

# Clients' experiences of multicultural counseling provided by the Bridge project



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This bachelor thesis is a part of the Empowering Work Research and Development Path of Laurea Otaniemi and was done for the Bridge project. Bridge is a service project for immigrants by the Swedish-speaking information and culture center Luckan that aims to help immigrants integrate into the Finnish or Finnish-Swedish society. The idea of Bridge project is to help immigrants attain knowledge of the Finnish society and also provide them with skills to navigate in it. The purpose of this study was to look at the relevance of multicultural counseling among immigrant students in the job seeking process. The aim was to explore how the clients have experienced the multicultural counseling provided by the Bridge project. Another objective of this study was to provide Bridge project with beneficial material for evaluating their own work and for planning the future of the project. Data for this qualitative study was collected using the semi-structured interview method. The informants were six immigrant students that have attended employment counseling services that Bridge project provides. The data was analysed using the method of inductive content analysis. The findings suggested different areas in job seeking process where immigrant students in Finland need assistance. The counseling of Bridge project answers some of these needs but others are not met by Bridge. Thus the study concludes that multicultural aspect to counseling is valuable when helping an immigrant to find work. However, in the case of students the current practice of Bridge project is not the most effective.

Keywords: Bridge project, multicultural counseling, employment of foreigners in Finland

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Tämä opinnäytetyö on tehty Bridge projektia varten ja on osa voimaannuttavan työn tutkimus- ja kehittämislinjaa Laurea Otanimessä. Bridge on ruotsinkielisen tiedotus- ja kulttuuri-keskus Luckan:in projekti joka palvelee maahanmuuttajia heidän kotoutuessaan suomalaiseen tai suomenruotsalaiseen yhteiskuntaan. Bridge projektin tarkoitus on auttaa maahanmuuttajia saamaan suomalaista yhteiskuntaa koskevaa tietoa ja oppimaan taitoja siinä toimimiseen. Tämän tutkimuksen päämääränä oli tarkastella monikulttuurisen ohjauksen tärkeyttä maahanmuuttajaopiskelijoiden työhaussa. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli kartoittaa Bridge:n asiakkaiden kokemuksia projektin toteuttamasta monikulttuurisesta ohjauksesta. Tavoitteena oli toteuttaa tutkimus josta Bridge voisi hyötyä sen oman toiminnan arvioinnin yhteydessä ja projektin jatkoa suunniteltaessa. Tämän kvalitatiivisen tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin käyttäen puoli-strukturoitua haastattelua. Tutkimukseen otti osaa kuusi maahanmuuttajataustaista opiskelijaa joista kukin on ottanut osaa Bridge projektin tarjoamaan työhaun ohjaamiseen. Aineisto analysoitiin käyttäen induktiivista sisällön analyysiä. Tutkimuksen tulokset toivat esille erilaisia työn hakuun liittyviä vaihteita, joissa Suomen maahanmuuttajataustaiset opiskelijat tarvitsevat apua. Bridge projektin tarjoama ohjaus vastaa vain osaan näistä tarpeista. Tutkimuksessa päädyttiin siihen, että monikulttuurinen ohjaus on oleellinen osa maahanmuuttajan työhaun neuvonnassa. Kuitenkin Bridge projektin nykyinen toimintatapa ei ole kaikkein tehokkain vastaamaan Suomessa opiskelevien maahanmuuttajien ohjaustarpeisiin.

Avainsanat: Bridge projekti, monikulttuurinen ohjaaminen, maahanmuuttajien työllistyminen Suomessa

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## 1 Introduction

The opportunities to study for free in Finland are good. The possibility to graduate with a vocational or higher professional degree is open for everyone regardless of their background. Many foreigners immigrate to Finland and gain residence permit on the basis of studying. Studying in Finland is made accessible for immigrants by offering various degrees in English language. In fact the amount of immigrants in the vocational or higher education has increased up to 23% in three years between 2005 and 2007. According to the National Board of Education in the year 2006 there were 7078 individuals participating in vocational education, 5366 in university education, and 7078 in university of applied science education. Together there are almost 20 000 immigrants who have gained Finnish professional education by the year 2010. (Finnish National Board of Education, 2010)

Despite the fact that a great number of immigrants have received education in Finland, the unemployment rates among individuals with a foreign background are still much higher than those of the majority population. Education obtained in Finland is said to be one of the key factors in finding work. Work then is in most cases directly linked with an immigrant's integration process and overall well-being. (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. 2002, 22) Yet there are immigrants that have graduated to a professional degree in Finland and still find it hard to integrate to the local labor market. Some foreigners give up and take the received education back to their native country, or other more culturally diverse environment.

