown up with the child, when I'm over here trying to get some treatments to the child. It's really important to know the background of the child, the history, whether they have always had these symptoms. So, in that situation it was extremely valuable that the parents told that it had started already at a certain age and they had had this sort of worry and have actually already taken him to doctor over this matter. Somehow [considering] the fact that they are the experts of their own child, so of course there should be more contact with them and that they would also understand where their child is at the moment.

Some social workers see that the family involvement would be hindered by their lack of knowledge about the way-of-life in Finland. One social worker saw that even though information sharing might be beneficial, the family should have no role in the upbringing. All in all, their role often fell to the side-lines.

H2: I somehow see that they have had a reason for why they have sent the child to safety or a reason why the child is without them. And then the responsible authorities are here in Finland. And also, that they are not... It really can be very hard to understand the Finnish society and the way to function here. So, I do not see that they would have anything more to give than what we know as adults and can see from the behaviour of the youth, and what the youth themselves bring out. Surely it can be that the parents might be able to tell something about the youth that they do not disclose, illnesses or something. So that kind of information sharing is important, but not being involved in the upbringing.

Many social workers stated that the family existence should not however be forgotten. When the parents are not seen in a relevant role, due to not being physically present, it can however happen. One social worker explained of a situation where the parents were forgotten about in child protection.

H7: I had one youth placed in child protection, and their use of telephone was restricted. And then the parents had gotten worried because they did not hear of the child for few days, that are they ok when there is no way to reach them. It gets forgotten so easily, no one thought that it could... You should give the youth a chance to tell that this has happened, and they have changed accommodation and cannot use the phone right now.

At times the parent's own behaviour has to be limited as it is seen as harmful for the minors. In many cases it may be creating a lot of pressure for the minors.

H1: At best it is effective upbringing conversation together with the parent, and then there are those situations where we have to in a way limit the parent and ask that they will not generate their own worries for the child. We have youngsters that may begin to develop symptoms and lose their sleep because the mother constantly calls and tells all the horrible things that happens there. They do not have food, they do not have home, and asks for help from the child, who might be 16 but the oldest living male of the family, who might have been partially send here to help the family. The pressures are immense.

It is however recognized by many of the respondents that the family could and should in several cases be more involved and engaged.

H7. Well surely with native Finnish youth in child protection the parents are taken into consideration better. Now of course these have the official guardians, who are heard in child protection cases. Yes, we are insufficiently in co-operation with the parents.

This subchapter has described the constructions of transnational families by the social workers. These include the 1. Partner in upbringing, 2. Tool of upbringing, 3. Provider and receiver of information, 4. Demanding and pressuring family member, 5. Oblivious family member, and 6. Side-lined and forgotten family member. Regards of the negative undertones of some constructions, most social workers felt the family members should be more involved and informed, and the support and care which they provided was recognized. Even though the minors are seen to be in Finland without their next of kin in the official sense, the respondents acknowledge that most of them have family members left behind. Unaccompanied minors' families or the way they are constructed are not particularly discussed in the previous research, especially not from social work perspective. This is regardless of the previous research findings stating that the families do play significant role in the transnational activities of the minors and are thus present in their lives (Patrikainen, 2017; Schmittgen et al., 2017; Kutscher & Kreß, 2016), and the factor that emotional issues caused by the family separation are often discussed in the research literature related to unaccompanied minors (Wernesjö, 2011; Rask et al., 2016).

Analysing the findings against transnational social work shows that the family existence beyond borders is acknowledged, recognising the transnational reality of the minors and their families. In most cases the family members have however been assigned a rather passive role. Where they are seen active is in providing support on the one hand and causing pressure on the other. Another active role is in providing information. The family role in creating pressure is discussed in previous research on unaccompanied minors (Björklund, 2014) while the role as providing support and sharing information are recognized in previous research of transnationalism (Withaekx, 2017). It appears that for many social workers the families are not seen as a "normal" family due to the distance, and their inclusion in the care of the minors is seen as cumbersome, a voluntary task that is practiced if there is any time left from other responsibilities. It is possible that the side-lining and othering of the family members is also related to viewing them as irresponsible and culpable for the minor migrating and being here alone and abandoned (Heidbrink, 2018).

Transnational families together apart

The situation of the family is seen to influence the minors in their day-to-day lives. Worry, longing, fear, pain, sadness, and psychosomatic symptoms are just some of the issues that the social workers express as problems the minors face due to being separated from their family. In this study, the separation is seen by the respondents to affect their feeling of safety, day-to-day functioning, education, and integration. Some are seen to feel conflicted and guilty on being in safety when their families are not and having wishes to go meet or look for the family if they have disappeared. The most worrisome the situation is for those who do have family members alive, but who are either missing, or who are in troublesome environment at the country of origin. Their day-to-day live is influenced with uncertainty. The wish to get the family to Finland is seen as prevailing.

H2: It affects a lot, there's great worry over the family if there is no family, like the connection has completely disappeared, then there is worry over where they are, how to find the family. Of course, this is personal, some accept it more easily and some get stuck. Then if the family is there then there is worry over their wellbeing, on what

conditions they are in, are they still alive tomorrow and things like that. And then a worry about it and great desire to get the family to Finland. Conflict about being here in safety, but family being there in trouble. There come even desires to go help the family.

The youth are seen as proficient users of different online based apps to keep in touch with family members around the world, highlighting the importance of internet in contacting with family members (Kutscher & Kreß, 2016). It is unclear to the social workers how often they do this because it is done privately, and because the minors have individual needs and possibilities to contact their family members. Some might contact family members more often, some more rarely. The connection might be limited by the youth themselves who start feeling too distressed from those calls due to longing or worry over their family, or due to too much pressure. Another reason for lack of contact was poor connections. Even though here all the minors have access to phones and internet, the families might not own any communication tools or might live in areas where connectivity is non-existent.

H7: They are at least to their family. Not all but quite many. It probably varies a bit on how they are in contact. Some are probably weekly, and some can be every day. Then many say that the connection may be bad. That the internet might not be working in Iran always or Afghanistan, there normally is internet but the phonelines are so weak that you cannot connect. And then the phone might be somewhere in neighbour and then it can be hard to reach, and always those lines do not work. That then it's harder to keep in contact at times.

When the family ties are active regardless of the separation, there are multiple ways they are manifested according to the social workers. There seems to be a common feel of responsibility, and the family often care for, support and encourage the minors. Very few families might send gifts to their child. The caring is reciprocal and from the side of the minors often manifested through remittances. Social workers recognize this practice but were not confirmed of the extend it took in practice. Many social workers say that they tell the minors that the benefits they receive are small and meant for their personal use. They do not however feel that they could stop them from sending money to their families if they wish to do so. Some of them admit to the minors, that sending part of this money might indeed be the only way to help their family.

