

Readers' perceptions of the encounter with an
ethnic minority group member in living library
setting



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READERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ENCOUNTER WITH AN ETHNIC
MINORITY GROUP MEMBER IN LIVING LIBRARY SETTING

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Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to study the experiences and perceptions of Finns who have encountered an ethnic minority group member in Living Library setting. The study aimed at observing how the Finnish participants have considered issues of personal contact, intercultural encounter and facilitated contact in the Living Library setting. This study is part of the Empowering Work Research and Development Path of Laurea Otaniemi, and was done for the Living Library project in Finland, which is administrated by the Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi. Living Library is a non-formal method that aims at promoting equality and diversity and to reduce prejudice. It functions like a mobile library, but instead of real books it lends out people, living books, who represent minorities and groups that face prejudices and discrimination in our society. The participants of this study were ten people who borrowed an ethnic minority living book for a discussion at World Village Festival 2009 in Helsinki meaning that the findings and conclusions of this study have to be seen in this context and not to be generalized to all Living Libraries organized before. The study method was qualitative, including focused interviews and inductive content analysis. The findings showed that participants experienced the encounter facilitated by Living Library as a positive experience, allowing them the right to ask, although nothing surprising had come up in the reading situation. According to the findings, people who borrowed a living book were open-minded and unprejudiced, and they did not come to the Library to challenge their prejudices but to discuss and to get answers to their questions. This refers to the method perhaps attracting only open-minded people, thus facilitating only neutral experiences and not epoch-making ones, since the participants are already open-minded. This implies that there is a need for creating new ways of contact between different groups, and a need for evaluating the existing methods, if an aim is to challenge the prejudices.

Keywords: Living Library, intercultural encounter, supported contact

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Abstrakti

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoitus oli tutkia niiden suomalaisten näkemyksiä ja kokemuksia, jotka ovat kohdanneet etnisen vähemmistön edustajan Elävän Kirjaston puitteissa. Opinnäytetyö pyrki tarkastelemaan, miten suomalaiset osallistujat ovat kokeneet henkilökohtaisen kontaktin ja kulttuurienvälisen, mahdollistetun kohtaamisen Elävä Kirjasto-menetelmän puitteissa. Opinnäytetyö on osa Laurea Otaniemen voimaannuttavan työn tutkimus- ja kehittämissinjaa, ja on tehty Suomen Elävä Kirjasto-projektille, jota hallinnoi Suomen Nuorisoyhteistyö -Allianssi ry. Elävä Kirjasto on menetelmä, jonka tavoitteena on yhdenvestaisuuden edistäminen ja ennakkoluulojen vähentäminen. Elävän Kirjasto toimii kuin liikkuva kirjasto, mutta oikeiden kirjojen sijaan se tarjoaa ihmisiä lainaksi. Nämä ihmiskirjat edustavat vähemmistöjä ja ryhmiä, jotka kohtaavat yhteiskunnassamme ennakkoluuloja ja syrjintää. Tähän opinnäytetyöhön osallistui kymmenen henkilöä, jotka lainasivat etnisen vähemmistön edustajan elävänä kirjana Maaailma Kylässä -festivaaleilla Helsingissä 2009, jolloin myös tämän opinnäytetyön löydökset ja johtopäätökset ovat suhteessa tämän tapahtuman mahdollistamaan kontekstiin eikä suinkaan kaikkiin järjestettyihin Eläviin Kirjastoihin. Tutkimusmenetelmä oli laadullinen, käsittäen teemahaastattelun ja induktiivisen sisällönanalyysin. Löydökset osoittivat, että lainaajat kokivat Elävän Kirjaston mahdollistaman kohtaamisen positiivisena, mahdollistaen luvan kysyä, eikä lainaustilanteessa ollut tullut ilmi mitään yllättävää. Löydösten mukaan lainaajat olivat avoimia ja ennakkoluulottomia, eivätkä he olleet tulleet Elävään Kirjastoon haastamaan ennakkoluulojaan, vaan keskustelemaan ja saamaan vastauksia kysymyksiinsä. Tämä viittaa siihen, että menetelmä houkuttelee jo etukäteen avoimia, ennakkoluulottomia ihmisiä, joten menetelmä ei mahdollista käänteentekeviä kokemuksia ennakkoluulojen suhteen. Tämä tarkoittaa, että uusia Elävän Kirjaston kaltaisia menetelmiä mahdollistamaan kohtaamisia enemmistön ja vähemmistöjen välille tarvitaan lisää, ja olemassaolevat menetelmät vaativat jatkuvaa arviointia ja päivitystä, jos niiden avulla halutaan hälventää ennakkoluuloja.

Avainsanat: Elävä Kirjasto, kulttuurienvälinen kohtaaminen, tuettu kontakti

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1 INTRODUCTION

Different cultures and ethnic groups are meeting increasingly in today's world due to the accelerating globalization. Apart from Finland's traditional ethnic minorities like Swedish speaking Finns, Roma people, Sámi people, Finland is a country with a growing immigrant population. (The Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). Despite the ethnic Finns living in close vicinity with various ethnic minority groups, it is not self-evident that these groups, majority and minority, would have mutual personal contacts. Instead, they can have strong prejudiced ideas about each other, possibly reinforced by seeing constantly only the surface of each other (Chrysochoou 2004, 69). The possibilities for the groups to encounter in safe, equal and supported environments are needed, in order to facilitate contacts that reduce prejudice between the groups and to promote equality and understanding of each others' cultures (The Finnish Ministry of Education 2008).

The focus of this paper is to study the experiences and perceptions of the readers at Living Library. The intercultural encounters are at the core of this study. The study aims at observing the experiences and perceptions on intercultural encounter in Living Library setting of those Finns who borrowed a living book representing an ethnic minority group during World Village Festival 2009 in Helsinki. There are some studies made on the Living Library, thus this paper is the first to present the readers' views. Earlier studies have shown that Finns hold prejudices against ethnic minorities and immigrants (Jaakkola 2004) but the prejudice can be reduced by education, and personal contact if taking place under certain conditions (Chrysochoou 2004).

In Finland, Equality Act which came into force in February 2004 aims at decreasing discrimination and promoting tolerance (The Finnish Ministry of Interior 2004). This idea is found essential and principal in this Bachelor's thesis containing the respect towards cultural diversity and intercultural encounter. The same principles form also the basis of the ethics and values of this study. With this study we want to express the need of respective atmosphere and equality in coping with the challenges, brought by multiculturalism, in our societies and to show an example of contributing to society and social work in local level through this social work Bachelor's thesis.

A few campaigns in Finland have tried to inform and teach Finns about the cultural differences, human rights and equal citizenship, and Living Library is one of these methods. For example European Union-wide European youth campaign for diversity, human rights and participation "All different all equal" by the Council of Europe is one of these campaigns and it took place during 1995-2007 (Council of Europe, All different all equal 2006). These campaigns and methods need constant evaluation and development in order to guarantee

that the aims set for them are being met. Also, in this Bachelor's thesis we want to see if Living Library method is serving its aims, based on the the readers' (majority group members') point of views.

The Living Library method is a non-formal method aimed at promoting equality and diversity, and decreasing prejudices and stereotyping. It aims at bringing different kinds of people together to share a dialogue; to facilitate meetings of minority groups and the majority, and through that to reduce prejudice. Living Library functions like a mobile library which can be set up anywhere, but instead of books the library lends out real people, who represent various groups that face prejudice and discrimination. These people, called "living books", can be borrowed for a discussion on the place for a maximum of 20 minutes. The participation in the Libraries is free and anyone can borrow a book. Living Library is a method open for any organisation or institute to use in respect of consulting first the Living Library coordinator. In Finland the information about Living Library method and events is being coordinated by the Living Library project of the Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi, who is our working life partner in this study. (The Living Library Organization.)

The participants of this study are ten Finns, varying on age and motives to borrow the ethnic minority living book. The study is carried out by using qualitative methods; focused interviews for collecting the data, and inductive content analysis for analysing it. These methods suit best when the aim is to observe individual's experience and not to provide statistical means. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2008.)

2 LIVING LIBRARY

2.1 Living Library project in Finland

In Finland, the first Living Library was organised during the World Village Festival 2006 by the Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi's "All Different, All Equal" -project. Originally the method has been developed in Denmark and first being organised in Roskilde Festival 2000 in Denmark. Today, it is constantly being developed and used around the world. Also, a Living Library Network Organization has been established in Denmark in order to unite all the Living Library actors around the world. (The Living Library Organization.)

The main purpose of the Living Library project in Finland is to distribute information about the method, and to provide support and counselling for those who intend to organise a Living

Library event. Those instances interested in organizing Living Library event are encouraged to contact Allianssi in order to arrange every library respecting the principles and aims of the method. The project is also administering the Internet pages of Living Library in Finland, where all the up-to-date information about the libraries is found, e.g. information for the organisers, about upcoming events, trainings, and so on. Basically, the purpose of the project is to share the expertise on Living Library method and to make sure that it is being organised around the country.

As said, In Finland the Living Library project is administrated by the Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi. The Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi is an umbrella organisation for Finnish youth organisations and an interest organisation for Finnish youth and youth organisations. It is also a service organisation for those, who work with young people on the local or regional level and in youth organisations, and a service organisation directly for young people. (Suomen Nuorisoyhteistyö -Allianssi ry 2009.)

Allianssi is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation independent of any political and denominational affiliation. Membership is open to all democratic nation-wide organisations dealing with youth issues. Allianssi has actively participated in the Council of Europe campaigns against racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance and is a member organisation of the European wide network against racism UNITED. Presently the main emphasis is in the promotion of multicultural youth work both nationally and internationally, and the Living Library project is one of the important on-going projects for serving this emphasis. (Suomen Nuorisoyhteistyö -Allianssi ry. 2009.)

Allianssi has had earlier had a campaign for promoting equality and diversity, Kaikki erilaisia, kaikki samanarvoisia (Keks: All different all equal) -campaign. All different all equal by the Council of Europe was a European Union-wide European Youth Campaign for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation. (Council of Europe, All different all equal.) Keks in Finland was the one, who launched Living Library to Finland, organising the first Living Library of Finland in Helsinki, at World Village Festival in 2006 (KEKS, Allianssi Nuorisoyhteistyö). This paper can also be seen as a certain kind of a continuum; now, in 2009 this study is carried out in at the same festivals, with Allianssi, this time doing a small study on the subject. One could also add "finally", since not many studies have been made on the subject, though it has existed in Finland since 2005 and been organised here already for closer to 100 times (Suomen Nuorisoyhteistyö - Allianssi ry. 2009).

As this Bachelor's thesis will be published on Finland's Living Library website, as well as on the international website of the Living Library Network Organisation, this work will benefit the Living Library network, the educators using the method, and also the people who are interested in methods promoting equality globally. Currently growing migration rates in the world demand new and innovative ways to cope with cultural diversity in the fight against racism and cultural conflicts. This need is also present when completing this paper. (The Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006.)

2.2 Living Library concept

According to the Living Library Network Organization "The Living Library is an innovative method designed to promote dialogue, reduce prejudices and encourage understanding. The main characteristics of the project are to be found in its simplicity and positive approach. In its initial form the Living Library is a mobile library set up as a space for dialogue and interaction. Visitors to the Living Library are given the opportunity to speak informally with "people on loan"; this latter group being extremely varied in age, sex and cultural background." (The Living Library Organization.)

Living Library works like an ordinary library in a sense that anybody can come to "borrow" a "book". There are often about 30 people as books, and many of them if not all, represent groups that often face a lot of prejudices. For example, in Finnish Living Library events there have been book titles such as "Somali", "gay", "vegan", "police", "visually impaired", etc. These people can be borrowed for a discussion for a maximum of 20 minutes.

The Living Library helps people to challenge their most common prejudices in a positive and humorous manner. It is a concrete way of promoting equality and understanding. According to The Living Library Organization (The Living Library Organization.) it "is a "keep it simple", "no-nonsense" contribution to social cohesion in multicultural societies". From the point of view of social work, Living Library can be viewed as a preventive work method, by helping people to encounter each other and through that, to decrease their prejudices, which again is expected to decrease racism. Living Library's work can also be seen as a type of anti-racist and anti-oppressive work, its aims being much of the same as theirs: promoting equality, decreasing racism. (Dalrymple & Burke, 1995.)

Basically the method works best in places, where a lot of people pass by, like in festivals or other public happenings. The idea of Living Libraries is free for everyone to use, thus everyone are allowed to use the method and to organise the Living Library event. Many

countries have their own Living Library coordinator, who is responsible for ensuring that the information of the method is easily accessible. In Finland, the Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi administrates the Living Library project. The project is coordinated by the project secretary Asta Rentola, who is also a supervisor of this study.

As said about Living Library: "It is a - contribution to social cohesion in multicultural societies" (Living Library Network Organisation), we feel that as future multicultural social welfare workers this will also be one of our priorities in this Bachelor's thesis. Through equality, democratic citizenship and encounter between ethnic minorities and majority group it is possible to understand, develop and contribute to social cohesion in multicultural Finland. Jacobson & Jang notice that the idea of educating people about multiculturalism is not to create a homogenous world culture but politics and conditions under which different cultures could cope equally (Gudykunst & Mody 2002, 353). Jacobson & Jang borrow Bohman's idea of world citizenship: "World citizenship ought not to be simply a matter of all the people of the world finally coming to have enough similar beliefs and goals to enter into a common republic; rather it should be a matter of achieving the conditions under which a plurality of persons can inhabit a common public space". (Gudykunst et al. 2002, 353.)

2.3 Reading in Living Library

Living Libraries are events organised at places where a lot of people can easily pass by and participate, e.g. in various festivals or public functions. In Finland, the Library is usually organised by a non-governmental organisation or a public service, like by a school or public library. It is also possible to organise a Library as a private person, although the arrangements demand usually an input of a whole working team. Although the method in itself is not owned by anyone, and everyone are free to "borrow" the idea, the Living Library project in Finland strongly recommends to use its consulting before organising a Library event. The Living Library project in Finland offers consultation and support for those who are interested in organising a Living Library event. Also it can distribute Library material and information.

In the case of this study, the Living Library at World Village Festival 2009 was organised by the Living Library project of Finland together with a few other non-governmental organisations. The books were being searched for through mailing lists and organisations' contacts, and finally about 30 people were willing to be books at the festival. For organising a Living Library, both the books and library staff (librarians) are needed.