The Finnish-Swedish Information Center Luckan started a project called "Bridge" in 2008 with a purpose to serve immigrants in the Metropolitan area. Based on personal contact and experience with immigrants the Bridge project coordinator argues that it is hard for a foreigner to attain employment without having the needed cultural and societal knowledge about Finland. A degree certificate can be useless without knowing how to navigate and create contacts in the society. The more different the ethnic- and cultural background of the immigrant is, the more difficult it usually is for him or her to approach Finnish employers in an appealing way. (Personal communication with Ann-Jolin Grüne 2009)

The purpose of this thesis is to look at the relevance of multicultural counseling among immigrant students that are looking for work. We try to understand and explain the role that multicultural counseling has in helping immigrants to integrate into the Finnish working life. The findings of this study describe how unemployed immigrant students have experienced the multicultural counseling provided by Bridge project. The informants of this study were six individuals with an immigrant background that are studying, or have studied, for a profession in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The data for this qualitative study consisted of semi-structured interviews which were analysed using the method of content analysis. We hope

that this thesis will be useful for Bridge project as they can use it as documentation on the services they provide. The current Bridge project funding from RAY Oy is ending in December 2010. We intended to provide Bridge with a study that will be useful for them in their final reporting and when planning the future of the project.

## 2 Background

The Bachelor thesis is a part of the Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Otaniemi unit project "Empowering Work Research and Development Path". One of the working life partners involved in the project is "Bridge" - the Swedish speaking information and culture center Luckan's service project for immigrants.

Luckan is a Swedish speaking information and culture centre located in the centre of Helsinki. It is aimed at the Finnish-Swedish individuals, immigrants and anyone interested; they are welcome to use the services provided. "Bridge" is a project that Luckan started in the fall 2008. The purpose of Bridge project is to help immigrants integrate into the Finnish or Finnish-Swedish society. The idea is to offer help to ethnic minorities to attain knowledge of the Finnish society and provide them with skills to navigate in it. Bridge project offers information as well as practical help on integration matters, studies, work and leisure. The project also attempts to change the attitudes towards immigrants and improve cultural tolerance among employers. (Luckan, Bridge 2009)

Bridge project has an office in the center of Helsinki, in the premises of Luckan. The project has a front desk where staff can be reached and information retrieved. Bridge is a low threshold drop in service for immigrant individuals. Any one can drop by at the office from Monday till Wednesday from 11 till 4 p.m. It is also possible to book an individual meeting. There are several computers for the clients to use as well as brochures on subjects such as employment, education, immigration and legal matters. The project staff also offers practical help to its clients: for example filling in job applications, writing an appropriate Curriculum Vitae and giving job hunting tips. Apart from the front office services, Bridge project also has internet web pages with information on relevant issues.

In the beginning Bridge project has provided a variety of activities for different groups of people; from children and teenagers to families with young children, unemployed and anyone else interested. The goal was to bring both Finnish-Swedish and foreign clients together and to raise cultural awareness and tolerance. These activities included for example art workshops, DJ-lessons for young adults and job hunt courses. However, after a year of existence, the project manager, and the only worker realized that the majority of her clients needed support in the job seeking process.

In 2009 the main focus of Bridge project was to provide with help in the job hunt. Work related workshops series called "What's in it for me" started to take place. The aim of these workshops was to provide information about the job market and to enhance job hunting skills. Each seminar had a theme, for example "Call backs and interviews", "How to write a curricu-



lum vitae” and “Opening own organization” to name a few. In each workshop there was a professional of the field discussing and teaching the subjects.

Bridge project was found in attempt to meet the specific needs of immigrants that came to the Luckan office. Luckan is an information service and foreigners with different backgrounds would come to the office to ask for help in various matters. Luckan was granted funding for the purpose of starting a project that would give more specific help to the immigrants coming to the office. As a result Bridge project started in the fall 2008. The Bridge project was the first of its kind organized by Luckan and there was no previous counseling model for them to use. Since its start Bridge project has been flexible with its emphasis in the work, changing activities and services according to the present need. For example the present focus in helping in the job search was only set during the second year of the project. (Personal communication with Ann-Jolin Grüne 2009)