H2: Well I have not with the clients... I know the pressure is there and exists, but I have not got caught, at least caught anyone on this happening at the moment. Many of the youths note that the money is small even for them, that it's not going to be enough. On the other hand, I have had to say or have said to the youngsters that it might be the only way if you can save from your own money to send money to them, that it's the only way for them to help their family.

The family seems to wish for the youth to do well in life, but at the same time there might be expectations on them being able to help the family. The family may expect the family reunification to be easier than it is, or that the youth may be in better position to support them financially. This creates expectations that in turn may cause pressure for the minor, who is caught up in the system where those issues are not easily achievable. In these situations, social workers are seen to be in a position where they can relieve the pressure by listening to the minor and explaining the situation to the family.

H1: Well. Inevitably the parents [...] wish that the child gets here a better life and education. Sometimes it's been a problem that the education has stopped or there has been no way to access it. These are sort of the basic assumptions. Then related is of course that through the education the child could help them, or that they could help them already at this stage when they have gotten here.

One way the family ties reach all the way to Finland is their influence on integration. One social worker stated, that family presence may be problematic for integration, through conflicts caused by different integration levels. Another said that the fastest to integrate are those who do not have existing family ties when arriving here. No consensus was thus found for what family situation would assist integration the most, but the presence of family as the alleviator of worry and thus facilitator of integration was recognized. Family separation was seen by most social workers as hindering integration, while family presence here was one factor to facilitate it.

H7. Yeah and what I have brought up, that when there is longing or worry over the family, then the thoughts are circling in that, and there are sleeping issues and anxiety and schooling issues. So, if the family was here then it would alleviate the symptoms and increase the integration through that. That you could be with your family and would not have to worry over the wellbeing of the family.

In general, the minors were seen to do best when they had certainty over the fate of their family, whether it meant that they had no living family members, or that they were reunified with their family. Family separation was seen to cause a lot of negative emotions in them, weakening their wellbeing (Patrikainen, 2017). No clear consensus was found for what family situation would assist integration the most, but the presence of family as the alleviator of worry and thus facilitator of integration was recognized, and the issues brought by it were seen as something that could be dealt with by appropriate support. In other studies family separation has been seen as disturbing both the integration and the wellbeing of the migrants (Rask et al., 2016) and worry over the family members as hindering the learning process that integration essentially is (Turtiainen, 2012). Family presence in turn have seen as assisting integration (Valtonen, 2008; Rudiger & Spencer, 2003). It should be also taken to consideration what Kuusisto-Arponen (2016) has stated regarding the connection of migration integration and right to family life. The author says that the possible failing of national integration policies should not be placed at the shoulders of the families. There is especially no way to evaluate before-hand how or if the family will have an impact on the integration of the individual child. The discourse of the child as the victim of the migrant family should be avoided (ibid).

Communication by the family was kept beyond borders as much as the connections allowed. Nowadays it is seen as so self-evident that everyone is able to pick up the phone and contact another person across the globe, that it was eye-opening to find out that this is not always the case. Thus Furman's (2008) notion ten years ago on class, gender and geographic location affecting access to technology seems to still hold true. In regards of this study the availability of technology was however not the only limiting factor of contact, since some of the minors were seen to try to limit contact to their families due to it causing distress. The distress could be seen related to the longing of the family, worry over them, but also the family expectations (Björklund, 2014). The family is seen to care for each other both through mental support and remittances, the latter being mainly directed from Finland to the minor's families. According to Baldassar & Merla (2014) this sort of care activity can be seen as expression of familyhood. Family should not however be seen as solely a place of support and comfort, as it can also bring about disappointment and trauma (ibid), as is seen also in these findings. The social workers recognize the minor's agency as engaged in caregiving within the family, by not trying to

prevent the minors from sending remittances (Heidbrink, 2018) even though they are sent from welfare allowances intended for one (Withaeckx et al., 2017). At times they even recognize the minor's remittances as the only possible way to support the family members, who are left without formal support.

Family reunification

According to the social workers the family reunification demands are strict and due to that a minority, if any of the children apply for family reunification these days (Björklund, 2014). For the families the application means time limits, a lot of traveling, issues with official documentation and visas, and great financial sacrifices. Other relatives or even adult siblings need to be left behind.

H1: Can they get the necessary documents, visas to the country with the closest Finnish embassy, do they have money to travel there, do they have money to pay for the processing fees. [...] These are such great financial sacrifices for the families who have in principle been in a weaker position in their home country, or through the losses of different family members, for example the father of the family has been killed, or they have ended up in a bad situation. Or the assets have been stolen by someone. Very rarely, at times, but rarely, there is a situation where the family says that the finances are not an issue in the family reunification. The challenges are so big, because we have to tell to this family that you have a possibility to apply for the permit, the end result cannot be told, the money is not returned if it does not work out, the rules are strict; they evaluate whether the child has been sent here on purpose, the contact, the dependency ratio, then comes the child's age, they must be underaged when the decision is made, for it to work out. Often the processes last so long, that the child has just turned 18, when it's almost always negative. These are very difficult things to explain so that they are understood, the demands set for the families, if there is for instance an illiterate mother and X times of siblings, the demands are impossible for one person to fulfil without a male relative or acquaintance there helping.

As the family reunification has gotten stricter, it has come to seem like a hopeless task for the minors. The biggest problem does not seem to be that the minors are not granted family reunification, the real issue is that the process has been made so difficult that they are actually not given a chance to apply for it. Their case or right to family thus never even gets evaluated.

H1: No but that's the thing, that the process has been made so difficult, that it on its own prevents it, that they cannot even evaluate the grounds and the children's right to family, when already the process has been made so that they cannot even leave the application. So, there is something fundamentally wrong with the current system. [...] Maybe it's cost effective for the state, but child's best interest is present nowhere.

Some social workers expressed worries on whether the legal protection of the minors was compromised in the current system, and whether they were informed in due time of the details and deadlines of the application process. The hopelessness of family reunification was seen to cause suffering in the minors, and in one case had even made them vulnerable for exploitation, when the need to collect money for family reunification was met by exploitative job environment. At times the money spend on family reunification is in fact seen better spend on family care. The changed nature of family reunification possibilities has altered also the social

workers role, who now have to discuss the realism of applying it at all and focus instead on preparing the minors for life without family (Mikkonen, 2013).

H1: All these changes in the legislation that have caused the family reunifications to decrease and become radically more difficult, have also altered our job to that where our main focus is on the youth learning to survive and accept the family-matters as they are not even officially initiated or there is no positive decision on the family getting to Finland.

When asked whether then the minors, as stated in the CRC (UN General Assembly 1989), have their rights realized in relation to family relations (a. 8.1), right to not be separated from parents unless it is seen in their best interest (a 9.1), and right for applications for family reunification to be dealt with by the state in a “positive, humane and expeditious manner” (a. 10.1.), the answer from all of the respondents was a no.