Usually the Library event takes place in a tent, if it is organised outdoors. There needs to be a separate area for the books and for peaceful reading. In the library, there can be found a library desk with the book lists, a books' section with chairs and couches where the books can talk with each other, and it is a must that there is some peaceful space for the reading to take place. The book lists consist all the book titles that can be borrowed, and the readers can choose from it with whom they'd like to discuss. After the reader has chosen a book, the librarian gets the living book "from the shelf", meaning the book's section. The Living Library is for free, and the idea is that anyone can just walk in and borrow a living book with the help of the librarian.

When the living book and the reader have agreed about the reading, with the help of the librarian, they can mutually agree about the place for the reading. This is good to be a quiet and peaceful place where the book and the reader can easily discuss. Usually there are some places appointed particularly by the Library organisers. The reading can take maximum of 20 minutes, although sometimes it is possible to extend the time if there are no readers in the queue. When the reading is finished, the living book returns to the Library and the reader can fill a feedback form.

The Library works slightly differently in different settings and by different organisers. There are never two exactly similar Libraries, since the books and the organisers vary. If organised in secondary schools, different issues need to be taken into notice than e.g. if the Library is organised at music festivals. Also the "target group", the readers, are very different in school setting than at festivals where anybody can come. The success of the reading situations is also highly dependant on the organiser; whether the organisers are well prepared and trained by the Living Library project of Finland or not.

In this study, the Library was organised at World Village festival and the visitors of it consist of very different people as anyone can join the festival for free. But despite the fact that anyone could have joined, it can be guessed that the visitors are mainly from the capital area and somewhat open-minded people, as the festival profiles itself as a cultural festival where various cultures around the world are present.

In this study, the expression "ethnic minority group member" has been used to describe the living books that are both immigrants and ethnic minority group members. This is because in the Living Library, the immigrant can usually be borrowed as both, as representing their group (e.g. "Tanzanian"), or as "an immigrant". The people who involve as being living

books, can have many book titles at the same event. To make it more clear; a Tanzanian person can be lent out as "Tanzanian Book" or as an "Immigrant Book", or even as a "Vegan Book", if that's the case. Thus, with the interviewees we have spoken about both, immigrants and ethnic minority group members, depending on which title they have borrowed. In this study when we speak also about ethnic minorities, it is usually referring to an immigrant, unless the context is about the findings.

In the Finnish law like in any other official documents, the term "ethnic minority/origin" has not been defined, simply because the meaning of the term is such a multiple and no clear definition is possible to make. "Ethnicity" or "ethnic origin" is impossible to define because it is a relative term that varies with time. One can talk about it as a dimension of an individual's identity, although it is a communal phenomenon from its origins. Lepola and Villa (2006, 110) state that ethnicity is often associated with national or geographical origin, lineage, language, culture, habits and values, although it is impossible to objectively define ethnic groups based on these.

2.4 Previous studies of Living Library

Feedback summaries, simple and mainly quantitative questionnaires, have been gathered from many Living Library events and for long they have been the guiding forms for future development of the Living Library. During the recent years some studies of Living Library have been done and those studies have looked into Living Library method more profound.

There exists three previous studies related to Living Library, although their focus is very different from this paper. Karin Hegnelius Tedenbrant made her Master's thesis in 2008 in Borås Högskola and the name of the thesis was "Don't judge the book by its cover - a case study about the Living library at the public library" (Hegnelius Tedenbrant 2008). Sanna Hautamäki from Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences made her Bachelor's thesis in 2008 about Living Library as a possible creative youth work method (Hautamäki 2008). Also Mika Korpinen has studied Living Library method in 2006 as a vocational institute study of two study credits (Korpinen 2006).

These studies are concentrating on Living Library method itself, and in relation to public library and youth work. The aim of this paper is to take a step further, and instead of merely studying the method itself, this paper observes the experiences of the intercultural encounter enabled by Living Library. By doing so, it provides valuable information about the Finnish readers and their views, which again gives information about whether the Living Library serves its aims. This paper aims also to support the development of the Living Library method

so that it can meet its aims more efficiently. Compared to the three mentioned studies, this study is the first to be made in English, as the language of the previous three studies has been Finnish or Swedish, and thus it allows the global Living Library network to read it also.

3 ETHNIC MINORITIES IN FINLAND

3.1 Generally about ethnic minorities

Finland's immigration situation follows the European and the whole world's tendencies. Especially the amount of refugees in the world, and in Finland, is highly dependent on the world's crisis and conflicts and the emigration after the conflicts. (10 väitettä & faktaa 2005, 13.) Also, in many countries the biggest foreign groups have arrived from the neighbouring countries, Finland is no exception. The FEMAGE -report (2009, 10), the part of the final report of "Needs for female immigrants and their integration in ageing societies" -project carried out in Finland between 2006 - 2007, found out that only few Finns named Estonians and Russians as the most common immigrant groups, even though these groups are actually the biggest foreign groups in Finland.

There have always been foreigners living in Finland and these days there are foreigners from almost every country in the world inhabiting Finland. Still, we have to remember that Finland has not been a receiving country of immigrants for long, and for example the amount of asylum seekers Finland has received has been very small compared to other countries. (Kanervo & Saarinen 2007, 19; Forsander & Similä 2003, 45.) For example, in 2005 Finland received 1-2% of the refugees in the European area as 3000 to 4000 persons have sought asylum in Finland during the last years (10 väitettä & faktaa 2005, 9). The numbers have not changed significantly and they correspond to the current situation too (Kanervo & Saarinen 2007, 14-66; Ihmisoikeudet.net-hanke 2007; Population Register centre 2009).

It is also good to remember that even though the growing immigration flows are a global phenomenon, multiculturalism is touching some areas in Finland especially because ethnic minorities are living mainly in metropolitan area and some other big cities. In the end of the year 2007, 5 % of Helsinki's, Espoo's, Vantaa's and Salo's population were immigrants, which is way more than in other cities in Finland. There are many more immigrants living in Finland in reality because immigrants who have received a residence of Finland do not show in these statistics as Intergration of immigrants to the Finnish society -report found out (Maahanmuuttajien integroituminen suomalaiseen yhteiskuntaan 2009, 16.) This means that the challenges of growing immigration population in Finland are especially touching some

areas. That is also one reason why this study is carried out in an event which gathers people from all over the metropolitan area.

Foreigners have different backgrounds and reasons to leave their home countries and to settle down in Finland. People come to Finland as migrants, emigrants, refugees, quota refugees and asylum seekers. In addition, there are several traditional ethnic minorities in Finland which have lived in the country during hundreds of years. (Kanervo & Saarinen 2007, 19.)

3.2 Finns' attitudes towards ethnic minorities in Finland

Ethnic minorities in Finland, as well as the attitudes and prejudice toward them, are not a new phenomenon. When it comes to immigration, Finland used to be a departing country for people for a long time, but the big changes in world politics between 1980's and 1990's started to attract emigrants from the former Soviet Union, and refugees from the war zones. Current situation of immigration in Finland started to form when Somali refugees arrived in Finland in the early 1990's and Finland had to start to think about how to answer to the new challenges brought by multiculturalism in the society. (FEMAGE -hankkeen loppuraportti 2009, 9.)

The idea of a nation-state, that citizenship and rights of the people living in each country are derived from pure country-based ethnicity, is still living also in the minds of Finns, and makes some people to believe that Finns are purely Finns with their traditions and nationalistic ideology. But the fact is that Finnish culture as a nationalistic ideology has not much relation to reality as a pure, unblended culture. Kupiainen (as in Simola 2003, 244) discusses that Snellman, the father of Finnish nationalism, borrowed his nationalistic ideas from German philosophers, mainly from Hegel and due to that our lifestyle is already from its' baseline partly multicultural and we have adopted cultural influences in our local lifestyle already in pre-historical times.

In order to understand the attitudes Finns have towards ethnic minorities, it is good to understand what attitudes mean in general. Attitudes produce control, security and information (false and real) and with the help of these a person also classifies information, creates models and schemas, organizes surrounding world and perceives and faces things (Viikko-Riihelä 1999, 695). Stereotypes and prejudices serve the same purpose but that does not mean that they would be just a product of cognitive mechanisms, like categorization, dissonance, predicting, remembering, but also products of social life, like a membership of a group or seeing social life organized as ingroups and outgroups. In fact, we have stereotypes

about most groups, including many to which we belong, but the stereotypes for outgroups often have a special vigour. (Schneider 2004 230, 264.)

As attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices seem to be ways for a person to cope better in this world they also cause sometimes discrimination, even racism, and minorities are very often the ones suffering from the situation. For example, immigrants' situation could be seen to be quite complex due to the fact that many times they arrive to Finland knowing a little or nothing about Finnish culture and lifestyle, not even talking about the weather and geography, and they have to cope in totally unusual environment. To understand better the notion of intercultural encounter we have to also comprehend the other side of it, not only the ethnic minorities' side. Also the members of majority groups have to deal with the unfamiliar environment due to minorities. That is why members of majority group construct their own common sense theories or social presentations to manage this unfamiliarity and this includes constructions of otherness in order to define oneself. (Chrysochoou 2004, 34.)

According to FEMAGE -report (2009, 11) Finns' attitudes towards ethnic minorities are more positive than in other European countries. Only one third of Finns thought that there are too many foreigners in Finland when in other countries studied 2/3 thought so. Finns' perceptions of foreign groups living in Finland are biased because when asked to name 3 biggest immigrant groups in Finland, majority named Somali people as a first group even though only 4% foreign citizens in Finland are Somalis. (FEMAGE -hankkeen loppuraportti 2009, 10-11.)

Integration of immigrants to the Finnish society -report (Maahanmuuttajien integroituminen suomalaiseen yhteiskuntaan 2009, 61-62) is the preliminary report of a collaborative project between the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH), the Rehabilitation Foundation, and the National Institute for Health and Welfare. It studied the integration of immigrants in distinctive domains of life in Finland. It has been noticed that attitudes toward immigrants who move to Finland have changed to be more positive during the years 1993-2007 and objection of refugees has decreased. Attitudes toward Somalis and Russians are more negative than towards other immigrant groups. It has been also proved that low socioeconomic position, lack of education, high age and male gender explain the negative attitudes. Still what is important also for this study, is that contacts with immigrants have been noticed to increase tolerance. Especially personal contacts with immigrants decrease threatening visions of immigration related to economy, racist attitudes and the fear of delinquency, terrorism, HIV/AIDS and drugs in all population groups. (Maahanmuuttajien integroituminen suomalaiseen yhteiskuntaan -report 2009, 61-62.)

These results explain a little about the situation in Finland on attitudes to ethnic minorities. They explain what kind of factors affect in the attitudes, which approaches have worked in order to create cultural understanding and to break the attitudes down. It has been pointed out that information and education reduce prejudice as well as the contact with immigrants (Viikko-Riihelä 1999, 691).

Contact theory got strong support in the research carried out during 1987-2003, which studied the attitudes of Finns towards immigrants: according to the research, the more the persons interviewed personally knew "foreigners living in Finland", the more positive the attitude of theirs was (Jaakkola, 2005, 109). The positive attitudes about immigrants most often were the result of personal contact. The personal contacts explained most, when researching the person's attitudes towards immigrants; the person's political stand, occupation, age and gender became only after that as explanators of the attitude. (Jaakkola 2005, 73, 110.)

In the year 2003 the attitudes of Finns towards foreigners living in Finland were more positive than in the year of recession 1993. Nevertheless, different ethnic groups were not considered "equally good/bad" but differences showed in the attitudes of Finns. Generally, those foreigners who stand up from the crowd clearly by their outlooks (skin colour, dress) or their behaviour, language, or other ways, are met with more reserved attitudes. Those foreigners, of whom Finns' attitudes are more positive, are the ones who come from countries sharing a lot same with Finnish culture: Sweden, Norway, Denmark and England. (Jaakkola 2005, 69.)

3.3 Finnish legislation and policy guidelines concerning discrimination and equality

The Equality Act in Finland guarantees by the law that all citizens should be treated equally in Finland (Ministry of Justice 2004). Living Library is a method developed to promote equality and to decrease discrimination (Living Library Network Organization). Living Library serves the aims of the Equality Act by promoting the growth of the more tolerant society by bringing the minorities visible and enabling the dialogue between the minorities and the majority. As this paper can be seen as a contribution in developing the Library, it can also be seen serving the aim of the law.

Discrimination based on language is prohibited by the Equality Act. In Living Library method, interpreters are used as often as possible and they are called "human dictionaries". These interpreters are not professionally trained interpreters, but people who get involved in organising the particular Library events, for example librarians, and then prepared to interpret during the event. (Lepola & Villa 2006, 150; Living Library Network Organization.)

In the Finnish Government migration policy program guidelines number 13, 14 and 15 are aimed at promotion of multiculturalism and non-discrimination. The policy guideline number 13 stipulates: "Relations between different groups shall be encouraged in a positive direction." This is what Living Library does, it aims at bringing the majority and minority group members together in a safe and positive environment. (The Finnish Ministry of Interior 2006.)

The policy guideline number 14 emphasizes the participation: "Immigrant participation shall be promoted and opportunities fostered for immigrants to uphold their own culture within the law." This has also been an important issue in Living Library from the beginning; there have always been immigrants as living books, and it has been seen important that the majority group members borrow immigrant books and the books that represent different ethnic minorities. As the aim of the Living Library states, "It is a - contribution to social cohesion in multicultural societies". (The Finnish Ministry of Interior 2006; Living Library Network Organization.)

The policy guideline number 15 in the Government migration policy program is about prevention of racism and discrimination based on ethnic origin: " "Zero tolerance" shall be aimed for in the prevention of racism and discrimination based on ethnic origin. All authorities, social partners and nongovernmental organisations adopt a decisive attitude to achieve real equality irrespective of ethnic origin." The Finnish Youth Cooperation -Allianssi is one of those non-governmental organisations, and its Living Library project is a result of Allianssi's long-term policy of promoting equality and decreasing discrimination. Living Library used to be part of the All Different All Equal -campaign which was aimed at promoting equality, and now it has become its own project because the work towards the current Government policy aims at Allianssi. (Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi.)