In the year of 2009 when research for this thesis was started, Bridge project was working with employment issues. Bridge coordinator helped the clients with Finnish language practicalities such as translating CVs and filling in applications. The project offered individual counseling for their clients. In these meetings the project worker gave cultural and practical knowledge in order for the clients to navigate and function independently in the Finnish society. When needed, the project worker referred clients to other agencies and services. Bridge project also provided group meetings regarding various employment issues. The participants had the chance to speak to the experts of the field as well as discuss issues within the group. In these meetings, Bridge clients received “cultural translations” of the Finnish society. In other words, the speakers would explain to the clients how particular things are done in Finland. For example how to approach a Finnish employer or how to behave successfully in an interview situation. (Personal communication with Ann-Jolin Grüne 2009)

### 3 Integration through work

Work is seen as an important step in a person’s integration process. (Jasinskaja-Lahti et. al 2002, 21) Acknowledging this, the aim of the Bridge project is to advance its clients' integration into the Finnish or Finnish Swedish society through helping them in the job hunt. Thus the first theoretical framework of our study is integration through work. Before reviewing the immigrants' situation in the Finnish labor market we will first discuss the concepts of integration and work.

#### 3.1 Concepts of integration and work

The term integration has not been clearly defined in the integration studies despite of its continuous usage; instead there are various definitions for it. However, most of the

definitions state that it is vital to participate in the society in order to integrate. Integration is also often emphasized to be an ongoing process. There are different approaches to studying integration and many researchers argue that it is important to state the approach that is being used. In "Monietnisyys, yhteiskunta ja työ" Forsander et al. present three approaches by Breton, Isawij, Kalbach and Reitz (1990). (Forsander et. al 2001, 38-40)

First one of these approaches can be called "structural integration" and it includes political, economical and social aspects of integration. The aim of structural integration studies is to look at how immigrants operate with the majority of the population. The second approach is integration between different ethnic groups. These studies look at for example the interests that different minority groups might have in common and also at the hierarchies and communication between these groups. The third approach suggests that integration within one's own ethnic minority group promotes integration to the receiving society. (Forsander et. al 2001, 38-40)

The focal interest of the integration studies has been on the changes happening to the immigrants and not to the receiving society. It is common to describe integration as a process of increasing participation in the society and its institutions. (Forsander et. Al 2001, 39) Another key focus in immigration studies is interaction between the new comers and the receiving community. The immigration phenomenon has been mostly studied from the point of view of the foreigners. Different adaptation strategies have been used in the studies. Essential for all the strategies is an attempt to "belong somewhere or be kept out from somewhere". (Forsander et.al 2001, 32) Also defining a person's level of integration is not simple. Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. refer to objective and subjective indicators of integration. The objective indicators are about the socioeconomic situation of immigrants and atmosphere in the society, where as subjective indicators look at the integration based on individual development and personal experiences. (Jasinskaja-Lahti 2002, 21)

Working is vital for human beings; it is a crucial activity for the preservation of personal health. Working instinct, from a psychological point of view, is an innate and powerful tendency to utilize individual's mental and physical powers as well as skills and talents, in order to achieve, to reach a goal, to create and to express oneself. Work can stimulate personal identity and in the same way help to boost self-esteem. Sense of identity, worth and dignity can be experienced through meaningful work. An individual can grow, realize and actualize their full potential by achieving meaningful results at work. Work is an activity through which an individual can become who he or she is and develop a sense of belonging. Also an individual can provide improved conditions to their community through work. Morin reviewed three approaches in explaining the meaning of work. Firstly there is the significance and value of work to an individual. Work is essential among all the cultures in the world even

though each culture places its own values and importance on it. Nevertheless, it is an important part of most people's lives considering the amount of time individuals spend working. The second approach is orientation towards work; what people look for in work and the motivation behind it. The third approach emphasizes the importance of coherence between an individual and the work he or she does. This sense of coherence provides an individual with a feeling of psychological security that helps him or her to cope with challenges that one may face in working life. (Morin 2004)

Jasinskaja-Lahti et. al bring up that the connection between integration and work is a two way street. Work brings along factors that help the individual to integrate, such as economic independence, social networks and a better self-esteem. On the other hand, the better the individual has integrated into the society, the better the chances are for him to be employed. (Jasinskaja-Lahti et. al 2002, 22) Employment is probably the most practical aspect in the Finnish integration plan. The plan usually includes language training, life control counseling and practical training; all of which aim to help the immigrant find work. Employment has been recognized as the central aspect or tool to an individual's integration. (Jasinskaja-Lahti et. al 2002)