H2: It is not realized, because family reunification has been made so difficult, that the ordinary families do not have possibility to it due to practical reasons.

When in turn asked whether family reunification would be in the best interest of the child, each of the respondents said yes.

H6: It would be. If we think about the child's best interest, then it absolutely would be. But apparently the national interests have gone ahead.

The social workers did however say that what is in the best interest of the child should be investigated on individual basis, and it is possible that there are cases such as family abuse, where it is not in the best interest of the child. Even when realized, it was not seen as unproblematic for the minors or their families. In general, it was nevertheless seen as being in the best interest of the child and in cases where family reunifications would be carried out, the families were seen to need great deal of support by social workers.

H6: [...] it is sort of naïve to think that it would go without any issues. But even then, the parent being here takes away the rootlessness and the feeling of injustice. No matter how badly it would go. It is still less bad than what it is now, the situation. And it is clear that there are the expectations when mommy and daddy are at such a pedestal, that it is thought to fix all the problems. And then it probably only brings more problems. It fixes some problems and brings other, it is not a problem free situation and it does need work as well.

This subchapter revealed that the current policies and practices that are related to family reunification seem to prevent the families from applying family reunification and thus averting the actual possibilities to be granted it. Due to this a minority, if any, of the minors apply for family reunification. There is a choice made between saving money on family reunification, which may not be actualized in any case, or spending it on family care (Schweppe, 2011). The hopelessness of family reunification has negative impacts on the minor by transforming their family environment, as well as the nature of social work practice. The changing nature of the social work means that while the social workers might not be extensions of migration control (Humphries 2004) as in the UK (Cemlyn & Nye, 2012) or Australia (Nelson et al., 2017), they are shifting to a direction where they are supporting people to cope in situations caused by the migration policies of the state. In other words, they might not be taking part on restrictive practices, but they are having a role in solving the aftermath. Whether that is the role of social work in all state practice, picking up the mess that people are left in after state policies, is of

course another question. The situation is seen by the respondents to stand against the minor's rights and best interest, reflecting the findings of Parson (2010) who states that the child's best interest is often not the primary consideration in practice. The migration policies of the state are thus seen as overruling the children's rights (Lundberg, 2011; Eastmond & Ascher, 2011).

It is acknowledged that the realization of family reunification is not problematic, yet a consensus did seem to be, that in general it would be in the child's best interest to be reunified with their family. It is acknowledged that families should be supported after the reunification to alleviate any arising issues (Björklund, 2014). It can be also be questioned whether the difficulties are partially caused by the long waiting times, that increase the gap between family members integration (Turtiainen, 2012). As with integration, possible issues should not be seen as justification to separate the families. In the discourse where children are seen to belong with families and the family relations are supported through hardships, it would seem as othering if these minors are separated from their families due to needing support. If the children are seen as having rights to family relations according to the CRC (UN General Assembly 1989), then the policies should reflect this. It thus appears appalling that these rights are made mockery of by what are seen by these findings as unobtainable demands with family reunification application.

The themes impact to transnationalism is apparent, as family reunification is in the unaccompanied minors' case the biggest influence in causing families to stay separated and thus creating and upkeeping transnational family ties (Robertson et al., 2016).

Transnational social work

This chapter turns the focus to the theme of transnational social work through the subthemes of 1. Social workers role, 2. Social work scope and resources, 3. Social work competence, and 4. Social work and transnationalism. The first subtheme describes the different roles which social worker have employed in their positions. The second subtheme focuses on the scope and limits of social work, as well as the availability and limits of relevant resources. Third subtheme showcases the different ways competence is perceived and needed in social work practice in this context. The final fourth subtheme looks at the relevance of transnationalism for social work, as well as the relevance of different ways of doing transnational social work. The three first themes take a general view on social work with unaccompanied minors but tie up in analysis to transnationalism. The last subchapter has the most straightforward connection of social work and transnationalism. The findings within this theme are most closely related to the research question number three of this study, asking "How transnational is the social work practice with unaccompanied minors?"

Social workers role

The job of the social worker is told to constitute of support and guidance based on individual needs, assessment of service needs and personalized care plans for the minors, co-operation with guardians, unit staff, and authorities, and statements to the migration office. Then depending whether their clients have a permit or not, the aim is on reception or on integration and independence.

The social workers hold variety of roles in relation to the clients. The image that appears from the data places social workers as advocates who safeguard the rights and processes of the minor.

H2: Well one important part that I forgot from there is being a sort of advocate for the children and youth, meaning that their rights and benefits are safeguarded so, that the matters in Finland will be dealt with according to the best interest of the child and youth, and according to the legislation. That is maybe the biggest role and purpose of the practice.

A word that was presented frequently in the data was realism, which appears to be a relevant concept in the social work the respondents conducted with unaccompanied minors and their families. It mainly relates to discussing with the minor and the family whether certain actions are realistic, i.e. family reunification.

H1: And we try to emphasize for the youth that what are the realities of what they can do at that age, and then get the message across to the parents.

In connection to discussing what actions are realistic and what not, they are limiting both the minors and their families. The limiting of the adult family members is most frequent and often based on the social workers wish to take the adult responsibility off of the child.

H6: The clients have quite wild fantasies of the Finnish system and their own abilities, so sometimes you have to be quite strict.

They do offer support where needed, but do not see themselves involved in the day to day lives of the minors, and thus perceive themselves to be more distant authority figures.

H2: I cannot say about the process more specifically, again social work is in quite a small role in the day-to-day life, the counsellors at the group homes are constantly present and get closer to the youth or child. On the other hand, social worker is seen as a bigger authority, who you want to come and complain about matters that do not work well at the group home, that in a way there is a sort of safeguarding role, or an authority for the youth.

For many social workers this distant role means that they are not seen as someone who the minors want to open up to or discuss about their private matters, but by a few this role is in contrast seen as a benefit for conversing on difficult matters.

H4: I think that social worker is often the one that the boys want to talk with about their family. The counsellors might be too close, and then when they talk among each other many boys bring out that they do not want to talk with them because they talk with each other, and the social worker is a bit more distant. And then it is our duty to bring to discussion matters that are difficult, and then I think it is part of the social work focus to talk about family. It is a sensitive topic, but at the moment I think that all the client youth want to talk about their family.