In the Finnish Government's child and youth policy programme 2007-2011 diversity and equality are seen as focus areas for improving the well-being of children and young people (The Ministry of Education 2008). The Finnish Youth Cooperation -Allianssi aims at promoting the welfare of children and youth, and its funding partly comes from the Finnish Government, thus immigration and internationalization are also marked for its strategy for 2007-2010 (Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi). The Living Library project is one of the actions carried out for the realisation of the law.

In the Government's child and youth policy programme 2007-2011, in the chapter four (4) on equality and diversity one of the aims is to create prerequisites for intercultural dialogue.

The measures to be taken for promoting equality and non-discrimination include strengthening young people's positive attitudes toward multiculturalism and various minorities, and supporting non-governmental projects which aim at promoting those positive attitudes. The Living Library project belongs to this category and thus serves the aims of the Finnish Government policies. (Ministry of Education 2008; Suomen Nuorisoyhteistyö - Allianssi.)

The chapter 4.5 of the policy programme focuses on the promotion of education for global responsibility and equality. The education activities taking place outside school are especially promoted as also the role of the non-governmental organisations in education for global responsibility. The chapter states that in supporting youth activities the priority goes to ones that support young people in growing up international, which again supports the respect for human rights and the prevention of discrimination. (Ministry of Education 2008.) Living Library is a non-formal educational method that aims at decreasing prejudices and promoting equality, in respect for human rights (Living Library Network Organization).

4 INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTER

4.1 Cultural identities and intercultural encounters

In the late 80's it was proposed to take a social psychological approach to social work because social psychological studies about roles and communication explained many issues faced by social work (Payne 2005, 161-162). Later, these theories about communication and roles have been widely used in social work because social psychological analysis of human interactions can provide us an understanding how identity and behaviour is created in social relations. When understanding these interactions it is possible to use these same interactions to modify persons' social constructions, behaviour and social relations. This offers a fruitful possibility to constructionist social work to observe and comprehend people's social identities, group behaviour, power relations in encounters, oppression and discrimination between groups. (Payne 2005, 161, 165.) This is also why it has been chosen to use some social psychological approaches and theories in this social work Bachelor's thesis in order to understand and reflect the experiences of the encounters in Living Library.

Cultures are encountering more and more in today's world due to the globalization and the refugee flows from war zones. Huntington (2003, 29) is referring the situation to the new world order when the Cold War's super powers' competition has changed into battle of cultures. If earlier the super powers were competing about territory, material, power and status these days the cultures are doing the same in order to ensure their survival. Many times people see their culture and ethnicity as something superior and more pure compared

to other cultures, like one's own culture would have a primary right to exist. This kind of ethnocentrism prevents people from taking one another's position which in order creates barriers for intercultural encounter. (Simola & Heikkinen 2003, 253-254.)

In intercultural communication the most important aspects are respecting and valuing the other person. First step in intercultural encounter is identifying one's own culture, attitudes and prejudices because cultural background directs individuals' behaviour and affects on interaction and communication between individuals. It is important to know about other cultures, which helps to understand different people and recognize the communication differences. It is good to bear in mind that observing, noticing and interpreting messages is mainly learnt and bound to culture. (Kanervo & Saarinen 2007, 2, 4, 11.)

Interacting with other cultures is also tied to cultural and social identities of persons. When we encounter cultural differences we tend to view people from other cultures as strangers. Social identity is a part of self-image which is defined by belonging to a group, and gets its power from a group and that is why perceptions of the group become and form a part of the self-image of a person. (Vilkko-Riihelä 1999, 674.) This explains why it can be hard for a person as a member of a group to meet other groups that challenge the identity of one's own group and in this way also the personal social identity of a person. The realistic group conflict theory explains what kind of things can be interpreted as challenging for the identity and the survival of a group and a person itself. Problems between groups arises from competition for scarce resources, like territory, wealth or natural resources and perceived conflicts can be as important in producing prejudice as realistic conflicts. (Gudykunst & Mody 2002, 133; Gudykunst & Kim 2003.)

Cultural identity activates when we are interacting with people who are interpreted to be culturally different. This is based on a general idea that all identities generate from the differences between people and groups. According to Kupiainen this would mean that ethnicity generates from contact and that cultural encounters create ethnic tensions as well as cultural tolerance. (Simola & Heikkinen 2003, 255.) Kupiainen adds that it is wrong to expect that encountering cultures would automatically create tolerance and understanding but the only way to build lasting equality is equal cooperation, which is not based on hierarchy but reciprocity and when all the participants are willing to learn from each others and changing their own thinking due to that. (Simola & Heikkinen 2003, 256.)

4.2 Easing intercultural encounters

Intercultural encountering is not trouble-free, because opinion differences in religion, worldview and politics cause permanent conflicts between different ethnic groups (Vilkkö-Riihelä 1999, 670). Countries' borders are becoming more and more invisible and in the name of various unions and contracts it is possible to move between countries working, travelling and doing business. The world had gotten smaller and this has forced people to face new cultural realities and think about intercultural encountering with a new intensity, and challenges related to it. Some interventions have been already noticed to work in order to promote equal interaction and democratic ways to encounter. One of the basic elements of improving intercultural encounter and communication is presenting information of different cultures in non-evaluative way; in doing so valid cultural information can replace unrealistic expectations with more realistic ones. In practice, this means presenting practical reasons for the beliefs, values and habits of the other cultures, which in order helps people to understand each others behaviour, customs and worldviews. (Gudykunst & Mody 2002, 134.)

Gudykunst & Mody (2002 134-137) also introduce other ways to unite people, reduce prejudice and stereotypes, and to ease intercultural encountering. People could be trained in the logic of making statistically valid inferences, which would reduce their tendency to stereotype groups. Also, creating a strong identification with an overlapping social category, like a regional alliance, humankind, gender or age, gives people shared identities and ethnic identities in debate could be seen just as part of people's identities and not as the whole identity itself. It is important to notice that actually we people have more things in common than we have differences. Creating positive climate for interaction can improve cross-cultural interaction as well. Increasing information and subjective experience of different cultures improve relations between groups and individuals. (Vilkkö-Riihelä 1999, 672.) This is why many social psychologists highlight the importance of personal contact and experience in creating more equal intercultural encounter.

4.3 Contact theories

In the contact between individuals, group's signification disappears and members of contrary groups can more easily encounter without conflicts. When groups are in contact, the situation changes and personal qualities disappear. (Vilkkö-Riihelä 1999, 670.) This insight speaks for the utility of the personal contact. There are many theories that encourage the use of personal contact in cultural encountering such as Social learning theory based on which people can socially learn from the personal contacts (Gudykunst & Mody 2002, 137). One of these theories is the contact theory which defines the main conditions of the contact settings in order to create successful cultural encounter. Living Library also aims to fulfill the

conditions of successful intercultural contacts introduced in Contact theory as explained in further paragraphs.

The father of contact theories is Allport, who designed the first ideas of intergroup contact theory, and this group theory also involves the contact between individuals as representatives of different minority groups. Crisp, Stathi, Turner and Husnu (2008, 2) describe Allport's contact theory's position, credibility and influence on other studies as follows: "One of the most successful and influential contributions to social issues research has been Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis (Harrington & Miller, 1992; Jackson, 1993). The hypothesis is now a well-specified theory that documents the psychological processes that produce a positive impact from social contact (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998). Allport originally asserted that maximally positive outcomes will be observed if the contact involves equal status between the groups, common goals, no competition, and institutional support. Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis of over 500 studies has recently qualified this assertion. We now know that while the above may be facilitating conditions, they are not necessary conditions. There is a fundamental, robust, and positive impact of contact on intergroup attitudes regardless of target group, age group, geographical area, or contact setting." (Allport in Crisp, Stathi, Turner & Husnu, 2008, 2.)

The conditions to be fulfilled in order to create successful intercultural encountering are defined by other researchers as well. To combine these conditions the main idea of the contact theory is that face-to-face interaction leads to an opportunity to get to know one another as individuals. The contact is always voluntary, supported by the relevant authority figures and equal status conditions have to prevail within the contact settings as Allport also mentioned in his early studies. Members of the stereotyped groups can prevent self-fulfilling prophecies by counteracting them, if they are aware of others' negative expectations and have been trained to do so. That is why training of the living books, in this case the members of ethnic minority groups, plays a significant role in creating safe and equal intercultural encounter. Other condition for intercultural encounter and contact is that interactions should be very cooperative and lead to positive outcomes. (Gudykunst & Mody 2002, 134-138.)

In Living Library setting the main idea is also to provide voluntary based individual face-to-face contact between the members of different groups, among which ethnic minorities are present. This makes it possible to have a personal contact with an ethnic minority group member, when it becomes important to remember that the status conditions between the persons in contact situation need to be equal as well. In Living Library settings that is possible through the positions of both the living book and the reader. The living book has put himself

into situation where he represents a minority group of which many people have prejudices, and in that sense his position is very sensitive. But also the position of a reader is sensitive because as an assumption, that the reader when choosing and reading a living book, admits that he has prejudices and he kind of "comes from the closet" with his prejudices. All this puts both the reader and the book in a sensitive position and when it is also known that the whole idea is to promote diversity, equality and democratic intercultural encounter, the both should have in mind this shared aim.

Talking about the stereotypes and prejudices, the minority group members who volunteer as books in Living Library are all educated for their task, and their consensus have been raised about the prejudices and stereotypes that people might have about them, not even talking about their own experiences as minority group members. This is also one of the requirements that contact theory puts to the successful intercultural encountering. In addition, every Living Library event is supported by authorities, like in this case the Living Library project in Finland and the trained staff.

Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) have studied, with quantitative research methods, 173 independent samples from 515 studies that have looked at intergroup contact theory. This meta-analysis revealed that the conditions for contact suggested by Allport in his early contact theory actually lead to even greater reduction of prejudice. It was also found out that these conditions do not affect the encounter as independent factors but as an interrelated bundle. Contact can reduce prejudice even if it does not fulfil Allport's conditions but not as strongly as it does when fulfilling the conditions. Also, the effects of the contact were founded out to lead to reduction of prejudice outside of the contact situation. For example, the attitudes toward the whole ourgroup and even towards different outgroups became more positive after a contact. Generally, in previous studies this has been explained through the positive effects of the contact situation but Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) found out that in diminishing the prejudice it is actually more relevant to look at the negative sides of the contact. This is because their analysis showed them that contact situation actually reduces anxiety and threath toward the outgroup to the extent that in the future's cross-cultural encounters a person will not undergo feelings like anxiety anymore. Contact had more effect on youngsters than on adults and contacts with sexual minorities affected most in reducing prejudice whereas contacts with ethnic minority group members yield average effects. In the earlier studies it has been shown that prejudiced people avoid contact but still the connexion between contact and reduced prejudice is stronger than the connexion between prejudice and avoiding contact. (Pettigrew & Tropp 2006, 751-767.)

Even though it seems that all the ingredients for a successful intercultural encounter are present in Living Library method, there is still some criticism pointed toward the contact

theory and ideas of contact as a facilitator of successful intercultural education. This criticism will probably serve us a lot when analyzing our data. Some researchers say that one or two examples won't change stereotypes (Schneider 2004, 430). Vilkkö-Riihelä (1999, 672) opens this idea up and explains that a pleasant contact with one outgroup member will not necessarily become common with other outgroup members too because personal contacts are experienced in individual level and single exemplar is seen more as an individual and not as a representative of a minority or ethnicity group.

There exists also a typicality paradox, which states that minority group examples need to be seen as typical enough members of the group such that they do not get sub-typed. A member of outgroup who is not stereotypic can be seen as an exception. If a person is too typical she may not provide enough disconfirm evidence for the stereotype to change. (Schneider 2004, 411, 430.) Providing contact with diverse array of outgroup members makes the process of sub typing more difficult and creates more differentiated perceptions of outgroup members which supports the same idea that contact with only one minority group member would not change the stereotypes (Gudykunst & Mody 2002, 135). Schneider (2004, 387) still reminds us that the quality of interaction matters more than quantity which speaks for personal contacts even if they are not numerous.

According to Schneider (2004, 384) contact does have generally positive effects on reducing stereotypes and prejudice, but only under certain circumstances. This correlation occurs partly because people who already have positive attitudes toward outgroup members seek contact with them. This might be also true with Living Library as it is voluntary and arranged in our case in World Village Festival which itself already invites certain kind of people to participate in Living Library, assumingly more open-minded and tolerant people. That is why one of the weaknesses of these kinds of events and methods are that the people who could most benefit from personal contacts are the very people who are most likely to avoid them (Schneider, 2004, 386).

5 CONDUCTING THE STUDY

5.1 The purpose of the study and research questions

The aim of this study is to gather the experiences and perceptions of the readers of Living Library, who have encountered an ethnic minority group member; the meaning is to understand the readers' experiences in the light of our theoretical framework. This will benefit the Living Library method, and the Living Library project in Finland and abroad.

The informants are those who belong to the ethnic majority; the ethnic Finns, who have borrowed a living book representing an ethnic minority, e.g. Somali, Russian, Iraqi, Roma, Sámi, Finland's Swedish, etc. The study focuses on the experience of the ethnic majority reader about the intercultural encounter with the ethnic minority group member at the Living Library.

As said before, this study has been planned also to benefit the Living Library method, and thus one of its purposes is to gather important information about the experiences of those who have participated. The method needs constant evaluation and development, in which our thesis will also contribute in small scale by providing information about the users of one local Living Library event and how the users of it have experienced the cultural encounter facilitated by Living Library.

Our study questions are: "How has the reader experienced the encounter with an ethnic minority group member in Living Library setting" and "What perceptions does the reader have about the Living Library". In the beginning of this study, the latter study question was "How does the reader think about that particular ethnic minority group now, after the reading?", but as the collected data emphasised more the method than the readers' views on the ethnic minority group, the focus of the study question was decided to shift. This is explained in detail in the data analysis-part.

5.2 Research method

Qualitative research methods were used in this study; focused interviews for gathering the data, and inductive content analysis for analysing it. As the main interest of this study was in presenting the readers' experiences and perceptions, in the readers' own voice, the qualitative research approach fitted the study better than the quantitative. Statistical repetition or saturation was not sought for, but the individual experiences.

In their book *Tutki ja kirjoita*, Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2008) present the idea that the starting point for qualitative study is to describe the real world, and this includes the idea about reality being a diverse concept. As the events give form to and affect to each other at parallel times, it is possible to find diverse relations between them. Qualitative study tends to study the subject as wholly as possible. (Hirsjärvi et. al 2008, 157.) In this study, the reader's experience was seen as something unique, which only the reader could define. Thus, the readers' views were approached by using the qualitative methods.