### 3.2 Integration process in Finland

In Finland official immigration and refugee policy was first drawn in October 1997. This policy defines integration as the part taking of immigrants in the economic, political and social life as full members of the society, with same responsibilities and rights as the mainstream population. (Jasinskaja-Lahti et. al 2002, 20) Today there is a law in Finland on the integration of immigrants. The objective of this law is to

“Promote equality and freedom of choice of immigrants by giving them adequate help and information in order for them to function in the society”  
(Act on Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers 493/1999, Chapter 1, Section 1)

Immigrant advisers in employment offices as well as professionals in the local authorities aim to provide sufficient knowledge and skills for the immigrants to cope in the society's every day life as well as working life. According to the 'Act of Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers', integration means personal development of immigrants that focuses on participation in work life and functioning in the society while preserving their language and culture. The authorities provide the resources and measures to ensure that this integration is possible. (Act on Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers 493/1999, Chapter 1, Section 2)

Every foreigner living permanently in Finland is entitled to an integration plan. The plan can be made after an immigrant has been registered as a permanent resident in the Finnish population system. At the time of the plan, a foreigner has the legal right to an immigration allowance to ensure financial security. The plan is valid for three years but it can be extended to last for five years. With the help of the plan, the immigrant is provided with tools to be a part of the society. One of the key factors of integration processes is learning the language, either Finnish or Swedish. The officials provide immigrants with an opportunity to attain adequate language skills in order for them to function in working life. (Ministry of the Interior 2009)

### 3.3 Employment of foreigners in Finland

The number of foreigners in Finland has doubled during the past 14 years. In 1995 there was 68 000 foreigners living in Finland, where as by the end of 2009 the number had grown to 143 000. In the 1990's humanitarian immigration was emphasized in Finland but in 2000's the immigrant's abilities to work have been emphasized in the immigration policy. In the future there will be a need for workers especially in the areas of social- and health care, elderly care and education. Therefore increasing immigration to Finland is said to benefit the society in the long run. (Local and Regional Government Finland 2009) Politicians have acknowledged the importance of immigrant employment in Finland. One way to manage globalization is through integration policy. Immigrants can help to replace the retired working force and also strengthen new and existing businesses as well as maintain the social system. It has been estimated that by the year 2030 there will be 600,000 people of age 65. At the same time 300,000 will retire. (Ministry of the Interior 2009)

Immigration policy is made by the Ministry of Interior and Governmental Program. The foundation of the immigration policy is based on human rights. Immigrant population should be treated on the same level as the local population. In order to be able to reach its goals and to improve their work, the Ministry has started a developmental project in Autumn 2006. Over the coming years an action plan is set up for work related immigration. Immigrants and their families are supposed to be provided with the needed guidance and support. (Ministry of the Interior 2009)

The employment situation of immigrants has been subject to economic and social changes in the Finnish society. For example the unemployment rates of immigrants in Finland were the highest in the recession period of the early 1990's and when the general labor market situation improved in the mid 1990's, also immigrants' unemployment reduced. (Jasinskaja-Lahti 2002, 22) However, numbers of unemployed immigrants have always been relatively

higher than those of the majority population. According to a Ministry of the Interior report by Pentti Arajärvi in 2009 the unemployment rate of immigrants is three times as high as that of the majority population. In the end of 2007 the employment rate of immigrants was 50 percent, unemployment rate being 21,6 percent. (Maahanmuuttajien työllistyminen ja kannustinloukut 2009, 19)

There are big differences in the employment situation within the individuals with different ethnic backgrounds. In year 2001 the unemployment rates were the highest among Somalian, Iraki, Iranian, Vietnamese and Moroccan immigrants. (Jasinskaja-Lahti 2002, 23) According to the Ministry of the Interior's report from 2009 the highest unemployment rates are still found among the same ethnic groups, only excluding the Vietnamese and with the addition of Afghans. Also the difference in the employment situation between men and women is significant. The unemployment rate of women was 25,2 percent and of men 15,8 percent. (Maahanmuuttajien työllistyminen ja kannustinloukut 2009, 19)