This subchapter presents the social workers in a variety of roles. They are seen as distant authority figures, which either increases or decreases their role as a trusted listener. They are also seen as advocates who safeguard the rights of the child in relation to the system and their own families. This is seen to be done by limiting the minors and their families and guiding them to what is deemed as realistic. The social workers role as similar to Kohli's (2006) *humanitarians* is again emphasized. In this role they focused on the here and now, avoided probing, were strict with transparency, and saw themselves as authority figures who were realistic and pragmatic, while advocating, protecting and mentoring the minors. Some of the

workers shifted back and forth with this role, and the role of a *witness* who had a focus both on the past and the now. Only one social worker resonated more with the *confederates*, being fond of the minors and creating trustful relationships with them. Even though the majority were thus seen in a rather dry and bureaucratic role I would still see them along Kohli, as doing their best to care well for the minors. I would however also say that at instances the practice by some was not far from the depiction by Herz & Lalander (2018) of social workers as the powerful and abstract authority figures, who pop-up to the lives of the minors to make powerful decisions. I would not see this to be however the fault of these individual social workers, but the policies and system they are a part of.

The different roles are important in relation to transnationalism, because they define the practice the different individuals undertake, and thus the correlation of it with transnational practice. The distant authority for instance relates to collection of biographical information and engagement with issues that are seen to be in the past (Schmitt, 2016). Kohli's (2006) humanitarians for instance were vague and forgetful of this sort of biographical information, as has been the case in these findings as well.

Social work scope and recourses

The scope of the social work practice is limited in different ways according to the different respondents. Difference is being made especially in relation to different professions such as counsellors or therapists, and fields such as voluntary work. The support is also seen to be mainly limited to the minor client, instead of the family members, at least as long as they reside outside Finland. When asked whether the family members back at home should be supported in any way, one social worker stated, that:

H2: Well no. It is the responsibility of that country where they reside to take care of its citizens. And us social workers here have the responsibility of our clients. That it goes to... It would go more towards voluntary work and that sort of sector from Finnish perspective.

The biggest resource that the social workers are lacking is clearly time. This is seen to greatly influence the scope of social work practice. When asked whether the minors' parents should be heard or informed regarding their care, one respondent stated, that:

H4: It would demand more resources, because it is challenging to have time for that, no matter how important it is.

Another social worker who was struggling with lack of time nevertheless stated, that, the case would be different if there were official recommendations at placed like with other children.

H6: In the case of Finnish children you would not however be able to say that yeah, they have not met their mother, because we here do not have time. [...] So if there was an official recommendation then of course it would further the communication. I do not know if someone wiser has thought about it and decided that it's not in the best interest of the child. But I think that there is something... More like protecting Finnishness, and brought out by immigration, than thinking purely about the child's best interest.

Another resource that the social workers appeared to be lacking is power, many of them told about feeling powerless, and without actual possibilities of influence. This might be impacted

by the issue that many of the respondents saw national legislation as the primary point of reference in their practice. In regards of powerlessness one of the respondents said that:

H4 [...] I sometimes feel that the biggest job for me and the biggest target of frustration is that I try to fight for the rights of the boys and then again individual social worker can unfortunately just not do it. It should be somewhere higher up, where they can intervene and influence. Sometimes it has felt like fighting against the windmills, because I feel that something is such an injustice, whether it is related to family reunification, or service provision. Or to how much they get time with me, why I have so many clients. [...] So those are the issue that are exhausting in this job. Not the client work, and the working with the boys is wonderful, but then again, the fact that how I can as a social worker cope with feeling in a way that their rights are not realized and how I can influence it when it feels so limited.

The limits of social work are seen also elsewhere, when at least in practice the social work is seen to be limited strictly within Finnish borders by most of the social workers. When asked whether transnationalism is visible in social work a respondent stated, that:

H6: It is visible. But then again, we come to the fact that this job is tightly limited within Finnish borders. Both from the perspective of financial resources and legislation. There was recently a human rights training and it became apparent, that police are international, criminals are international, but the matters of working people and social work are not. They are very local.

This subchapter shows that based on the views of the respondent's social work practice in Finland is limited to the borders of the state. Social work clients are solely those, who reside within those borders. This showcases the institutionalization of social work within nation state (Righard & Boccagni, 2015). These factors have a natural impact on how transnationalism and the mobility of the clients and their families is perceived and how the scope of the practice reaches them (Withaekx et al., 2017).

The biggest lack of resources is faced in the areas where they are much needed; time and power, each affecting also transnationalism. Time is being seen as hindrance between implementing transnational activities, also recognized as a possible explanation to lack of transnational activities by Söderqvist et al (2015). Another lack of resource was with power. The respondents saw their possibilities to influence matters regarding their working conditions, the wider conditions of their clients, and policies regarding their clients or migrants as considerably low (Cemlyn & Briskman, 2003). The lack of power the social workers face practicing between human rights and migration policies reflect the findings of Huegler (2016) who stated that the social workers are placed at a liminal position, similar to their clients.

Social work competence

Social work competence in different fields was seen to be a vexed question. The majority opinion was initially that no specified competence is needed, because the basic processes are similar in all social work. This was also the point of appeal, when some social workers were seen to be afraid of working with migrants.

H2: But well what I have noticed is that many are afraid to work with migrants, and then we try to tell that they are no different than others, if they need an apartment you

get them apartment, if they need psychiatric help you arrange it. The problems are the same as for the Finnish clients.

It was however added by many that the social workers in this position need a lot of specified knowledge on policies and processes. This was however seen to be the case for most other fields as well, and the knowledge was seen to accumulate over time. The knowledge was seen to base on national legislation, ethics and rights.

H3: It is beneficial to be interested and familiar with issues and I am trying to do it myself all the time, to know the legislation applied to the youth, and the child welfare act, and then matters related to integration, the aliens act, and it would be good to have some knowledge on that transnationalism too. It's like in all the social work fields that you need some specific knowledge too.

Openness was prioritized over learning in building competence. The majority of respondents for instance did not feel the need to gain further knowledge on the conditions of the minor's home countries, beyond that there is a war. Also, flight reasons were seen as more related to asylum process. Only two respondents said they had sought further knowledge of these matters. Only one respondent said that it might be beneficial to learn of cultural practices but recognized that it is challenging when the youth do not represent any static culture.

H2: But well, if you work with migrants, everyone has prejudices, but they should stay in certain limits when doing this job. And there should be a sort of interest towards other cultures.

Cultural sensitivity was subsequently seen by most as the best approach to the work with the minors.

H7: All the social workers need to have cultural sensitivity, at least that when you work with these clients. Common sense and cultural sensitivity.

In this subchapter it can be seen that the competence in working with unaccompanied minors leans to common social work education and experience, specific knowledge on legislation and processes that accumulates while working at the field, and cultural sensitivity. The views on the competence relate to how the minors are seen as ordinary or special client group, and thus how they are understood in relation to their lived environments and backgrounds, holding relevance to transnationalism and biography work through that. They can also be reflected against Schmitt's (2016) diversity competence needed in transnational social work. Schmitt sees the social workers in need of *reflexive and critical diversity competence*. This competence is based on human rights and anti-discriminatory perspective and demands that social workers reflect their own perceptions: values, interpretative frames and procedures.