Hirsjärvi et. al (2008, 161) present the typical features of qualitative research: first of all, the nature of the study is looking at the data as a whole, and thus the data must be collected

in natural, real situations. This is what has been emphasized from the first stages of analysing the data. According to Hirsjärvi et. al, the researcher needs to emphasize the interview situation, the encounter, as a whole and trust the interviewee, not the survey questionnaire for example. The forms and papers might come in handy and act as a part of the study, but the human, the interviewee, needs to act the main role. (Hirsjärvi et. al 2008, 161.)

These are also important factors why the qualitative research methods were used in this study: the main interest lay in encountering the "reader", the human, and hearing what he/she has to tell about the Living Library experience. The use of quantitative study methods was considered in the beginning, such as collecting the data from the interviewees by questionnaire forms, but the conclusion was made that if the readers' views were wanted to be heard about the perceptions of the encounter with the living book, it is a must to hear the reader in reality and not merely through papers. And as described later on in this chapter, statistical data of Living Library's readers' experiences exists, in the form of feedback forms which are collected from readers in every Living Library event. We came to think that most likely the questionnaire forms would leave out something important, as being clearly structured and possibly giving only narrow space for the reader to reflect the reading situation. In this study it was also considered that this study's interview situations also would give the readers something valuable: time and space to process the reading experience a bit further, and possibly even give tools for that through the study questions. This again benefits the reader, and also serves the idea of Living Library giving "food for thought" about human diversity. (Hirsjärvi et. al 2008, 160; Living Library Network Organization.)

One of the important features of the qualitative study is that it aims at finding out unexpected things. This is why the qualitative research does not aim at testing theories or hypotheses, but at observing the data in multifaceted and very detailed manner. Hirsjärvi et. al (2008) also remind, that the researcher does not define what is important in the study, but this is the interviewees' job. This is also a reason why the inductive content analysis was decided to be used in this study; it is impossible to know beforehand what the interviewees are going to tell about the encounter, thus it would create a too big number of hypotheses about the theory if choosing the theoretical background before the interviews (Hirsjärvi et. al 2008, 160).

Other typical feature of qualitative study includes that it emphasises the kind of methods in data gathering which allow the "voice" and views of the interviewee, as the aim of this study. For example focused interview, group interview and discourse analysis of texts and documents are these kinds of methods. One important feature of qualitative study is that the sampling is made purposefully and not randomly. Actually, in their book "Tutkimushaastattelu. Teemahaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö" (2008, 59) Hirsjärvi and Hurme

present the idea that the whole word of “sampling” should not be used at all when talking about qualitative study, because “instead of statistical generalisations the intention is to achieve understanding of a certain event, to gain more information of a local phenomenon or to search new theoretical point of views to events and phenomena.”

This also supports the chosen view on this study: the interest of this study was not in collecting statistical information, for example about whether the reading experience was positive or not, but in what kind of feelings, experiences and perceptions does the reader have after the loan event. Actually statistical information about the readers’ experiences did exist already, in the form of feedback forms from nearly all the Living Libraries organised in Finland. This feedback form is usually one page long, and includes tick box questions about the reading experience, but these feedback forms have not been analysed nor a study has been made about them. It is up to the individual Living Library event organiser how he wants to present the feedback form findings. The Living Library project in Finland also has the feedback form summaries from the past events, but the data is only stored, not analysed.

5.3 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of ten interviewees; ten people, who had borrowed a living book at a Living Library event at the World Village Festival 2009 in Helsinki city centre. The readers were Finns, and the living books that they had borrowed represented various ethnic minority groups in Finland. Within these ten people (readers) there were three pairs; a pair referring that the living book had been borrowed together with a friend. Thus only seven interviews were made; three of them consisting of two readers and two interviewers, four consisting of an interviewee and two interviewers.

Interviewees, the readers, varied widely in age. Youngest reader was a high school aged boy and the oldest was a retired lady. If roughly categorized, it could be said that half (five people) were under 30 years old, and half (five people) were over 45 years old. Three out of ten informants were male, seven women. Presumably all the informants come from the capital region. Nevertheless, this is not reliable information since no official record was gathered about the participants’ age or other personal information. All the participants stated to be Finns when asked.

The participants were selected randomly, which is explained in the following. It was decided that the interviews would take place during the World Village Festival and that the interviewees needed to be ethnic Finns who had borrowed a living book representing an ethnic minority group. The World Village Festival was chosen because the Living Library event there is the biggest Library organised in Finland yearly, it gathers the most visitors and it is a

two-day event. On average, 150 people have visited the Library during one weekend during the last two years, thus it was an ideal place to find people for the interviews.

As only the profile of the informants was known beforehand (ethnic Finn) it cannot be accurately talked about any specific sampling method, although the "sampling" in this study reminds the simple random sampling. The original aim was to interview eight readers who had borrowed a living book that represent an ethnic minority group in Finland. The reader was to be an ethnic Finn. The book that the reader had borrowed could have been e.g. Roma, Sámi, Finland's Swedish, Somali, or any other person from an ethnic minority group in Finland. This time, at the World Village Festival there were not all these ethnic minorities present, but in order to protect the living books who the interviewees had borrowed, the specific groups present at the Library at World Village Festival are not mentioned.

The reader profile was chosen to be this narrow, having to be an ethnic Finn encountering an ethnic minority group member, so that reliable data could be gained from the interviews considering the study questions. The Finns's attitudes towards immigrant have earlier been researched by Magdaleena Jaakkola (2005) in a 20-year long research and a lot of research has been made on the contact theory hypothesis on the encounters between minority and the majority. Thus the sampling of this study was also based on the chosen theoretical framework.

All the informants were reached on the place, in the World Village Festival, right after they had borrowed a book, by the interviewers, us, being on the place and asking straight if they would like to participate in our study. This was made in cooperation with the Living Library staff so that they told us when an ethnic minority living book or an immigrant living book had been borrowed, and when the book was returned. When the book was returned by the reader, the interviewers introduced themselves and the study, and asked if the reader was interested to participate. Only one person refused during the weekend referring to lack of time, and seven interviews were made, including the total number of 10 people. (Appendix 2)

As the reader affirmed that he/she would be interested to participate, he/she was given the choice to determine the interview place; one of the cafés nearby the festival, or in the festival area. All the interviewees preferred a café. Altogether there were three cafés, where the interviews were carried out, and in each the readers were offered coffee or tea by the interviewees. This was not for attracting the interviewees to participate, but was told to them after they had confirmed their will to participate in the interview. This is mentioned because of ethical reasons, to imply that the informants did not participate for the free refreshment but for their own reasons.

In the interview situation first the readers were informed about the study, its purpose and its context. The informed content was presented and read through with everyone. All the readers were asked if they agreed that the interviews were digitally recorded, and everyone agreed. Everyone signed the informed content. It was explained to everyone that we did not need to know their personal information, for example their names, but if they wanted to give their contacts, we could inform them about the progress of our study. Everyone was given the names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of the us who conducted the study, in case they had further questions, and/or if they regretted their participation later on and would have liked to withdraw their participation. Everyone said it was sufficient that they knew our contact details and they would contact us if they needed, and no-one gave out their personal details or contact details.

It was decided that the informants were given the possibility of not leaving their contact or personal details, because the informants were not wanted to be given any conditions about their participation. Instead, with everyone it was emphasized that they could take contact to us who conducted the study at any moment before November, if they wanted to withdraw from the study. A reason why the informants were not obliged to leave their contacts was that their participation in the study was spontaneous and they were not wanted to be pushed to give the contacts spontaneously, which they could perhaps later on regret. Thus no reliable record exists of the participants' age, home town or other status.

The reason for choosing the random sampling was that the study aimed at providing objective information about the Living Library users. It was impossible to know beforehand who are going to borrow a living book, because the method bases on free and easily accessible participation. Readers vary by their age, gender, previous experince on borrowing, etc. If the interviewees had been chosen beforehand the findings would be less reliable; by doing so, the interviewees would have been aware during the reading situation that they are going to be asked questions about that situation, which would have created pre-conceived ideas on answers to ours questions and perhaps not allowed a real, reader-originated interest for the reading situation but one originated from the interest of this study.

It was considered in this study that as the interviews were done as soon as possible after the reading experience, it would give more accurate information on the perceptions of it, than if the interviews were made some time afterwards. Also, it was believed that higher chances of getting informants would exist when giving them a chance to be interviewed right at the same date as the event, than if they were asked to make an interview appointment later. This opportunity was given to all informants as well, but none used it and preferred the interview being done right after the reading.

It was also considered that by interviewing the readers as soon after the reading as possible the situation is still fresh on the reader's mind. It would not maybe have been beneficial to interview the reader a month later or so, as probably he/she would have forgotten many aspects of the situation, and the information would have been very different than the focus of this study. For example, if a study on the impacts of Living Library was being made, then it could have been relevant to do the interviews a lot later.

The number of the informants reflected the resources in use for this study. Focused interviews were being carried out for this Bachelor's thesis, for which the data collection and data analysis took a considerably lot of time. There existed only a certain amount of time and other resources for this study in the framework of a University of Applied Sciences Bachelor's thesis, thus the small number of informants. Also, for gathering the experiences of intercultural encounter facilitated by Living Library, a huge amount of participants is not needed for a qualitative study. If the study was quantitative and it aimed for example for saturation (the same results achieved often), informants would have had to be more in number. In this study, similarities were hoped to be found in the data, but most of all, as Hirsjärvi et. al reminded, the interviewer is not the one who decides what the interviewee decides to bring up. (Hirsjärvi et. al 2008, 160.)

5.4 Data collection

Focused interview, also known as semi-structured interview is the qualitative research interview method that was used in this study. According to Metsämuuronen (2006, 115), half-structured (focused) interview fits well to studies in which the topic is sensitive and not so easily being realised by the interviewees. The latter meaning that the interviewees might not even be fully aware of what has taken place and then being interviewed about. This applied straight to this study; the interviewees had been in the Living Library reading situation and possibly thought about it only as "reading", not as an intercultural encounter, and they were not perhaps aware of their own motives and prejudices connected to it. As said earlier, these interviewees also benefitted the reader by offering an arena to discuss more about the reading experience; the issues that might have happen even unconsciously to the reader while in the "reading situation" (Metsämuuronen 2006, 115).

The interviews were carried out so that in every interview both of us were present and interviewing equally, for one or two readers. Four interviews were individual readers' interviews and three consisted of two readers and the interviewees. These pairs had borrowed a living book together, thus they participated in the interview together. It had not been anticipated that it would be so popular to borrow an ethnic minority book as a pair, thus this option had not been considered before the actual Festival event, but was taken as a

chance to get important information about the Library users experiences. After all, Living Library is constantly developing and the popularity of pair reading is present in today's Libraries.

During the interview situations, the method of focused interview was being used. Hirsjärvi and Hurme discuss, that focused interview does not have one set definition, but the definitions vary slightly among different researchers. Generally it can be said that the emphasis of the focused interview is on the themes decided beforehand, but the interview does not include a set of questions to be asked in pre-decided order. Instead, the interview goes around the themes and topics, but the interviewee can also affect on the direction that he/she takes in telling about his/her experience. This is an interviewee-friendly way of carrying out the interview and gives a lot of emphasis on what the interviewee sees important. In this study the model of themes for interviews was being used and is described in the following. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 47; Metsämuuronen 2006, 115; Appendix 3.)

According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008, 47) the focused interview includes a hypothesis that all the interviewees have experienced a common event or situation. In the case of this study, it was the reading situation at the Living Library. The researcher has then tentatively clarified the parts, structures, processes and the unity of the phenomenon to be studied. After this tentative content analysis the researcher has concluded certain assumptions about the dominant features' consequences to the interviewees. Based on this analysis the researcher then develops an outline, a certain kind of a frame, for the interview. Finally, the interview is then focused on the persons' subjective experiences about the events/situations, which the researcher has tentatively analysed. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 47.)

The interview themes of this study were built around the two study questions, of which the latter got later on shaped: "How has the reader experienced the encounter with an ethnic minority group member in Living Library setting?" and "How does the reader think about that particular ethnic minority group now, after the reading?". The first theme focused on the reader's experiences of the reading situation including the elements present (voluntariness, equality, set time and space, etc.) and the ideas that aroused from the participation. The second theme focused more on the reader's experience on the encounter with the ethnic minority group member, the living book, and on the outcomes of the reading situation. The themes and their content, as well as some questions under the themes can be seen in the Appendix 3.

Before creating the interview plan, both of us got familiar with the research methods and with the theory basis of the plan. The themes and questions were built on the basis of the theory. Once the interview questions were formulated to a draft version of an interview, they

were taken to a qualitative interview workshop in Laurea, during a Research and Development day, supervised by two teachers from whom advice was received. The workshop gave valuable ideas for carrying out the interviews, and the questions and the interview structure was reviewed.

Before the actual thesis interviews, two pre-interviews were carried out for the purpose of testing how the structure and the situation work. It turned out to be very fruitful to test the interview situation and questions before the actual interviews, and the two test-interviews gave many improvement ideas. These were e.g. about the cooperation between the two interviewers and about the questions, and how to ask. Both of the test-interviewees were informed about the study and given the contact details of the us who conducted the study.

Hirsjärvi and Hurme clarify, that the focused interview (half-structured interview) is closer to the unstructured interview than to the structured interview, although the theme is same to all the interviewees. Focused interview, unlike structured interview, does not have a certain order or design for the questions, but also it is not as free in its delivery as unstructured interview. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 48). This can be also seen in the interviews that were carried out for this study, as there did not exist a certain set of questions in a certain order, but the interviews also emphasized the readers' own decision of the direction. The information is not in a same set order in each interview but information has been brought up by the informants in various sets.

Language and its use is a crucial aspect in focused interview, because the interview happens through a dialogue between two or more people. In the case of this study, there are two interviewers and one interviewee, per an interview. As there are no questionnaire forms or other paper forms, the data is based on the verbal presentation of the interviewees. All the interviews are being transcribed and analysed. In this process, it is very important to pay careful attention to the language used, because the analysis method used in this study, content analysis, is text analysis method. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 105.)