There are different reasons to why the unemployment rates are higher among immigrants than the majority of population. We will take a look at two different aspects. First the characteristics of the immigrants and how those influence their opportunities to find work. Second the attitudes of the receiving population and the kind of impact those have on the employment situation of immigrants. Jasinskaja-Lahti et. al argue that the most important factors to influence the employment opportunities of immigrants are previous work experience gained in Finland, the time spent in the country and the Finnish language skills. Immigrants in Finland are also on the average lower educated than the majority population. In addition human capital, including applicability and attitudes, is equally important in the job market as the formal competence, education and work experience. (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al 2002, 23) Social- and cultural competence, such as good language skills, have been increasingly emphasized in the job markets over the past decade. Forsander argues that these requirements can be misused to discriminate against ethnic minorities on the basis of lack of their cultural competence, such as faltering language skills. (Forsander 2002: 69)

On the other hand, one of the key findings of Maria Riala (Alternative futures masters thesis study on "Second-Generation immigrants in the Finnish Labor Market in 2020" published in 2009) was that some immigrants experience that it might be easier for an individual with immigrant background to stand out in a positive way in the Finnish labor market than for a native Finn. (Riala 2009) Annika Forsander argues that education received in Finland can have a significant impact on immigrant's chances of getting a job. Finnish employers seem to value local education more because they are familiar with the context of it. The employers are hesitant to appreciate a foreign curricula because they don't know what skills and competence it brings. (Forsander 2002: 69; Forsander et al 2001: 64) Among the immigrant

job seekers there are illiterates and mothers with many children and it is not realistic to expect individuals from these groups to quickly get employed. (Maahanmuuttajien työllistyminen ja kannustinloukut 2009, 19)

### 3.4 Attitudes towards foreigners in Finland

The head of immigration affairs in Helsinki Annika Forsander has done several studies on immigrants in the Finnish labor market. In "Insiders or Outsiders Within" she researched the employment situation of those immigrants who had come to Finland between years 1989 and 1993. The study has showed that there are several variables that play an important role in immigrant employment. The most important variable was immigrants' ethnicity. National origin of the immigrant plays an important role in their integration into labour market. The attitudes towards culturally diverse individuals from the majority of the population can be seen in how these culturally diverse individuals are treated in the labour market and how their positions evolve.

Most of the studies regarding attitudes of Finns towards individuals with an immigrant background show similar ethnic hierarchy. Forsander reviewed studies by Jaakkola (1999) and Söderling (1997) and according to them western people are most wanted as immigrants, while "visible" immigrants that mostly come from developing countries are least wanted. The second variable was education. The results of the study showed that it was relevant whether or not the immigrants had received an education in Finland or not. Education acquired in Finland helped in the process of entering into the labour market. As we have reviewed earlier, this can be interpreted as social trust in the local education. (Forsander 2003)

Based on the same study Forsander also argues that the situation of the immigrants depends on the conditions of the receiving country. The Nordic Welfare state is built for homogeneous society thus the structure in the society does not adapt well to the variety of lifestyles. Since the threshold for labour market inclusion is high thus the unemployment rate among the immigrants is high as well. That being said, the poverty rate in Nordic Welfare states has been low and poverty has been in control to some extent. However, Forsander believes that there is a risk of ethnification of poverty. (Forsander 2003)

In a study called "Luottamuksen ehdot" published by the Family Federation in 2002 Forsander again mentions that the Finnish people have been found to be hesitant to embrace ethnic differences and institutions based on

those differences. Practice of discrimination has been the starting point and context for studying the societal status of immigrants in Finland as in other Nordic countries and the Great Britain. The poor societal condition of immigrants is explained by discrimination they

experience by the mainstream population. The attitudes of the people in the surrounding society affect the integration and job seeking process of the immigrants. (Forsander 2002)

To clarify the meaning of discrimination on the job market, Forsander refers to Martin Schein's definition on discrimination being treating people unequally based on unacceptable reasons. Attributes such as education and professional skills are acceptable requirements since they matter in completing the job. Hiring or not hiring based on unacceptable reasons such as age, sex or ethnic origin is considered discrimination. (Forsander 2002, 63-64)

Discrimination is probably the easiest to point out when studying the job seeking attempts of persons with an immigrant background. A Ministry of Labor report from 2005 lists various examples of cases where an individual has been discriminated against in the Finnish labor market. For example an applicant has been without reason asked to have Finnish citizenship. Unreasonable language skills have also been expected of immigrant applicant. In some cases the applicant has even been told that they already found somebody for the job even though that was not the case. The labor officials study the reports on these cases but so far no convictions have been imposed. (Työhallinnon julkaisu: Kala kuivalla maalla. kotoutuminen maahanmuuttajan näkökulmasta 2005, 29-30)