By the respondents in this study a specific competence was not seen as particularly needed, but cultural sensitivity was the most highlighted form of competence. This was seen as open, understanding and reflexive way to encounter the clients. The social workers did also hold an anti-discriminatory perspective and wanted to avoid stereotypical notions, though in practice there were some othering notions among the findings. Human rights were not as integrated to practice as national legislation. Schmitt (2016) states that knowledge about migration conditions such as flight circumstances or flight reasons allow the social workers to gain deeper understanding of biography and lifeworld's of the clients, it is thus concerning that majority of the social workers did not feel the need to gain further knowledge on these matters. In

conclusion it can be said that while the practice may be culturally sensitive and the value-base fitting, there is still some reflection to be done with interpretative frames and the procedures with clients, in order to hold diversity competence fitting to meet the transnational minors.

Social work and transnationalism

The transnational forms present within this subtheme involve biographical work, contact to family, contact to organizations, and professional networking. Also, the utilization of informal vs. formal networks was present in the data, as well as the overall influence that transnationalism has on social work.

Since most of the social workers worked with minors that had residence permits they received secondary biography information. Only two of the social workers worked with minors who had recently arrived and had thus collected this information themselves through interviewing the youth. This affected the results in regards of social workers collecting biographical information. The collection of biographical information was also related to the theme of silence as many of the social workers wanted to avoid probing. When receiving secondary information, they were very concerned about being transparent with the youth over them having received and viewed their information. The avoidance of probing was explained with starting off from a clean slate, the minors right to choose silence, for it not being the business of the social worker, or for being cautious of the client's backgrounds.

H3: The youth are at the age that I think they have the right to decide about it and I would see that based on legislation too they have the right to decide what they say. With those who want to speak I will speak [...] but if someone does not want to speak I will not be digging in anyway. Maybe it's another moment in their life when they want to open up.

There were however few social workers that saw the biography work, including knowledge on family background, as important part of holistic social work. They utilized different tools, such as interviews and network maps to gain this knowledge.

H7: It helps to understand the entirety. If the youth has psychological symptoms, and you know about their background it is easier to understand what the symptoms might be about. I think it is important to know the full picture in the work of a social worker.

Contact abroad was taken, but not in abundance. One of the major forms of contact was with families. This was utilized in most cases for informing the family on family reunification, or the children's environments here. Some social workers did not make any contact with the family. The lack of time was seen to be one influence in the lack of contact. Only two social workers were contacting the family more intensely.

H7: Well I haven't, I don't have time to keep in contact with them other than regarding family reunification. Sometimes when there has been a lot of worry over the youth then I have thought about calling the family and telling that they would support to that too. Because the youth themselves does not say if they are doing badly, they tell the parents that everything is ok, everything is ok. But because I have quite the workload due to having so many clients, there is just no time left for that.

The other form of contact abroad was with organizations. Some contact was tried to make with officials of European countries, but this was not seen as functioning in the most optimal way.

No contact to the officials in countries of origin were made, since there were not seen to be official contactable structures in the countries where the minors came from.

H8: Well. This client group comes from these countries, so it is impossible. Iran does not have no reliable social work, neither Afghanistan or Iraq. So, it's... It does not exist. Nor can be trusted. And of course, then in other countries... If there is such a country, then why not. But yes, from where they normally come from they do not usually have social work, reliable. So, it's challenging.

The need for more international networking and knowledge-sharing was recognized, but the co-operation wishes were quite Eurocentric.

H2: Why couldn't it be, a better network between European countries.

There were individual cases when large international organizations were contacted, mainly with the aim to assist in family reunification or support the families in crisis situations that were seen to affect the child. The organizations operating in the countries of origin were however untrusted.

H1: Once I thought it was great in one case that I got an immediate response from UNHCR in Afghanistan, when a sibling had been left behind. I got contact information to where the child could go, and the response from the siblings was that these places they are telling about, these children's homes, are worse than being on the streets. That in the children's homes they sell out even your organs. So, there might be this difference of opinion when they have the idea and perception of how the organizations there are, and I have the idea that we have UNHCR that has reliable partners, because I look at this from the western frame of reference.

Also, the Red Cross family tracing was utilized, but it was often seen as rather inefficient. Family members had been found through informal ways from social media instead. Couple social workers said they took over their own form of spy work, looking for the family from social media.

H8: It goes through the official way. I think that our work is more efficient at times. Through social media. Because that's what the youth use, and most of the adults too all over the world. It is quite good when the photos and those come, so probably the Red Cross one is quite good too, but I don't know if any results have been measured on how many has benefitted from it.

In fact, in many cases, the minor's own informal networks were seen as more efficient, than formal networks. Many social workers thought that the minor and the family were seen to gain more support and help through their informal networks, and peer support was seen more efficient for the minors, than what was offered by employees who had not experienced anything similar as the minors.

H2: It is normally most functional, when the youth and the families find those support structures from their own networks.

All in all, transnationalism was seen as relevant to social work. The extend of relevance however followed the same idea as the relevance it was seen to hold for the minors, thus whether it was a matter in the side-lines or centre of practice. For other social workers it was an issue that was in the minor's life, but not taking a centre stage, and thus something that should be

acknowledged. For others it was important and seen in the focus, especially through the transnational family ties.

H8: Transnationalism. I think that when working with the unaccompanied minors it has to present at all times, since the beginning.

One social worker stated that transnationalism should be recognized, but that the social workers should receive training regarding the matter. As many of the social workers wanted to be given an explanation on to what transnationalism means in the beginning of the interviews, it seems that the concept is not the most familiar to the respondents, and training around it might be beneficial.

H6: Yes, and it would need training and theory base, and an international model. If you try to start doing a lot of transnationalism here yourself then quickly you will be told that what are you trying to do on your own.

The matter of collecting biography information divided the social workers. As has already been discussed under previous themes, some of the respondents wanted to avoid probing on to the clients matters. There were however others who saw it as a necessary part of holistic social work, in line with Schmitt (2016). Contact abroad both with families and organisations was seen to be taken in moderate amounts and in individual cases. The fact that contact abroad is nevertheless taken shifts the practice of transnational social work from moderate level to intermediate (Righard & Boccagni, 2015). The extent of the contact was highly dependent on individual social worker, varying from no contact at all to frequent contact. Contact was also taken to some international organizations. These contacts were however seen to be influenced by corruption issues as well as inefficiency, and the minors themselves had a lack of trust in them. Informal networks were seen as more efficient than the formal ones. This may push the minors to turn from formal networks such as social work to these informal networks in search of support (Withaeckx et al., 2017) and shared experiences (Björklund, 2014). Transnationalism of the minors is acknowledged and the impact of it recognized for the social work practice. The extent of the influence was however again differing between each respondent. There was also a need for training and framework, which is likewise acknowledged in the previous research (Schmitt 2016; Righard & Boccagni, 2015). There is in addition a call for paradigm shift, but it is understood that it should not be on the shoulders of individual social workers (Withaeckx et al., 2017), as worry was within these findings as well. The findings indicated, that the transnational practice holds a very low degree of institutionalization, relying on the efforts and discretion of individual workers (Righard & Boccagni, 2015).