For both of us the mother tongue is Finnish. The interviews were carried out in Finnish because the target group of the interviewees were the ethnic Finns. Careful attention was paid to the language use of the interviewers and the interviewee's. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008, 49) emphasise, that the interviewer aims at finding out the meanings that the interviewee gives to certain objects or matters. This can be done only through language as a tool. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008, 49) also remind, that the answers that the interviewee gives, always reflect the interviewer's presence and his/her way of asking the questions.

Miller and Glassner (as in Silverman 2004, 127-128) talk about the same phenomenon, they also remind about the complex nature of the interview situation: "the interviewees sometimes respond to interviewers through the use of familiar narrative constructs, rather than providing meaningful insights into their subjective view." The difficulty of being able to find the right questions for the informant is also highlighted, due to the fact that the researcher and the informant are members of two different primary groups, and thus the researcher might not know enough about the phenomenon under study. It is very important in the qualitative study to make the interviewee's voice heard: "--it (qualitative interviewing) provides us with a means for exploring the points of view of the research subjects, while granting these points of view the culturally honoured status of reality." (Miller and Glassner as in Silverman 2004, 127-128.)

For this study, individual and pair interviews were carried out, and not group interviews. The main reason for this being of practical nature: the informants were interviewed right after the situation (reading), and it couldn't have been predicted who the informants personally were going to be, thus there was no chance to do sampling of individuals in beforehand. The other reason for this is also that of the circumstances: the interviews took place during one weekend, and the informants were the festival visitors. As they were wanted to be reached immediately after their reading experience, they were interviewed at the place.

The interviews lasted approximately 20-50 minutes each and the word by word transcription of them approximately 2-4 hours. The language of the interviews was Finnish, and no translations were being made until some of the expressions were collected to the Findings - section of this report, and then translated.

5.5 Data analysis

The data in this study refers to the transcribed interviews. All the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed, after which the method of inductive content analysis was used. Metsämuuronen describes content analysis according to Syrjänen dividing it in seven stages; first, the researcher must get familiar with the data thoroughly and to know the central concepts based on theory. Then the researcher theorizes and internalizes the data, after which it should be possible to roughly classify the data into main categories and/or themes. (Metsämuuronen 2006, 124.)

After this rough categorization has been made, the researcher once again needs to specify the research tasks and concepts. This enables then to see how often different phenomena and concepts have occurred, and it is possible to see the exceptions too, and make the final classification. In this point, the researcher might also need to make a cross-validation and to

test the categories found. When all this is done, the researcher may start interpreting the data more and draw conclusions. (Syrjänen as in Metsämuuronen 2006, 124.)

Metsämuuronen (2006, 125) also recommends making mind maps or concept maps, to help the data sorting process. These make it easier to see the “big picture” and all its parts at the same time. But as this study is not quantitative, the mere categorization and typologizing is not enough. Miller and Glassner have quoted Charmaz (Charmaz, 1995): “The coding, categorization, and typologizing of stories result in telling only parts of stories, rather than presenting them in their “wholeness”. This is something that was kept strongly in mind while analysing and writing this study. (Miller and Glassner as in Silverman 2004, 127.)

Besides mere content analysis, Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002, 111) also about inductive content analysis. First, the interviews are transcribed word by word. Then the researcher needs to get familiar with the data and understand its content. This is followed by the researcher marking the simplified expressions from the text and gathering them together. As the researcher collects the expressions, he simplifies them and lists these simplified expressions. Then the similarities and overlapping expressions are taken out, and the remaining data is divided into groups. Finally, groups and categories are being formed. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2002, 111.)

For this study, elements from Metsämuuronen’s (2006) and Tuomi and Sarajärvi’s (2002) methods were used. All the interviews were recorded digitally during spring 2009 in the World Village Festival, and transcribed word by word on the computer during summer 2009. After the transcription of the data, in Autumn 2009, we got more familiar with the data, using mind-maps and other creative methods for internalizing it. Then all the transcribed interviews were read through and the expressions that were mutually considered valuable for the research focus were being marked and collected in a separate file on computer. First both of us collected these expressions on our own, made simplified expressions of them, and then they were put together and overlapping ones were taken out. These simplified expressions were 438 in total.

All the transcribed data was in Word-documents and from there, the important expressions were collected to Excel-files by “copy-paste” method. After collecting the simplified expressions in one document, sub-groups were created together for these simplified expressions, according to what both agreed were the most common issues that the interviewees talked about, in the light of the study questions. In this point it was noticed that the second research question was not being answered very often by the interviewees.

According to what was mutually being agreed to be the most relevant data, nine sub-groups were first created, of which six were decided to keep: “Reader profile”, “Reader’s motives to

borrow a book", "Reader's perceptions about the living book", "Reader's perceptions on Living Library Setting (physical)", "Reader's Perceptions on Living Library Principles", and "Reader's perceptions of the outcomes, and readers' feedback". These six sub-groups were agreed to belong under two categories: "Reader's experience of the Living Library setting" and "Reader's experience of the encounter with an immigrant". These two categories again belong to the main category "Reader's perceptions on the encounter with an immigrant in Living Library setting", as the topic of the thesis. Later on, based on the feedback given by the tutors of this study, the findings were narrowed down to four themes, those shown in this paper.

As stated before, an important feature of the qualitative method is, that it aims at finding out something unexpected, and does not aim at testing a theory or a hypothesis. And like mentioned before, according to Hirsjärvi et. al it is impossible for the researcher to define beforehand what will be important in the study, as this is the interviewees' work. The interviewees are the experts of their own experience, and it is impossible for anyone else to tell beforehand, what they decide to bring up. (Hirsjärvi et. al 2008, 160.) Thus, keeping this in mind, it was being decided that as the interviewees did not talk about their prejudices widely, but told a lot about the living book and the Living Library experience, the second research question was to be modified. At first, the latter research question had been "How does the reader think about that particular ethnic minority group now, after the reading", but as instead of talking about this, the interviewees focused more on the Living Library method and the living book, it was being decided that the new research question would be "What perceptions does the reader have about the Living Library".

Both, the qualitative research methodology and the method of inductive content analysis support the decision about the change of direction that was taken in this study. As it is impossible to know what the informants decide to bring up and consider important, not too many hypotheses should be made before the data collection. And as in inductive content analysis, the findings direct the way the data is being interpreted, not the theory.

According to Tuomi & Sarajärvi the handling of the qualitative data bases on logical deduction and interpretation, in which the data is first split in pieces, conceptualized, and then gathered again in new order as a logical whole (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 110). This is the method also used in this study; first the data was split in simplified expressions and then the simplified expression were divided into sub-groups, groups and categories. All these groups give valuable information about both of the research questions. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi the content analysis aims to clarify the data material, so that clear and reliable conclusions on the phenomenon can be based on it. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 110)

In content analysis, the main attention is paid in the interconnections between words and expression. Thus, content analysis aims to describe the content of the documents verbally and to organise the data material in clear and neat form without losing the information it contains. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 110)

According to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2002, 105), content analysis produces relevant conclusions, not results. This is also something that was being highlighted in the course of this study; it did not aim to provide results or "truths", but to present the readers' perceptions as occurred in the interviews. This is also what the research task was. Content analysis is a text analysis, observing humane meanings and searching for the meaning of the text. It aims at obtaining a description of the phenomenon in a neat and generalized form. This study aimed at following these principles. (Tuomi et. al 2002, 105.)

6 FINDINGS

6.1 Readers' perceptions of the living book

Generally all the readers considered the living book as a nice and positive personality. Five readers stated that it was because of these positive features and approach of the book, that made the encounter a good and easy experience.

"From the first moment it was easy to talk because this immigrant was clearly an open personality, it was easy to go along, there was no stress." (P.6.)

"Alun alkaen oli hyvin helppoo jutella koska tää maahanmuuttaja selkeesti oli ite avoin ihminen, siin oli helppoo lähtee mukaan, ei ollu mitään jännitystä." (P.6)

Readers were thinking that "certain types of people" get involved as being a book. Some of these readers also mentioned in the interview that the living book was an ordinary person (see later).

"But like, this experience was an easy one. That maybe those people also, those who decide to be a book, they are a selection of people who are open, outgoing, and narrate gladly." (P.8.)

"Mutta niinku tää kokemus oli sellanen helppo. Et ehkä noi ihmisetkin ku ryhtyy kirjaks, valikoituu sellasista ihmisistä, jotka on avoimia, ulospäin suuntautuneita ja kertoo mielellään." (P.8.)

Although most readers considered the book to be open, two of them were also wondering that there might be also a hint of political correctness from the book's side, that the book does not want to bring up negative thoughts in the reading situation.

"On the other hand we must think that he has probably experienced some a bit more negative things in Finland. He did not tell about them very much, or he did not at least talk Finland down. I wonder if the book could do something like that, would he dare to say something negative...

- - I think there was a hint of that (political correctness)." (P.3.)

"Toisaalta pitää miettiä et hänki on varmaan kokenu jotain vähän negatiivisempia juttuja Suomessa. Hän ei ainakaan niitä silleen kertonut kauheesti, tai ei ainakaan Suomea mollannu. Et oisko siitä kirjasta sit sellaseen et uskaltasko seki sanoo jotain negatiivista... - - - Mä luulen et ehkä siin oli vähän ripaus tällasta (poliittista korrektiutta). (P.3.)

Readers also mentioned that the living book was an "ordinary" person, and not an expert of everything. Two of these readers stated also in the interview that the book might be an exceptional member of his group (see the section earlier). Although the readers usually first had refused to admit that they have prejudices, during the interviews four did admit to hold some prejudiced ideas about the book. Mainly these had to do with the language skills, employment and the discrimination situation of the ethnic minority.

"Well in my opinion he was just like any young person I know." (P.8.)

"No siis ku mun mielestä hän oli kuin kuka tahansa tuntemani nuori mies."
(P.8.)

6.2 Readers' experiences of the Living Library setting

Generally readers were positive about the Living Library setting and the way it is organised, nobody brought up negative feedback about the Library or the living book, but were happy about their participation. Nevertheless, most readers did bring up the limited amount of time there had been for the encounter with the book. These readers stated that the time could have been longer. Apart from saying that the time could have been longer, some of the readers also brought up that more time would be needed for deeper discussions.

“Well it is true that there were more things that I would have liked to discuss more, the time was quite short... The time could have been longer, it could have been extended to an half an hour for example. But of course in that kind of event many people want to get to discuss so the time cannot be very long.” (P.1.)

“Siis kyllähän niitä asioita mistä mä oisin halunnu keskustella ois ollu enemmän, toi aika oli aika lyhyt... Se aika ois voinu olla pidempi, sitä ois voinu pidentää vaikka puoleen tuntiin. Mut tietysti tollasessa tapahtumassa haluaa mahdollisimman moni päästä keskustelea ni ei se aika voi olla hirveen pitkä.” (P.1.)

Although readers mainly considered the time being short, not everyone thought it was a negative thing. Two readers mentioned that the limited time made the encounter easier.

“Well of course the idea (Living Library setting) behind it (made it easier). It was easier when you know that the time is limited.” (P.8.)

“No niin totta kai se idea (Elävä Kirjasto) siinä takana (helpotti). Oli helpompaa kun tietää et se aika on rajattu.” (P.8.)

On the third sub-theme the readers were asked to think about the issues that either made the encounter easier or more difficult, three readers answered that the Living Library setting and the idea of the reading made the encounter easier.

(To the question what helped/made it difficult:)

“Because it was an organised situation. - - One didn't need to give reasons why I was asking him something, like the Living Library institution gave right to ask freely.” (P.2.)

“No ku se oli järjestetty tilanne. - - Ei tarvinnu perustella sitä syytä et miksi kysyy häneltä jotakin, että tavallaan toi Elävä Kirjasto instituutio oikeutti sen että me saatiin kysyä vapaasti kaikkee.” (P.2.)

Altogether majority of the readers stated that if not the Living Library contact, they wouldn't have necessarily got these kinds of contact through any other ways. One interviewee had used an interpreter in the reading situation, which had facilitated the communication with the book.

"I have few acquaintances from one ethnic minority group, but with these kind of people I wouldn't have had any contact." (P.1.)

" - - mul on muutamia erään etnisen vähemmistö ryhmän edustajia tuttuina, mut ei ihan tämmösten ihmisten kanssa mulla ois ollu mitään kontaktia." (P.1.)

6.3 Readers' experiences of the encounter in the facilitated framework

According to the readers, it was easy to talk about almost everything in the encounter situation with the ethnic minority book. Still, some of the readers were hesitating a little bit if it is polite to ask personal questions, or if they really would dare to ask all the questions that could be asked in this kind of situation.

"But yes after all, when I'm with a stranger, someone that I experience to be more stranger, I could imagine those diverse groups that where here... I still could feel shy maybe to ask exactly something that people are meant to ask with this method." (P.8.)

"Mut kyl mul kuitenkin ehkä kun mä vieraaseen, minkä koen vieraampana, ni kun vois kuvitella et mitä täs nyt oli niitä erilaisia ryhmiä... Ni kyl mä kuitenkin voisin aristella ehkä kysyy just jotain sellasta asiaa jota tällä menetelmällä on ehkä tarkoitus saada ihmistä kysymään." (P.8.)

Readers stated that there existed a right to ask, which allowed them to freely make questions, unlike usually in the encounters with the immigrants and/or ethnic minority group members, or even with just anybody. Although the majority mentioned about previous contact with immigrants and ethnic minority groups, most of them said they have no previous contact with this particular ethnic minority group which they had encountered in Living Library.

"Well, because it was arranged situation. On did not have define the reason why asking him (living book) something, that in a way that Living Library institution eligibled that we were allowed to ask anything freely." (P.3.)

"No ku se oli järjestetty tilanne. Ei tarvinnu perustella sitä syytä, et miks kysyy häneltä (ihmiskirjalta) jotakin, että tavallaan toi Elävä kirjasto instituutio oikeutti sen, että me saatiin kysyy vapaasti kaikkee." (P.3.)

Many readers thought that it is very unique and different to hear things from a human than through other forums, like media.

"It is always interesting when another person who lives somewhere on the other side of the world... It is always a unique experience, how it is over there, and he has that kind of information that one could not easily get from Internet, or maybe, but when it is like that one can hear it from a human being and ask very detailed. But when one reads it somewhere then one cannot get it in a way which one would like to hear it exactly. --- So, that kind of a little piece of evidence, that this is true when one person tells it from his own experience." (P.3.)