A master's thesis study "Getting a Job in Finland" by Akhlaq Ahmad in 2005 explored the importance of social networks while entering the labour market. The finding of the study show that despite the fact that Finland has well organized social system of public employment agencies and formal channels that offer unemployed with information regarding job opportunities, social networks still contribute a significant source in finding employment, especially for the immigrants living in Finland. In fact, the majority of the immigrants that participated in the study have found work through social networks. On the other hand, the study pointed out the double role that social networks can play in the process of job hunting; it offers vital information about employment opportunities but at the same time it can also restrict individuals to stay in low-prestige sectors of the labour market. (Akhlaq 2005)

#### 4 Multicultural counseling

The Bridge project uses multicultural counseling as a tool to help individuals holistically. The clients coming to Bridge have ethnically diverse backgrounds. The project aims to help these individuals in various life situations. The Bridge project provides the clients with individual counseling as well as group counseling in form of informative workshops and seminars. The seminars offer guidance for individuals that are seeking for employment. This chapter is going to briefly explain what is multicultural counseling; a few approaches to it, its aims and important aspects, such as multicultural competence from a counselor's perspective.

#### 4.1 Definition of multicultural counseling

In order to discuss multicultural counseling it is important to take a brief look at the definition and meaning of culture and counseling. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization described culture as intellectual, emotional and material characteristics in a community, society or a social group. These characteristics are surrounded and influenced by literature and arts but also by traditions, ways of living, beliefs and value systems. (UNESCO 2002) Ponterotto et al. (2001) argue that the meaning of culture is difficult to define because people and culture are interrelated. They add that cultural identity affects who and what a person is. However, individuals change with time, thus the meaning of culture alters together with them. People also change after interacting with other culturally diverse individuals. (Ponterotto et al 2001: xi)

Launikari and Puukari (Ed. 2005) add to Ponterotto et al. (2001) definition of culture by saying that culture develops because of individuals, while living in cultures develops individuals. Launikari and Puukari (Ed. 2005) believe that in order to understand oneself and one's culture, an individual needs other people. (Launikaari & Puukari Ed. 2005, 28-29) McLeod (1998) points out that culture is a complex concept that should not be oversimplified. Culture is explained as the way humans live in a group and it is important to consider and utilize the findings of social anthropology. Social anthropologists are able to interpret and explain different cultures by living in them and by conducting observations over a long period of time. The meaning of culture has an important role in counseling. Even though a counselor cannot study in-depth a culture of his or her client, nor have the opportunity to observe the clients in their natural environment as anthropologists do, a counselor is also trying to "know" the culture of his or her client. That's why counselors ought to keep in mind that the knowledge they possess of the culture of a client is limited. (McLeod 1998, 162-163)

Professionals have various definitions, understandings and theories of counseling depending on their area of social work and the approach they use. To briefly summarise them, counseling can be seen as a profession that aims to help an individual to function independently in the society while promoting human well-being. Counselors intend to empower individuals so that they can use their own resources and strength to function and navigate in life. Counseling can take different forms for example one on one counseling, group counseling, counseling with couples and families, over the telephone and also through self-help materials such as books, CD's and DVD's. There is also a vast area of counseling regarding employment. Counseling agencies help individuals to cope with work stress and anxiety as well as offer vocational guidance. (McLeod 1998, 2-11)



The counseling process can be divided into three parts, beginning, middle and end. In the beginning of counseling a therapeutic relationship is formed. Client and counselor usually discuss expectations of the sessions and at the same time the counselor assesses the situation of the client. Learning and change happen in the middle part of the process. In the end of the process an individual learns how to sustain and use what has been learned in the sessions, as well as skills to deal with his or her situation. The counselor also provides further referrals when needed. (McLeod 1998, 235)



Picture 1: The counseling process

A variety of details have to be taken into account while discussing multicultural counseling. Multicultural counseling is person and culture centered thus it acknowledges the differences between clients. It also emphasizes that aspects of family and culture influence the way an individual sees the world. (Ivey et al. 1997, 134) Multicultural counselors emphasise the significance of interaction between a person and his or her environment. In order to work efficiently with a client counselors need to bear in mind that an individual is always a part of a family. (Ivey et al 1997, 148) Family plays an important role in multicultural counseling and therapy. A counselor should include family and other important extended networks in the counseling processes in order to understand the client better and achieve wanted results. (Ivey et al 1997, 135) A multicultural counselor needs to have an understanding of how the family of a client is affected by culturally diverse community. In the same way, the family of the counselor as well as his or her worldview also affect counseling sessions. (Ivey et al 1997, 148) An efficient and skillful multicultural counselor is aware of how culture affects individuals and vice versa. A multicultural counselor needs not only have a broad knowledge about the variety of cultures but also the processes through which individuals go through in order to become part of a community and a society. A counselor must also have an understanding of how individuals construct their worldview, basic attitudes, values and norms. (Launikari & Puukari Ed. 2005, 27-28) Basically skillful counseling is to have a broad and holistic understanding of the processes that individuals go through because of cultural differences they are surrounded by.