CHAPTER SEVEN

Concluding discussion

The aim of this study was to understand how the Finnish social workers perceive transnationalism as part of the minor's realities, take into consideration their transnational family ties, and how transnational the social work practice itself has become. This was done with the intention of gathering information which may be utilized in developing social work practice with unaccompanied minors, and thus subsequently increase the wellbeing of the client group, along with the implementation of children's rights. Whereas the realization of the ultimate intent is hard to evaluate at the time of writing this conclusion, the aim of the study may now be discussed.

For this study the interview data of seven Finnish social workers was analysed using thematic analysis. The study is located within interpretivist-constructionist positions, thus the results are seen as constructed social realities (Bryman 2012) by the respondents and the social setting that the study took place in, instead of depictions of objective truth of the matter. The accounts of for instance the way unaccompanied minors' families are is a construction by the respondents, and even further interpretation by the researcher. It should be however noted that even if something is constructed, it does not mean that it does not have an impact. How matters are constructed is an issue of power (Burr, 2015). Policies are thus one such matter that have been constructed but at the same time have very real influence in people's lives. From these constructions and interpretations an analysis for this study was formed. The analysis includes three themes which were chosen to describe the data: transnational minor, transnational family and transnational social work.

The findings of the theme *transnational minor* can be seen to answer the question of "How do Finnish social workers view transnationalism as part of unaccompanied minor's realities?". The unaccompanied minors are constructed through their sameness and otherness by social workers and the structures. The social workers perceive the minors in majority cases at the same time as ordinary teenagers, but also as holding specific backgrounds and experiences, thus recognizing their individual and collective experiences and needs (Gustaffson et al., 2016). In policies they are unfortunately perceived the other way, as either fitted in services that do not acknowledge their specific circumstances, or as othered, not deserving the same amount of care as others (De Graeve & Bex, 2016). The minors are seen to resort to silence, which is multiplied by the social workers who refrain from probing into their matters (Kohli, 2006). Different transnational activities were recognized by the respondents, and the influence of them on the minors was seen to be both positive and negative. Primary activities were seen as sociocultural, and the main form of transnationalism was seen to be their family ties. Agentic behaviour towards family care and transnational activities was accepted and recognized, yet not worded as such. It can be questioned whether that and the highlighting of certain transnational activities over others is affected by a certain construction of childhood (Crawley, 2009; Doná & Veale, 2011). The findings do however follow along the lines of previous research of unaccompanied minors' transnational activities (Schmitt, 2016).

The theme "*transnational family*" can be seen to answer to the research question of "How do Finnish social workers take into consideration transnational family ties when planning and executing the care of the unaccompanied minors?". The family members of the minors are constructed in variety of ways by the social workers. These include 1. Partner in upbringing, 2.

Tool of upbringing, 3. Provider and receiver of information, 4. Demanding and pressuring family member, 5. Oblivious family member, and 6. Side-lined and forgotten family member. The respondents were seen to consider the transnational family ties when planning and executing care of the minors. This was however not done regularly and was viewed as a voluntary task that often got left to the side-lines due to time demands. In the majority of the cases they were not seen as a “normal” family that needs to be involved, which might be due to perceiving the family as irresponsible and culpable for the minor migrant’s situation (Heidbrink, 2018). Family separation, upkeep of family ties, and family reunification all bring along different issues, and social work support has a relevant role in alleviating these situations. The social workers recognize the minor’s agency in undertaking family care and sending remittances, thus facilitating transnational family relations (Withaecx et al., 2017). Family reunification procedures are seen to stand against the child rights and best interest in its current form, where it has been made so difficult, that the families cannot even apply for it. In addition to it influencing the lives of the minors and families, it changes the nature of social work (Mikkonen, 2013). The unobtainable family reunification is the biggest influence for the separation of the minor from their family, and the upkeep of transnational family ties (Robertson et al., 2016).

The third theme of *transnational social work* can be seen to answer the question of “How transnational is the social work practice with unaccompanied minors?”. The social workers obtain different roles in their practice. Realistic and pragmatic authority figure in line with Kohli’s (2006) *humanitarian* is the most common of them. While they seemed to care for the minors as well as possible, there is a concern of them being seen as powerful, abstract authority figures who pop-up to make decisions for the powerful and abstract system (Herz & Lalander, 2018). This can however be seen as the blame of the system, rather than individual workers. The social work was seen to be limited to Finnish borders, showcasing the institutionalization of social work within nation state (Righard & Boccagni, 2015). The social workers are seen to face a lack of time to carry out transnational social work (Söderqvist, 2014), and they feel like lacking in power, being placed between inclusionary human rights and exclusionary migration policies (Huegler, 2016). The competence of the social workers leans to common social work, specific legal and process knowledge, and cultural sensitivity. There is however still some reflection to be done with interpretative frames and the procedures with clients, in order to have diversity competence with transnational minors (Schmitt, 2016). Training related to transnationalism is seen as beneficial and needed. The transnational activities the social workers undertook places the practice shifting between moderate and intermediate transnationalism, varying between different respondents. Yet even though the respondents did undertake both moderate and intermediate activities, this was not consistent between different social workers and focused more on individual cases, showcasing low degree of institutionalization of transnationalism (Righard & Boccagni, 2015). The overall practice is thus still weakly transnational, even though the good first step has been taken in having transnational awareness (Withaecx et al., 2017).

In conclusion the social workers recognized transnationalism as part of unaccompanied minors’ realities to a varying degree. The recognition is connected to silence, agency, and perception of the minors as either same or other. Transnational family ties are fairly well considered, and they are acknowledged important for the minors. The inclusion of the family is however voluntary, weak, and inconsistent. The social workers undertake transnational activities, but the overall transnationalism is weak. This may be influenced by the view of social work limited to Finnish borders. The initial awareness of it and its impact is however step towards the right direction. I would thus call for an increasingly transnational social work, where the minors’ transnationalism and transnational relations are acknowledged, and they are always

encountered as individuals with not just particular problems but particular capabilities (Schmitt & Homfeldt, 2014).