"Kyllä se on aina kiinnostavaa, ku toinen ihminen, joka on asunu jossain ihan eri puolella maailmaa... Se on aina ihan ainutlaatuinen kokemus, et millasta siellä on ja hänellä on semmosta tietoa, mitä ei ihan helposti saa ongittua jostain netistä, tai kenties, mutta kun on sellasta, et saa kuulla ihmiseltä ja kysyä ihan tarkkaan. Mutta kun jostakin lukee ni sitä ei saa silleen ku ite tasan tarkkaan haluis kuulla. --- Nii semmonen pieni todiste et tää on totta ku se yks ihminen sen sanoo omasta kokemuksesta." (P.3.)

Three readers emphasized the personal and dialogical aspects of the encounter, which allowed the readers to talk about the issues they were interested in finding out. Also, when asked about the framework of the Living Library according to the principles of the contact theory seven readers brought up that the encounter was equal.

"Yes, that is true that anyone was not forced to do anything and there was no ready made roles; like, in such and such task I meet you in such and such position. So in that sense about equality, we both had sought to be in that situation." (P.9.)

"Joo se on totta, ettei ollu mikään pakko pullaa kellekään, eikä ollu tavallaan sellasia valmiita rooleja; että siinä ja siinä tehtävässä kohtaan sinut ja tässä ja tässä asemassa. Että siinä mielessä oltiin niin tasa-arvoisuuden suhteen, että oltiin molemmat hakeuduttu siihen tilanteeseen. (P.9.)

The only things why there might have existed a hierarchy, mentioned by three readers, were the age difference, and the fact that the readers have chosen the book and were allowed to ask him questions, not the other way round. Some readers experienced themselves as "interviewers", some also perceived it more like a dialogue with the book.

"Maybe he was more dependent on the situation because in the end we were able to choose him (to talk with)." (P.9.)

"Ehkä hän oli vähän enemmän tilanteen armoilla, kun me saatiin kuitenkin valita hänet (keskustelukumppaniksi)." (P.9.)

When readers were asked about the voluntary nature of the encounter according to contact theory five readers thought that by being involved voluntarily in Living Library facilitated the encounter.

"Of course, one could assume that if neither of us were voluntarily in that situation then it could be stiffer and there would not be that kind of authentic interest involved. It was so that we were interested in each other until certain point. Freedom and the informatily of the situation." (p.6)

"Tietysti vois olettaa, että jos kumpikaan meistä ei olis vapaaehtoisesti siinä tilanteessa niin se vois olla jäykempää ja siin ei olis sellast todellista kiinnostusta. Se oli niinku se, me oltiin niinku kiinnostuneita tiettyyn pisteeseen asti toisistamme. Vapaus ja tilanteen rentous." (P.6.)

6.4 Perceptions of the outcomes of the encounter

All the readers found the encounter being a positive experience, as it was seen laid-back, natural, eye-opening, refreshing, comfortable and non-formal situation. Half of the readers stated that they learnt a lot and got information and answers to their questions.

"Yes, it is true that at least I myself spend that kind of life that the people with whom I mainly discuss are similar to me and in my opinion then it is refreshing to talk with people of different ages, people who are in different life situations." (P.9.)

"Joo se on totta, että ainakin itse kyllä viettää sellaista elämää, että ne ihmiset joitten kanssa enimmäkseen keskustelee niin ne on sitten samankaltaisia kun itse ja mun mielestä on sitten virkistävää keskustella eri-ikäisten ihmisten kanssa, eri elämäntilanteessa olevien kanssa." (P.9.)

Nothing surprising, meaning something new, astounding or negative, came up in the discussions according to three readers. Most of the readers had previous contact with immigrants and/or ethnic minority groups. Half of the readers were interested in issues around immigration, multiculturalism and religion, and three of them stated that they had also sought information about these beforehand.

"Positively of course (affects on future), because there was nothing negative in this or nothing that could have brought up some kind of new and astounding thing which I could have not thought and it would have be negative." (P.5.)

"Myönteisesti tietysti ilman muuta (vaikuttaa tulevaisuuteen), koska täs ei ollu mitään kielteistä eikä mitään sellasta, mikä ois tuonu jonku uuden ja ällistyttävän jutun, mitä mä en ois voinu ajatella ja se ois ollu kielteinen." (P.5.)

Some of the readers' prejudices, dealing with the previous ideas of the ethnic group represented by the living book, turned out incorrect during the encounter.

"Yes, those (prejudices) really decline and that was the idea of that, I met this person for that exact reason that those will decline those fears in my head." (P.10.)

"Kyllä ne (ennakkoluulot) oikeesti vaimenee ja sehän se oli ideanakin tossa, minä törmäsin tähän ihmiseen juuri sen takia, että ne vaimenee ne pelot mun päästä." (P.10.)

Still, some of the readers brought up that one encounter with an ethnic minority living book does not mean that prejudices will change or that other ethnic minority group members would not experience racism in Finland.

"Well I don't know if I have hidden prejudices, but on the other hand those would not be solved due to one conversation that in the end there will be encounters through the life anyway..." (P.3.)

"No emmä nyt tiää onko piileviä ennakkoluuloja, mutta toisaalta ei ne nyt yhen keskustelun kautta ratkea, et loppujen lopuks just kohtaamisia elämän kautta tulee muutenki..." (P.3.)

One of the readers told that the encounter decreased his fear toward his concern related to immigration.

"So, in that last sentence I thanked, that (encountering) took away my fear a lot. That was the meaning of the conversation, at least for me, that's why I went there." (P.10.)

“Et siinä viimesessä lauseessa kiitin, sehän (kohtaaminen) vei sitä pelkoa minulta paljon pois. Sehän oli se keskustelun idea, ainakin minulle, siksi minä menin siihen.” (P.10.)

Many interviewees were considering that a racist or intolerant person would not use Living Library and borrow an ethnic minority book. None of the interviewees although did considerer themselves as prejudiced, but stated that they didn't have racist attitudes.

“It can be of course said, that probably those who are very rasistic would not borrowfrom Living Library. But that is a huge amount of people who can be suspicios at different levels or have some kind of prejudice.” (P.5.)

“Et tietenkin voi sanoa, et varmaan ne, jotka on ihan tämmösen rasismin kourissa ei kyllä lainaa Elävästä Kirjastosta. Mut sehän on valtava määrä ihmisiä, jotka on niinku eriasteisesti voi kuitenkin kokee epäluuloja ja tai jonkunlaista ennakkoluuloa.” (P.5.)

“But as I have not had any strong prejudices ever in any case, they have rather been such as I have never known anyone personally, I have thought many times that what do they think and what do they really think about us and how they experience this.” (P.5.)

“Mutta ku ei mulla kuitenkaan mitään voimakkaita ennakkoluuloja ole missään tapauksessa koskaan ollu, että ne on pikemminkin sellasta kun ei oo tuntenu koskaan ketään henkilökohtasesti, mä oon miettiny monta kertaa et mitähän ne ajattelee ja mitähän ne oikeesti ajattelee meistä ja miten ne kokee tän” (P.5.)

When asked about the future, the readers expressed that they might be more open minded towards immigrants and it might be easier for them to take contact to immigrants due to the encounter in Living Library.

“Well, not probably impact that much (on the encounters in the future). Quite open-minded approach already, but maybe it will encourage to take contact... So, it might be a bit encouraging. Finns, however, can be little bit shy and introvert so maybe it is a nice encouragement.” (P.6.)

“Ei mitenkään hirveesti varmasti vaikuta (tulevaisuuden kohtamisiin). Aika avomielinen suhtautuminen jo ennestään, mut ehkä se sitä sit vielä rohkaisee ottamaan kontaktia... Niin ehkä se voi sitten vähän rohkaista. Suomalaiset

kuitenkin voi olla vähän ujoja ja sisäänpäin kääntyneitä ni ehkä se on mukava rohkaisu.” (P.6.)

Half of the readers believed that the encounter in Living Library will not probably increase contacts with immigrants in the future or have an impact on their future interaction with immigrants because in their every day life they would not take spontaneously contact to anyone anyway. New questions, interest, ideas and insights aroused from the experience to some readers.

“Probably it will not impact on that (encounters in the future) a lot, except that I will dig for more information about it.” (P.10.)

“Se siihen (tulevaisuuden kohtaamiset) tuu varmaan kauheesti vaikuttamaan muuten kun sen, että kyllä minä enemmän kaivan sitä tietoa siitä.” (P.10.)

6.5 Summary

The findings show the experiences and perceptions of the Finnish participants about their encounter with the ethnic minority group member in Living Library setting. The encounter was perceived as a positive and comfortable meeting between individuals, and the participants considered it being easy to talk in the situation. The overall experience was seen as eye-opening and it awoke new questions in the readers, who stated that perhaps after this encounter, it might be easier to take contact with ethnic minorities in the future.

The living books were seen as delightful, open and smart people, who were willing to tell about themselves. These positive features of the book were seen as crucial for the encounter being such a positive experience for the participants. The books gave out information although also shared the discussion with the participants. It was considered whether the books were politically correct in the encounter and did not bring up any negative views. The books were seen as “certain types of people” who got chosen to be books because of their positive qualities, for example language skills, openness and willingness to meet new people. Although some thought that the books represented certain types of people, a few also stated that the book had been just an ordinary person.

The participants experienced the Living Library setting as a facilitating framework for getting into contact and involving in dialogue with “strangers”. The participants considered the Living Library being well-organised and were happy that they had participated. Living Library setting according to participants had facilitated the kind of dialogue that normally does not happen even between persons who know each other, because of the time, space and the rules of

Living Library. Participants stated that the time could have been longer and in order to get into deeper discussions, more time would be needed. The interpreter was also considered as useful and efficient.

Encounter with the ethnic minority in this kind of setting was seen as a positive experience. It had been easy to talk with the book and the participants were especially happy about the possibility to ask questions from the ethnic minority group member without being regarded as curious and nozy. The participants stated that even with other Finns or their neighbours they would hesitate to ask too many questions, but this time the Living Library gave them the right to ask about the books' life. It was emphasised how different it is to hear things from a person himself, who has experienced and gone through them, instead of reading the same information from a real book or magazines. Face-to-face communication was seen as a positive experience.

Although having the right to ask, some participants considered if they would really dare to ask questions that this method promotes one to ask; even about more sensitive issues. On the participants' side there might have also been some political correctness according to few. Equality was considered to be present in the reading situation, as both parties had voluntarily come to discuss about mutual things. The only things why hierarchy might have existed were thought to be because of the age difference and the position of the reader allowing him to ask anything from the book and not the other way round.

The findings show that the participants were generally open-minded and not having strong prejudiced ideas about ethnic minorities. Many participants stated that they did not consider themselves prejudiced or racist, and instead were wondering if a racist would ever end up in Living Library as a reader. Most of the participants had previous contact with ethnic minorities, information about them, and interest towards immigration issues, multicultural issues or religious issues. Those participants who told they did not have previous contact with the kind of people like the books, considered this to do with their age, gender and place of residence, not that they did not want to encounter people like the books.

The participants' motives to borrow a living book included them being interested in multicultural issues and wanting to get in contact with the kinds of people they had no chance otherwise. Most readers had participated spontaneously and no-one brought up that they would have earlier planned to visit the Living Library. Encouragement from friends was received by two participants. Previous positive experience brought back two participants to borrow a living book again.

What the participants perceived as having received from the reading, were new information, answers to their questions, positive mood and more open-minded views on life. The encounter was considered to be laid-back, natural, non-formal, refreshing and comfortable, which the participants had enjoyed. A few stated that their perceptions on the particular ethnic minority group changed slightly. According to participants, mainly nothing new came up in the encounter, but the information they had received from the book had been as they expected.

7 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The overall credibility in qualitative research is based on the aspect that the researchers follow good scientific practise. This includes among other things following the principles acknowledged by the scientific community, general conscientiousness throughout the research process and in presenting the findings, and acknowledging the previous studies and the principles of transparency and openness. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 129-130.)

Reliability in qualitative research implies that the research could be repeated and similar outcomes to be founded: in another words, repeatability. It also means that the research aims at accuracy. Validity again means that the research has focused on what it was supposed to focus on. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 133; Vilkkka 2005, 161.) However, these concepts, reliability and validity have originally been terms of and for quantitative research, and as these concepts cannot be straight applied to qualitative research as they primarily demand for the needs of quantitative research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 133). Instead of focusing on these two concepts, more beneficial for the qualitative research is to focus on evaluating the trustworthiness and some kind of a generalisability (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 135; Vilkkka 2005, 157).

In evaluating the trustworthiness, following points can be evaluated: the object and the purpose of the study; the personal commitment as a researcher in the process; the data collection; the informants of the study; the relationship between the researcher and the informant; the duration of the study; the reliability of the study; the data analysis; and the reporting of the process. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 135-138.) So to say, " - - the researcher should give the readers sufficient information on how the study has been carried out, in order for them to be able to evaluate the findings of it" (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 138).

In this study, the trustworthiness is evaluated by using the methods mentioned earlier; by evaluating the various aspects of the study, as Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2002, 135-138) recommend, and then looking at the trustworthiness of our study as a whole. The evaluation process has been constantly present in the study and an on-going process, in order to helping to take an

objective point of view for this study and through that, the researchers to better succeed in the study being reliable.

The study is a small-scale Bachelor's thesis and thus it is not relevant to aim for example to any kind of generalisability. As said before, the focus is on the experiences of individual readers, and there will be no two exactly similar experiences, thus this study does not aim for any kind of repeatability either. The focus has been on hearing the readers' voices and presenting them in the form of the thesis report.

The object of this study was to map out the experiences and perceptions of the readers of the Living Library; Finnish readers who had borrowed an ethnic minority book to read. The need for this study arose from the Living Library project in Finland, because no previous research had been made about the topic. The reason for us as social work students to take this topic for our final study arose from our studies which have highly focused on intercultural work in the social field, thus the focus of this study combined aspects from both sides; the Living Library method and the intercultural encounters. We believe that the object has been served throughout this study for both interests, Living Library and intercultural encounters. This can be seen in the data collection, in choosing the participants, in data analysis and generally in the whole report, where the research focus has been strongly present in each.