In addition to knowing his or her culture as well as that of the client, the counselor should understand historical and current relationship between the cultures in order to consider historical facts in the society, such as oppression and racism. (Palmer & McMahon Ed. 1997, 293-

295) For example, a depressed client from a diverse multicultural background needs to be seen not merely as an individual but also as an individual within a multicultural context. Ivey et al. argue that racism often leads to depression and that in fact multicultural counseling cannot be successful unless multicultural issues are addressed as societal oppression, racism and sexism. (Ivey et al. 1997, 135) Palmer and McMahon (1997) also point out that the counselor needs to pay attention to the communication of the clients, since they might not communicate in the way expected. One needs to keep in mind that concepts such as honesty, truth, intentions, self-enclosure, and politeness vary within cultures. Another crucial aspect of communication is language. The counselor has to be aware of his or her usage of language; expressions may be misunderstood by the client and break the communication and the counseling relationship. However, it is impossible to be aware of such expressions all the time thus the counselor needs to develop a sensitivity towards the clients' reactions. (Palmer & McMahon Ed. 1997, 295-297)

#### 4.2 Culture specific approach vs. universal approach

Launikari and Puukari have reviewed different ways to look at cultural differences. The interpretation that concentrates on cultural differences, especially ethnicity and race, is called *culture-specific*, while *universal* approach focuses on cultural similarities. Culture-specific approach helps to notice and respect individuals as representatives of their own cultural background. Universalistic perspective points out that even when coming from different cultures all people share similarities. Thus the latter mentioned approach argues that all counseling can be seen as multicultural because each individual has his or her own story and everyone belongs to different cultures according to their sexual orientation, gender, political background, social class, religion etc. It is important to balance these two approaches; otherwise there is a danger to fall for subjective understanding of multicultural counseling. Multicultural counseling acknowledges the significant influence that culture has on human beings. Human existence cannot be explained without keeping in mind that individuals are a part of communities and of the society. Meaning of culture is formed by people interacting with either similar or different cultures and thus affect the development of culture. (Launiaari & Puukari Ed. 2005, 30)

Ivey et al. reviewed Fukuyama's universal approach to multicultural counseling. Fukuyama describes culture as gender, sexual preference, age and ethnical issues. This approach to multicultural counseling concentrates on cultural issues in each counseling meeting. It encourages the counselors to not only look at the individual issues of the client but also to examine their multicultural context, as well as the environment of each client. First the counselor needs to be culturally aware and only then he or she can try to understand how family and personal issues relate to cultural background. Culture is respected and clients are en-

couraged to take pride in their ethnic background. Following this approach counselors assist their clients in cultural identity development and also provide them with information about the process of acculturation and oppression. (Ivey et al. 1997, 135-136)

Ivey et al. present a critique of the universal approach to multicultural counseling by Lock (1990). Lock states in his focused culture-specific approach that it is necessary for a counselor to gain expertise in a specific culture group. He argues that specific cultural groups may suffer because the multicultural approach is too general. He goes on saying that the universal approach can even weaken the efforts for change. According to Lock, for example in North America based on the history of racism, the focus should be mostly on African-American, Asian-American, Latino-American and Native American cultures. Culture-specific approach requires counselors to take a close look at their own racial beliefs and attitudes. It urges counselors to discuss racial matters such as oppression and to be willing to go beyond the individual and family sessions. The approach also asks of the counselors to view their clients not solely as individuals but also as members of groups. (Ivey et al. 1997, 136-137)

There is an intense debate over the universal and culture specific approaches. The members of feminist, gay/lesbian and various religious communities have criticized literature on multiculturalism that only focuses on racial and ethnic issues and give less attention to their personal matters. While many other members of society argue that issues of gays and lesbians or women take away the importance of the central issue which is racism. However it is up to a counselor to be sensitive about their client's needs and assess the issues that require to be considered. (Ivey et al. 1997, 137)