In relation to the contradictory position of social workers Nelson et al. (2017) suggested a model to challenge this, inspired by Foucault's principle of resistance and aimed at reconnecting with social justice and human rights and involving advocacy and social activism. This goes in line with Cemlyn & Briskman (2003) who acknowledge the social workers liminality and powerlessness, but state that the workers are actually in an optimal position to bring about social justice and the actualization of human rights. I would thus encourage for increasingly rights-based social work practice, where the minor's rights are actualized in day-to-day practice but also in raising awareness, which might also help to alleviate feelings of powerlessness by connecting social work to social justice and human rights (Cemlyn & Briskman, 2003). This could be achieved by involving the third human rights mandate as suggested by Staub-Bernasconi (as cited in Wonka, Staub-Bernasconi, 2012). Social work should thus look beyond the nation state (Christie, 2003) and be defined as human rights profession, that can be practiced in the new global environment and is not solely dependent on nation state structures (Ife, 2012) when even the clients are not. These changes should not however rely on individual social workers but be reflected in organizations and policy, and apparent in the resources allocated for social work.

This study contributes to filling a gap in research, but the need for further studies on social work practice with unaccompanied minors and the reflection of it to transnationalism remains. From the perspective of transnationalism, I would along with Patrikainen (2017) say that it would be interesting to study transnationalism from the standpoint of the families of the unaccompanied minors. It would also be interesting to study how family reunification impacts the child (and their family) as well as what sort of support is provided in these situations. In relation to social work with unaccompanied minors there is a need for further, more extensive studies on how human rights are involved and viewed by social workers practicing with unaccompanied minors, and how the position of social worker is manoeuvred in the limitations between human rights and migration policies. Reflecting this with social work resistance (Nelson et al., 2017; Huegler, 2016) and the connectedness of social work and the state in Finland (Buchert, 2016) it would be interesting to study that what, if any, forms of resistance social workers in Finland take when working under oppressive policies, and what position the workers have towards activism and advocacy. In relation to unaccompanied minors there is a need to study further the issue of their othering in care.

In addition to the findings that relate to the research question and aim, there are two important findings within this study: how unobtainable family reunification is for the unaccompanied minors, and how the minors are othered within the care structures. In addition to recommendations for further research, I would thus call for the responsibility of the state to provide the unaccompanied minors the actual chance to apply for family reunification as per their rights. The othering of unaccompanied minors needs to stop in services and policies. Their rights to care need to be more specifically defined in the legislation, and the municipalities need to be properly guided in the minor's rights to care and services.

As I have attempted to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, it is also important to discuss the limitations of it. I believe the research aim and questions to be well structured and of relevance. Being fairly new combination of concepts, the background literature was however limited in some parts. I see time as the main limitation of this study. At the current time frame, I have learned as I go, but had there been more time before rushing into the field I believe to have been able to construct a better methodology, basing it on the most relevant sources. This

could have allowed me to collect increasingly appropriate, in-depth data, and be even more meticulous in ensuring the trustworthiness and the ethical considerations, as well as further reflect the ontological and epistemological positions of the study. Surely If I would have known at the beginning what I know now, this study would have been better. As this study is part of my master's studies, learning should however be one of the most sought-after achievements from this research, and that has definitely been attained. I would thus not be keen to change anything in the study design, but rather it is a question of improving. I believe that the methodology was good, and I stand by the choices that have been made. Qualitative approach was the best approach to collect the thick data needed for this study and semi-structured interviews were a good method for that. Thematic analysis in turn appeared useful in analysing the data, though it can be questioned whether some deeper essence was missed in separating the data to pieces. When it comes to a holistic view on the matter it would have been interesting to include the unaccompanied minors in this research as well. I however recognize that it would not have been in the scope of this student thesis, at least not as ethically conducted. In conclusion I am pleased with the way this research was carried out and believe the results to be useful in reflecting how Finnish social workers perceive transnationalism in their practice with unaccompanied minors.

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Appendix 1. Interview invitation in Finnish

Haastattelukutsu

Hei, olen sosiaalityön ja ihmisoikeuksien maisteriohjelman opiskelija Göteborgin Yliopistosta. Olen tekemässä pro gradu-tutkielmaa suomalaisten sosiaalityöntekijöiden näkemyksistä ja kokemuksista alaikäisten yksintulleiden turvapaikkaa hakeneiden transnationaalisesta (ylirajaisesta) lapsuudesta.

Haastateltavaksi etsin sosiaalityöntekijöitä jotka työskentelevät ryhmä- tai perheryhmäkodeissa asuvien alaikäisten yksintulleiden turvapaikkaa hakeneiden parissa (turvapaikanhakijat ja luvan jo saaneet). Toiveena on ymmärtää miten sosiaalityöntekijät käsittelevät transnationalismia ja transnationaalisia perhesuhteita työssään niin ajatuksen tasolla kuin käytännössäkin. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on kerätä informaatiota jonka kautta voi kehittää alaikäisten yksintulleiden turvapaikkaa hakeneiden kanssa työskentelyä ja näin ollen lisätä heidän hyvinvointiaan ja oikeuksiensa toteutumista.

Motivaatio tutkimukseen on lähtöisin ajankohtaisuudesta mm. perheenyhdistämisen haastavuuden vuoksi, sekä omasta kiinnostuksestani kansainvälistä sosiaalityötä sekä lasten hyvinvointia ja oikeuksia kohtaan ja työkokemuksesta alaikäisten yksintulleiden turvapaikanhakijoiden ryhmäkodissa.

Tutkimus on laadullinen ja aineisto kerätään puolistrukturoitujen yksilöhaastattelujen avulla. Haastatteluun tulisi varata aikaa n. 60 minuuttia, haastattelut nauhoitetaan. Haastattelut voidaan suorittaa työpaikallasi tai esimerkiksi kahvilassa. Matkustan itse paikalle haastatteluja varten, joten säde mieluiten max. 200 km Tampereelta. Saatan kuitenkin pystyä joustamaan tarpeen mukaan. Tietoja käsitellään luottamuksellisesti, henkilö- tai tunnistetietoja ei tallenneta tai julkaista missään vaiheessa. Yksittäistä vastaajaa ei voi tunnistaa valmiista tutkimuksesta.

Tutkimus julkaistaan englanniksi, haastattelut voidaan suorittaa joko englanniksi tai suomeksi. Tutkimus julkaistaan Göteborgin Yliopiston elektronisessa julkaisuportaalissa. Tutkimukseen osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista.

Jos sinulla olisi mahdollisuus osallistua tähän tutkimukseen, ota pian yhteyttä, sillä haen tutkimuslupaa tietäessäni mistä kaupungista haastateltavat ovat.