A big challenge in creating a whole and logical work was, when we got to realise that the data we had from the informants, was not corresponding to the second research question. This put us in front of a difficult question; should we continue like this, keeping the second question the same and presenting the findings of it as "nothing surprising came up", which is an important finding in itself and which we are going to discuss in the next section, or, should we modify the second research question so, that the data which brought up a lot of new issues, could be closely to be looked at and analysed, at the same time when the newly modified question also answers to our research focus. We decided, as the methods of this study were qualitative, including inductive content analysis, that the findings that we had, deserved to be analysed as a whole and as little as possible should be left out. Thus, the earlier second study question got to change and the findings that referred to it, would be discussed in the discussion-section, among other important findings. The two current study questions correspond to the research task: to what are the perceptions and experiences of the Finnish Living Library readers, when they've borrowed an ethnic minority living book. (Hirsjärvi et. al 2008.)

Two test-interviews were made before the actual data collection. The data collection was planned according to the theoretical background and support was being received from two teachers at a workshop meeting in Laurea, which tells about the transparency. The test-

interviews aimed at testing the structure and the themes of the interview, and the communication methods. After both interviews we together evaluated our mutual communication in the interview situation, our communication style with the informant, and the questions and the structure of them in the interview. Based on the two evaluation sessions we then made changes to the interview questions and the structure, and were more aware of our own communication style that is present in the interviews. This increases the trustworthiness and also promotes the ethically correct approach to our data collection according to O'Leary (2004, 43).

In data collection, we chose the environment partly on the informants' preference, as they got to decide which café or outdoor area they would prefer. In every café we found a quiet corner, which was ideal for recording the interviews so that they could later on be heard correctly when transcribing. The cafés also ensured a safe and comfortable environment, equally familiar to both, the interviewers and the interviewees, which again is a sign of an attempt to decrease the hierarchy between the two. According to O'Leary (2004, 43), it is important for the researcher to be aware of his own attributes and positions of power when making the research. As said before, we attempted to be aware of the existing power relations present in the interview situation, and gave each other feedback on our communication styles.

A part in our data collection can be criticised as unreliable: it was decided that the informants did not need to give their contact details to us, but instead we gave them ours, in case they needed for further information or wanted to withdraw from the study. As stated before, this was because the informants were not wanted to be given any conditions about their participation, because this again could have decreased the number of participants in this study and to leave out those people's opinion. Also, every informants' participation in the study was spontaneous and we did not want to push them giving the contacts spontaneously, which they could possibly later on regret. We personally emphasized for every participants, how and where we could be reached, and every informant got our contact details (Appendix 1) and the informed content (Appendix 2). In our opinion this is enough to safeguard that the rights of the informant are guaranteed. In case the informants lost the contact papers, they could still easily reach us through the Living Library project in Finland; there is only one Living Library office and one worker there, our thesis supervisor, who would instantly direct the message to us. We have also aimed at protecting our informants in each stage of the project, which is being discussed later on in this part.

The data collection method corresponded with the aim of this study and provided the findings that were searched for. In collecting our data we got supervision from the workshop at our

school and from our worklife supervisor, which allowed the third person's view on the work and helped us to work more objectively.

The random sample of the participants included those ethnic Finns who had borrowed an ethnic minority living book. The decision about this is based on preserving the reliability of the findings; we needed to narrow down our sample in order to provide reliable findings on our study question. If we had chosen to study the experiences of any readers, who had borrowed any book possible, our study question would have had to be wider which would again demand a wider sample. With the resources of 15 ECT (European study credits) for this study, it would have been impossible to carry out a wider study. Now, we made seven interviews including 10 informants altogether, which was already giving a lot of data to transcribe and analyse.

All the participants were reached at the place and asked if they would like to participate in the study. We asked every Finn that we knew to have read an ethnic minority living book. All except one wished to participate, thus no segregation was being made on the place by us, about if we considered someone as a "good" participant and someone not. All the participants were equally prepared for the interview as none had any pre-information about it. We chose this sampling because it gives a unique opportunity to hear the variety of readers' perceptions and experiences right after the reading. It is also practically impossible to collect the participants beforehand as the decision to use the Library is usually spontaneous, as was the finding also now. We also believe that all participants were fully aware of what they participated in, and that they were healthy and not for example intoxicated. Everyone signed and received the informed content and it was gone through by talking about it with everyone, which also ensures that the researchers were accurately informing the participants about the nature of the research, which O'Leary (2004, 53) emphasizes.

Throughout this study we have emphasized that no harm comes to the readers nor the book they have read, and that confidentiality and anonymity has been ensured. These acts speak for it; we have allowed the participants to stay anonymous, in the findings their names or identities are not revealed, and the data exists only with us two and will be destroyed in a year's time. In this report, certain names and expressions of the interviewees have been changed, in order to protect their identity and that of the book they borrowed. If the interviewee talks about a particular country or the book as a nationality or a member of a certain group, like "Australian" "Polish" etc., the expression has been changed to "person" "that particular ethnic minority group member" or "a person from that country". (Note: no Australian or Polish person was as a book during World Village Festival, this is just an example.). Also words that clearly refer to the person's home town or other personal details,

have been taken out and replaced simply as “home town” or “neighborhood”. Throughout the findings –section the masculinity he, him, his is being used despite what was the gender of the informant or the book the informant is talking about. This is for protecting the living book and the informant; there were only few ethnic minority living books at World Village Festival, as their readers too, thus both could be easily identified from both sides (The books could identify their readers from the text, and the other readers could identify the books).

The duration of this study was altogether about a year. Although the first idea for this study came already in the beginning of 2008, we did not start the study process properly until January 2009. The schedule has been compact, the work has been regularly progressing, and we have been able to manage the schedule. The process has been intensive which has enabled us to have it fresh in mind all the time. Especially important this has been after the interviews; we have been able to transcribe the data soon after the interviews and to process to the analysis stage quite fast, so that the findings would keep relevant. There was an intended small break for both of us in the summer, after the data had been transcribed, so that we would have an opportunity to get an objective distance to the data when starting to analyse. This was considered very good, as it was easier to start analysing after the interviews did not feel anymore so subjective.

The intensive study process has enabled us to stay interested in the study and to keep the theory and the findings fresh in mind while working on the study. The compact schedule also serves our working life partner, as for it getting the findings as soon as possible enables it also to develop its functions faster.

Personal commitment from both of us has been strong. We have noticed that it has been more than fruitful working as a pair, as we have been able to support each other in the process, to analyse the process more objectively, and to make use of both of our views and competence. Throughout the process we have mutually agreed about everything we have made. We have both shown commitment by gathering information about theory and research methods we have been using, as considered essential for the research reliability by O’Leary (2004, 50). According to O’Leary, researcher has the ethical responsibility to gather enough professional knowledge and competence, in order to ensure a reliable study.

For example in the data analysis process we have double-checked many parts, like when gathering the simplified expressions. Both of us collected the expressions from the interviews that we individually considered relevant, and then came together to present our findings. We put the expressions together, took out the overlapping ones and chose the expressions that we considered were relevant for the study. This way we were able to get as an objective conclusion of the findings as possible, as both of our views were present. We then created the

sub-groups according to the study focus, and realised that the data was focusing more on something else than we had thought to come up, when making the plan. But even though we decided to modify the second study question during the process, we believe that it is not decreasing the trustworthiness of this study but the other way round; now the study is more of a whole and answering to the study task more accurately. This supports the idea of the making of this study being a learning process for both of us; in the beginning of the process we might have not considered everything we should have, and this has then come back to us when analysing the data. This has taught a lot about the research process and helped us to see the importance of good planning.

The overall trustworthiness of this study can be discussed by looking the whole study process. This study has been a small-scale one, consisting of 10 participants. Repeatability or saturation has never been an aim, but presenting the views of the readers in a clear and coherent way. Our original study task was to find out what kinds of perceptions and experiences the Finnish readers have, after encountering an ethnic minority living book at Living Library setting. The data collected for it corresponds with this task, which refers to reliable information.

8 DISCUSSION

The aim of this thesis was to explore the perceptions and experiences of the Finns that have participated in Living Library by borrowing a living book that represents an ethnic minority group; to hear the participants' views on the intercultural encounter and the Living Library method. The participants were 10 people who had borrowed a living book representing one of Finland's ethnic minority group during the World Village Festival 2009 in Helsinki centre. Qualitative research methods, including focused interviews and inductive content analysis, were used in this study. The two study questions were, "How has the reader experienced the encounter with an ethnic minority group member in Living Library setting" and "What perceptions does the reader have about the Living Library". The findings as well as the conclusions drawn from those are tied to the World Village Festival 2009 context and therefore cannot be generalized directly to other Living Library events organized before.

According to all readers the encounter with an ethnic minority book in Living Library was a very positive experience. Even though the readers did not come directly to challenge their prejudices and stereotypes in Living Library, they ended up in a dialogue which offered them information, which was seen as the main outcome of the encounter with an ethnic minority book. Gudykunst & Mody (2002, 134) emphasize the importance of presenting information of different cultures in non-evaluative way so that valid cultural information can replace unrealistic expectations with more realistic ones. In practice, this means presenting practical

reasons for the beliefs, values and habits of the other cultures, which in order helps people to understand each others behaviour, customs and worldviews (Gudykunst & Mody 2002, 134). It can be noticed that this exactly took place in the encounters between the readers and living books and maybe this is the value of the encounters for the readers interviewed in the study.

It was also stated that the readers were happy to discuss with a real person instead of reading about the ethnic minorities, immigrants and other issues related to them from real books and by following the media. According to the readers, the real person gives very different information than the media and literature, which was seen as a valuable aspect. This is one hypothesis of the contact theory also; in order for the contact to reach maximally positive outcomes in reducing prejudice, it needs to be personal, face-to-face contact between individuals. This facilitates the dialogue without external interferences and provides a setting for succesful interaction. Chryssochoou (2004, 69) reminds that "The contact hypothesis is not about living in close vicinity with members of the outgroup, but about establishing contact through interpersonal and close interactions".

As already mentioned before, the Living Library method itself was proved to be very efficient and good way to encounter other cultures according to readers. In the study, contact theory hypothesis got support, especially when observing the participants' opinions about Living Library setting. Participants considered the institution's support as easing the encounter with the ethnic minority. According to Chryssochoou (2004, 70) who discusses the contact hypothesis, the contact between two people is beneficial for the reduction of prejudice when it is supported by institutions. This hypothetical view is supported by Allport, Pettigrew and other social psychologists who have researched the contact theory (Allport in Crisp et al. 2009; Pettigrew et. al 2006). This study supports the idea that institutional support is needed in order to assure beneficial intercultural encounters reducing prejudice.

The participants considered the voluntariness and equality as alleviating factors in the encounter. Both of these factors, equal status and voluntary participation, are the contact theory hypothesis conditions which need to be fulfilled in order for the contact to reduce prejudice. Equal status refers to the both parties being equal in the contact regardless of factors that could create hierarchies, e.g. social and financial status, age, gender, etc. The both parties must be respectful to each other. (Allport as in Crisp, Stathi, Turner & Husnu 2009.) The participants of this study stated the reading situation to be generally equal as both parties, the book and the reader, had voluntarily sought contact with each other and were both committed to learn from each other. The fulfilment of these two conditions supports the idea of the contact being one that might have affected on the prejudices positively.

The framework of the Living Library was experienced generally very supportive and natural arena for intercultural encounters. Only the time being too short according to some readers could be interpreted to be something to develop when thinking about the settings. Even though according to these findings the encounters in Living Library were very positive and this kind of arena of dialogue got support, the worrying aspect is that even the arena is useful and seemingly working way for people from different cultures to encounter, is it really reaching the right people, the people who have prejudices? The findings reveal that people who took part in the interviews, were generally open-minded and unprejudiced people. These people seem not have borrowed the living book for challenging their prejudices, as the aim of the Living Library method (Abergel et al. 2005), but moreover to discuss with people unknown to them. Most of the interviewees stated that they do not see themselves as prejudiced or racist. Instead, many interviewees were pondering that most likely racists would not end up using the Living Library.

Based on the data about the readers, these findings support Magdaleena Jaakkola's (2004) findings on tolerant Finns. In her 20-year study she found out that the most tolerant and open-minded towards immigrants were those Finns that had previous personal, supported contact with them. This idea gets support also this study: the majority of the participants stated that they did not consider themselves prejudiced and these same participants did have previous contact with immigrants.

Basically, this refers to the idea that "the rich get richer and the poor poorer". The people who are already open-minded look for the personal contacts and the people who are prejudiced would not even participate in Living Library's encounters by borrowing a book. What is the value of these kinds of encounters if this is the reality? To whom are the encounters directed to? Who will actually participate in these encounters? If the persons participating are the ones who are already the most open-minded and experienced with multicultural issues, isn't this method watering down the very possibility of a dialogue that it wants to offer to people and the society? If Living Library enables the contact between different people to reduce prejudice but the people participating in these encounters do not have prejudices or do not participate to challenge their prejudices, is Living Library then only creating arenas for the tolerant people to get more tolerant? Is Living Library closing those ones out to whom it is actually directing its services to? According to the findings of this study, this seems a very accurate notion.

Does arena provided by Living Library serve those with prejudices too? Does it reach them? What kind of arena would reach all the people? One of the weaknesses of these kinds of events and methods is that the people who could most benefit from more personal contact are those who are most likely to avoid it (Schneider, 2004, 386). There is a risk that in our

society the equal participation is not supported enough and only some voices are heard. When creating arenas of interaction it really should be thought of whom these interventions will serve in the end. It is not enough to just create arenas but those arenas should be also open for everyone in practice, not only for the tolerant and open-minded people. As Living Library is doing already step by step, the concept should be broadened to other arenas too, like schools and day cares. Maybe events like the World Village Festival invite open-minded people, and this affects also on what kind of readers will visit the Library. Living Library could be organised in events which are not that directly profiled to be multicultural events, like music festivals. In these ways the arenas could be open to many more people, and the prejudiced people would maybe get involved in Living Library more than it is happening at the moment.

It cannot be assumed that because of the readers interviewed for this study did not see themselves as prejudiced persons that they would not have prejudices. Actually, the readers stated in the interviews that they have "small prejudices" to do with the language skills, employment and experiences of discrimination of the book, even though they did not consider themselves as prejudiced persons in general. This makes one think if the readers even identified their possible prejudices and stereotypes of ethnic minorities in the encounter. As Schneider (2004, 230, 264) states, we all have stereotypes about most groups, including many to which we belong. Probably, the readers interviewed for this study were not exceptional in this manner.