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Anna Joutsijoki

Göteborgin Yliopisto

(sähköposti)

Appendix 2. Interview guide

Finnish social worker's perceptions regarding the transnational childhoods of unaccompanied minors

Oma esittely/ *Own presentation*

Tutkimuksen esittely/ *Presentation of the study*

Suostumus/*Informed consent*: Tutkimukseen osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista ja sen voi keskeyttää missä vaiheessa tahansa, haastattelut nauhoitetaan ja niistä voidaan esittää otteita tutkimusraportissa (mutta henkilöllisyys ei tule esiin ja aineisto on luottamuksellista) ja tutkimuksen tekijään voi ottaa yhteyttä, mikäli tulee kysyttävää. *Taking part in the research is voluntary and can be interrupted at any point. The interviews are recorded and extracts of them may be presented in the research report. Identity will not however be revealed, and the data is confidential. You can contact the researcher at any point should questions arise.*

Kysymyksiä nyt?/ *Any questions now?*

Nauhoitus/ *Recording*

Interview questions:

Tausta/Background:

- Mikä on koulutuksesi? *What is your education?*
- Milloin valmistuit? *When did you graduate?*
- Mikä on työkokemuksesi tältä alalta? *What is your work experience from this field?*
- Kauanko olet työskennellyt tässä yksikössä? *How long have you worked in this unit?*
- Missä yksikössä työskentelet? *In what unit do you work at?*
- Mikä on asiakasryhmäsi? *What is your client group?*
- Miten kuvailisit työnkuvaasi? *How would you describe your job description?*
- Mitä sosiaalityöllä tavoitellaan alaikäisen yksintulleen [lapsi/asiakas] elämässä? *What is social work trying to achieve in the life of the unaccompanied minors [child/client]?*
- Minkälaisen prosessin lapsi aloittaa sosiaalityöntekijän kanssa saapuessaan yksikköön jossa työskentelet? *What sort of process does the child began with a social worker when arriving at the unit you work at?*

Transnationalismi/Transnationalism

- Miten ymmärrät konseptin transnationalismi/ylirajaisuus? *How do you understand the concept "transnationalism"?*
- Näkyykö transnationalismi mielestäsi asiakkaidesi elämässä? Miten? Kuinka useaa asiakasta se koskettaa? *Is transnationalism in your opinion present in the lives of your clients? How? How many clients it involves?*

-Minkälaista informaatiota keräät lasten taustaa koskien? Miten keräät sitä? (Lapsi itse, uutiset, perhe) *What kind of information do you collect regarding the background of the children? How do you collect it? (From the child, the news, official reports (by who?), the family)*

-Kuinka hyvin tunnet lasten alkuperä-/lähtömaiden tilanteen? Millä tavalla olet tilanteeseen tutustunut? *How well do you know the situation of the children's countries of origin/departure? In which way have you gotten to know about the situation?*

-Millä tavalla lapsen tausta (lähtömaa, kotimaa, perhe) on läsnä työskennellessäsi heidän kanssaan? *In what way is the background of the children (country of departure, country of origin, family) present in the work you conduct with them?*

-Ovatko lapset tietääksesi yhteydessä kotimaahansa? Miten ja kuinka usein? Keneen siellä? *To your knowledge, do the children communicate with someone in their countries of origin? How? How often? With who?*

-Millä muilla tavoin lapset ovat kontaktissa lähtö- tai kotimaahansa? *In which other ways are the children in connection with their countries of origin/departure?*

-Kuinka koet muutosten yksintulleiden alaikäisten kotimaan tilanteessa (esim. konfliktit eri ryhmien välillä) vaikuttavan heihin yksilöinä tai ryhmänä täällä? *How do you see changes in the children's home countries (i.e. conflicts between different groups) affecting them as individuals or groups here in Finland?*

Family ties

-Mitkä ovat lasten perhesuhteet? *What are the family situations of the children?*

-Miten perheen poissaolo mielestäsi vaikuttaa lasten elämään? *How does the absence of family affect the children's lives?*

-Miten ylirajaiset perhesuhteet vaikuttavat lapseen? *How do transnational family ties affect the child?*

- *Loneliness*
- *Support*
- *Pressure*
- *Responsibility*
- *Remittances*

-Voiko sosiaalityö tehdä jotakin mahdollisen paineen ja vastuun huojentamiseksi? *Can social work do anything to relieve the possible pressure or responsibility?*

-Toteutuvatko lasten oikeudet perheeseen tai kontaktiin perheen kanssa kuten CRC:ssä kuvailtu (art 8.1, 9.1, 9.3 and 10.1)? *Are the children's rights to family or family connection provided as stated in CRC (art 8.1, 9.1, 9.3 and 10.1)?* children's rights to family relations (a. 8.1), right to not be separated from parents unless it is seen in their best interest (a 9.1), and right for applications for family reunification to be dealt with by the state in a "positive, humane and expeditious manner" (a. 10.1).

-Tuetaanko lapsia yhteydenpitoon perheensä kanssa? Kuka tukee ja miten? *Are the children supported in their communication with their families? Who supports this and how?*

-Kuinka moni asiakkaista hakee perheenyhdistämistä? Mistä syistä sitä haetaan/ei haeta? *How many of the children apply for family reunification? For what reasons is it applied/not applied?*

-Olisiko se lapsen edun mukaista, että perheenyhdistäminen tapahtuisi? Miksi, miksi ei? *Would it be in the best interest of these children that family reunification would occur? Why, why not?*

-Oletko kohdannut tilanteita joissa perheenyhdistäminen ei olisi lapsen edun mukaista? Voitko kertoa näistä tilanteista lisää? *Have you experienced situation where family reunification would not be in the best interest of the child? Can you tell more about it?*

Social work practice

- Oletko yhteydessä lapsen perheenjäseniin? Miksi? Miksi et? Millä keinoin? Keihin? *Do you seek contact with family members of the child? Why? Why not? Through which means? To who?*

- Uskotko, että lasten perheenjäseniä tulisi kuulla ja informoida heidän huolenpitoaan koskien? Miksi? Miksi ei? *Do you believe that the children's family members opinions should be heard or informed in the care of the child? Why? Why not?*

- Oletko yhteydessä kehenkään lapsen huolenpitoon liittyen heidän lähtö- tai alkuperämaassaan? *Are you in contact with anyone over the care of the children in their country of origin or departure? (Networks, NGO, government officials)*

- Mitä ovat ajatuksesi yllirajaisesta yhteistyöstä muiden sosiaalityöntekijöiden (tai järjestöjen ym) kanssa koskien asiakasta tai heidän perhettään? *What are your thoughts on collaborating transnationally with other social workers in the case of a client or their family?*

- Pitäisikö myös taakse jääneitä perheitä tukea? Kenen ja miten? *Should social workers seek to support also the families left behind?*

- Miten uskot, että tämä tuki tai sen puute vaikuttaisi lapsiin? *How do you think that either the existence or lack of this sort of support would affect the children?*

Conclusion

-Tulisiko sosiaalityöntekijöiden ottaa huomioon alaikäisten yksintulleiden transnationaalisuus? Millä tavoin? *Should social workers take into consideration the transnationalism and transnational family ties of the unaccompanied minors? In what ways?*

-Haluaisitko lisätä mitään muuta? *Is there anything else you would like to add?*