It could be even asked if the readers borrowed a living book of which they had prejudices, or, if they just borrowed an interesting book, or a book of which they already knew something about. According to the findings of this study, the readers' motives to borrow a book included getting to know more about ethnic minorities, deepening already existing understanding of multicultural issues, as well as getting involved in an interesting discussion and meeting new people. Could it be so that it would be too challenging for a reader to really borrow a book of which he/she has the most prejudices about? And, is it easier to borrow a book which is already somehow common to the reader, and of which the reader knows something about in order to know what to ask? One of the readers stated directly that he borrowed a living book because he already knew what to ask because the ethnic group the book was representing was familiar to the reader beforehand.

According to the findings, the interviewees considered the living book to be open, positive and delightful, and this they considered crucial for the positive reading experience. They stated that because of the book's qualities, the encounter was so pleasant and positive experience. It was also pondered, whether this positiveness was just an exception; if the people who get involved as being books, are somewhat unique and positive examples of their

group, but do not represent the group in whole. This is worrying if thinking the aims of the Living Library; to help people to understand that the living book that they encounter is just another human being as everyone, and like all the other members of the group that they represent. In two interviewees' opinion, the living book was just an ordinary person, which speaks again for the Library encounter meeting its aims (The Living Library Organization). It would be interesting to do further research on whether the readers see the living book as an individual or as a member of their group, and how these perceptions are then applied to the readers' wider perspective on those groups.

It is interesting that if ethnic identities generate from the differences between people and groups, this meaning ethnicity generating also from contact between these different ethnic groups, that at the same time it is also the way to break down those differences. Vilkkoriihelä (1999, 670) says that in contact between individuals, group's signification disappears and two persons are meeting as individuals. This definitely facilitates the encounter and the interaction between two individuals from two different ethnic groups, but does this then mean that two individuals meeting do not present their outgroups anymore to each other and the encounter stays on the individual level? Even though according to many researchers this is the way to reduce prejudices, does it really reduce them if those prejudices diminish only with the individual that is part of the encounter, and the rest of the outgroup remains untouched?

Chryssochoou (2004, 70) refers to ideas on decategorization of Brewer and Miller in her study. According to decategorization, in order to reduce prejudice, the salience of the categorization should be reduced and instead, the focus should be on the individual attributes. In Living Library, the living books are borrowed as members of their group, like as "immigrant book" or "tanzanian book" which refers to living books being primarily members of their group and secondary as individuals. But as brought up by the participants, the books were moreover considered as individuals and their personal features were highlighted throughout the interviews. This supports the idea that in Living Library, decategorization does take place as happened with the participants of this study (Chryssochoou 2004, 70).

Findings of this Bachelor's thesis support this phenomenon that the encounter did tend to stay between the two participants, the reader and the ethnic minority group book, instead of being generalized to the whole outgroup. A question is raised: Is the encounter in a Living Library setting then able to change the stereotypes and prejudices or even challenge them, if the contact is only seen as a contact between two individuals?

According to the typicality paradox, which presents a criticism to contact theories, outgroup members in the encounter need to be seen as typical enough members of their group so that

they do not get sub-typed. According to Schneider (2004, 411, 430), an outgroup member who is not stereotypic can be seen as an exception, which again does not promote the change of the stereotype. This is what could have happened with some of the participants in this study: the book, being such a positive person, was seen possibly as an exception and not representing the whole group. For the readers' perceptions to change, more encounters with the group members would be needed. Gudykunst & Mody (2002, 135) agree by noticing that providing contact with diverse array of outgroup members makes the process of sub typing more difficult and creates more differentiated perceptions of outgroup members which supports the same idea that contact with only one minority group member will not change the stereotypes and prejudices.

Many researchers support the idea of the personal contact reducing prejudices and stereotypes, and it has been even shown to produce a positive impact on the attitudes of people (Vilkko-Riihelä 1999, 691; Gudykunst & Mody 2002, 137; Crisp, Stathi, Turner & Husnu, 2008, 2.) As the encounter provided by the Living Library is exactly this kind of personal contact, it is important to think if this kind of personal contact will actually reduce stereotypes and prejudices, and whether it will stay at a superficial or individual level. It must also be considered if it is possible to generalize these encounters to have significance, when thinking about the whole outgroup instead of only the person faced in the personal encounter.

Of course the idea of the impact on personal contacts as a way of reducing prejudices is not put down totally in this study but mainly challenged. There are many factors that speak for the personal contact, especially the fact that the quality of interaction matters more than quantity, which speaks for personal contacts even if they are not numerous (Schneider 2004, 387). The data gathered in this study shows that the readers really saw the encounter as something positive and valuable even though the readers are talking about single, individual encounters.

When thinking about the future encounters with ethnic minority group members half of the readers stated that they do not believe that the encounter which took place in Living Library would have any special impact on the future because they do not take contact spontaneously with any strangers in general. Still, Pettigrew & Tropp (2006, 751-767) claim in their meta-analysis of 173 independent samples from 515 studies, that attitudes toward the whole outgroup and even towards different outgroups become more positive after a contact. Some readers supported this idea by stating that they might even take contact more easily or that they might have a slightly more positive attitude towards ethnic minority group members in future, as they already had very positive attitudes about them. It seems that as the readers were already

competent in some ways with the multicultural issues, the encounter did not affect that much on their thinking, and therefore their future thinking will not change dramatically if at all.

All in all, this Bachelor's thesis was able to find out some of the experiences of the Living Library readers and to reflect them to the aims of Living Library and to some theories of intercultural encounter. As the sampling of this study included ten people, it is hard to make any generalized conclusions drawn from the data, but rather to find out some commonalities which came up in the interviews. As this study creates new information and critical discussion about the readers' experiences and perceptions of the intercultural encounter in Living Library setting it is able to provide a small insight for the Living Library organizers to assess Living Library as a tool of human rights and equality education. Also, this study will continue the work done to develop Living Library together with the previous studies. The special feature of this study is thought to be that the experiences and perceptions of the Living Library readers have not been studied before qualitatively, and therefore this study creates new information and analyses it. For the first time, the readers' voices are heard and they can contribute in Living Library by sharing their experiences of being in a position of a reader. In this way the readers can contribute a little bit to the discussion of multiculturalism and to ways of promoting it in Finnish society, too.

Of course this study does not give answers to everything related to readers' experiences and perceptions. During the interviews, more could have been asked from the readers concerning their perceptions on intercultural encounters and other cultures, now our interview focused more on the experience about the contact, and the prejudices of the reader. It was nearly impossible to predict that so little information would be received from the readers about their prejudices, and so much about the method itself, which made us to change the focus of the previous latter study question. This nevertheless could have perhaps been avoided if preparing the interview better.

This study is only a small scale study and in order to get more reliable information about whether the Living Library method serves its purpose, another study should be made on that subject. Our aim was moreover to focus on individuals' experiences and perceptions, thus another study could be made to explore the method's functioning itself. A research idea for the future would be also to study the feedback forms which have been collected from the readers during most of the Living Library events in Finland, which would give statistical information about the readers' experiences and perceptions.

Despite some of the lacks in this study, we believe it has succeeded in providing the readers' experiences to be heard and analysed, and through this, in benefiting the Living Library

method. This is the one of the first studies being made on the Living Library and we believe that it can act as a stepping stone for other studies and to promote the discussion on the subject, our findings giving interesting issues to discuss about.

Most of all, this has been a learning process for us both. Instead of producing major findings about the readers' perceptions or Living Library method, this study has helped us as students to understand the importance of rigor and accurate reporting in producing an informative paper. Also, being part of an intensive pair studying and supporting each other despite of our differences taught us a great deal about ourselves as professional study partners and about team work skills needed later on in working life. Even being a small-scale study, this paper has helped us to grow as professionals by showing how important it is to follow good scientific practise and to use the knowledge we have possessed. Besides teaching us about research process, it has provided us with an insight to the world of interrelationships and cultural diversity, which will benefit us when entering the working life in multicultural social work field.

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APPENDIX 1

An information sheet about the project

Hei Elävän Kirjan lainannut!

Olemme kaksi Laurea Ammattikorkeakoulun opiskelijaa, jotka tekevät lopputyötään Elävästä kirjastosta, ja lainaajien kokemuksista. Olisi mahtavaa, jos haluaisit osallistua tutkimukseemme!

Teemme tutkimusta Elävän Kirjaston lainaajien kokemuksista ja mielipiteistä. Erityisesti haluamme keskittyä tutkimukseemme suomalaisten lainaajien kokemuksiin etnisen vähemmistön edustajan kohtaamisesta.

Jos siis olet lainannut esim. romani-, saamelais-, suomenruotsalais-, somali-, kurdi-, tai muun etnisen vähemmistön edustaja-kirjan, olet etsimämme henkilö. Olemme kiinnostuneet SINUN mielipiteestäsi lainaustilanteesta!

Sinun nimeäsi tai henkilötietojasi ei tulla julkaisemaan, vaan tutkimus on luottamuksellinen. Sitä vastoin se, mitä kerrot haastattelussa, tullaan käyttämään tutkimuksemme arvokkaana aineistona. Sinulla on oikeus kieltäytyä aineiston julkaisemisesta ja oikeus nähdä valmis aineisto.

Opinnäytetyömme on alemman ammattikorkeakoulututkinnon opinnäytetyö, joka julkaistaan joulukuussa 2009.

Sinun kokemuksesi Elävästä Kirjastosta on arvokasta tutkimusmateriaalia, jolla voidaan saada tietoa kirjaston toimivuudesta! Olisi hienoa jos voisit osallistua haastatteluun!

Jos kiinnostuit osallistumaan haastatteluun, ota yhteys meihin, Anuun ja Jennyyn. Maailma Kylässä festareilla päivystämme Elävä Kirjasto-teltan läheisyydessä katiskan luona. Myös kirjaston lainaustiskiltä voit kysyä meistä.

Haastattelut tehdään teltan läheisyydessä oppimiskeskus Herossa kahvikupposen äärellä ☺

Jos muutatkin mieltäsi, ja haluat osallistua haastatteluun festareiden jälkeen, voit aina soittaa tai laittaa sähköpostia meille:

Anu Kotamäki
p. xxxxxxxxxxxx
xxxxxxx@xxxx.fi

Jenny Oinonen
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Appendix 2
Informed content

Laurea Ammattikorkeakoulu, Otaniemi

Arvoisa tutkimukseen osallistuja,

Olet osallistumassa tutkimukseemme Elävän kirjaston lukijoiden kokemuksista. Teemme tutkimusta Laurea ammattikorkeakoulun opinnäytetyönä. Tutkimus suoritetaan Maailma Kylässä -tapahtuman Elävän Kirjaston yhteydessä 24-25.5.2009 ja tutkimus tehdään haastatteleamalla vapaaehtoisia Elävän Kirjaston Lukijoita.

Olemme tietoisia siitä, että terveys- ja sosiaalialan opiskelijoina opinnäytetyömme tekemiseen sovelletaan vaitiolovelvollisuutta, josta on säädetty mm. Laissa sosiaalihuollon asiakkaan asemasta ja oikeuksista (2000/812/15 §) ja Laissa terveydenhuollon ammattihenkilöistä (1994/3/17 §). Täten emme saa sivullisille luvatta ilmaista yksityisen henkilön tai perheen asioista, josta olemme tehtävämme perusteella saaneet tiedon. Salassapitovelvollisuus säilyy opintojen loppumisen jälkeen.

Noudatamme tiedonhankinnassa ja aineiston käsittelyssä luottamuksellisuutta ja totuudellisuutta. Kiinnitämme erityistä huomiota siihen, ettei opinnäytetyöstä koidu mitään haittaa siihen osallistuville henkilöille. Noudatamme toiminnassamme Laurean tutkimuseettisiä ohjeita.

Käytännössä tämä tarkoittaa sitä, että tutkimukseen osallistuvien henkilöllisyys ei tule tutkimuksen missään vaiheessa ilmi, kenenkään henkilötietoja ei tulla julkaisemaan ja osallistujien kokemuksia käytetään tutkimuksen teossa siten, ettei niistä ole selvitettävissä, kenen sanomaa ne ovat. Tämä takaa täyden anonymiteetin tutkimukseen osallistuville. Haastateltavalla on myös oikeus kieltäytyä aineiston julkaisemisesta ja oikeus nähdä valmis aineisto. Tutkimus valmistunee jouluna 2009 ja tutkimusraportti on tällöin löydettävissä Elävän Kirjaston internetsivuilta (<http://www.keks.fi/elavakirjasto>).

Allekirjoittamalla tämän lomakkeen tutkimuksen tekijät sitoutuvat noudattamaan edellä kuvattuja tutkimuseettisiä periaatteita ja tutkimukseen osallistuva toteaa olevansa informoitu tutkimukseen liittyvistä käytännöistä sekä oikeuksistaan haastateltavana ja antaa tutkimuksen tekijöille luvan käyttää haastattelussa keräämäänsä materiaalia tutkimuksessa.

paikka aika haastateltavan allekirjoitus

paikka aika tutkimuksen tekijän allekirjoitus

paikka aika tutkimuksen tekijän allekirjoitus

Appendix 3

Interview questions

Two main themes:

Experiences of the encounter
Attitudes and prejudices about the group

Sub-themes:

Experiences of the encounter
Contact hypotheses
Previous thoughts about the group
Encounter with an ethnic minority group member
Yield of the encounter

Supportive questions:

What kinds of thoughts do you have now, after the reading?
What made you to participate?
How was it, being a reader?
What do you think about Living Library?
What made the situation easy/difficult?
Did you get answers or new knowledge?
What made the encounter easy/difficult?
How do you experience the voluntary contact?
What do you think about equality in the reading situation?
What do you think about this kind of a method for meeting?
How did this kind of personal contact feel?
How did you feel about topics, were you able to speak about everything?
Have you had any previous contact with the group? If yes, what kind?
What kind of ideas did you have about this group before the encounter?
Where had you gotten information before?
What made you to borrow this particular book?
How was the communication between you two?
What kind of ideas do you have about the book?
What do you feel you were left with from the reading?
What do you think about the group now, after the reading? Did something change from before you borrowed?
How do you see your future encounters with the group?