#### 4.3 Multicultural counseling theory

Multicultural counseling intends to add meaning to individuals and communities by challenging their old ways of thinking and living. The purpose of multicultural counseling is to help people to create new way of thinking and provide them with alternative ways to behave in their daily lives. An individual needs to function in his or her own culture as well as understand and respect other world views. Thus multicultural counseling attempts to add a cultural perspective to the existing older traditions, such as cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic and existential-humanistic approach (Ivey et al. 1997, 138) Multicultural counseling qualifies as a theory because, as other theories on human behavior, it is capable to predict future behavior. When there is too much attention on the cultural differences or cultural similarities it most likely will lead to failure, while a balance between the two will lead to positive outcome. For example, too much focus on cultural differences leads to exclusion, feeling of resistance and stereotyping. On the other hand, when cultural similarities are overemphasized it may lead to

taking advantage of the less powerful by the more influential individuals. (Ivey et al. 1997, 138)

Each theory on multicultural counseling was originated in a specific cultural context. If the theory is suitable to a certain situation it will most likely be discriminatory towards contrasting culture. Different world views affect the way people explain and understand certain aspects in life. For example, each approach might explain the same individual problem differently. Historically traditional Western diagnosis and therapy view the problem in a client as opposed to difficulties being related to the person's social environment. (Ivey et al. 1997, 138)

Multicultural professionals have often disapproved of counseling having a Eurocentric perspective as it reflects the values and the norms of Euro American Culture. Launikari and Puukari reviewed a metatheory on multicultural counseling and therapy by Sue, Ivey and Pedersen (1996) which consists of six propositions. (Launikari & Puukari Ed. 2005, 84) According to Ponterotto et al. this metatheory of multicultural counseling helps individuals to view culture as core to all human psychological functions as it believes that culture is deeply rooted in human consciousness. The theory acknowledges that understanding of problems is affected by the culture of the client and the counselor. Also the goals in the multicultural counseling process are defined according to the culture. (Ponterotto et al. 2001, 510)

The first proposition of the metatheory by Sue, Ivey and Pedersen states that multicultural theory is a metatheory of counseling and psychotherapy. It recognizes the fact that there is no right or wrong counseling theories, even though they are as contrasting as Western and non Western theories are; they only portray a different worldview. The second one emphasizes the fact that human identity is a result of each individual's personal experiences and social circumstances. There are cultural, individual and family differences between the counselor and the client. Thus counseling should consider these experiences and contexts. The next proposition stresses that self perception and perception of others are highly influenced by culture. These perceptions are usually affected by the relationship between the dominant culture and immigrants. Following proposition points out that goals of successful counseling process need to be appropriate and in harmony with the experiences and culture of the client. The fifth proposition emphasizes the significance of holistic help aiming to not only help the individual but also intervene the societal systems that surround the client. Finally the last proposition suggests that multicultural counseling aims to raise self-awareness of the client and surrounding people. Traditional methods of healing and counseling from various cultures can be used in order to achieve that. (Launikari & Puukari Ed. 2005, 84-85)

#### 4.4 Counselor client relationship

Traditionally the counseling relationship has been explained using the theoretical concepts of transference and counter-transference, the authenticity of the relationship and the working alliance. (Launikaari & Puukari Ed. 2005, 33). The concept of transference suggests that a person can unconsciously transfer feelings that he or she has previously had, towards someone else important, to the counselor. Transference can also be linked with passing of feelings towards the new culture in the adaptation process. Client can have prejudiced views on a certain culture and thus react towards the counselor in a similar way that they have previously reacted towards a person from the same culture as the counselor. Counter-transference implies that the past experiences of the counselor influence the opinion he or she might have toward the client. For example, there is a danger that the counselor may unconsciously react discriminatory toward his or her client. The concepts of transference and counter-transference are important tools for counselors to understand the dynamics and emotional responses in the counseling sessions. It is vital for counselors to be aware of their own cultural assumptions, prejudiced views and stereotypes. (Launikari & Puukari Ed. 2005, 34)

Rogers (1957) was the first to introduce the concept of authenticity of the relationship. Launikari and Puukari argue that it is the key point for successful multicultural counseling and it should be nurtured during the whole counseling process. (Launikari & Puukari Ed. 2005, 34) Bordin (1975) emphasizes the cooperation of the counselor and client. The objectives of counseling and the way to reaching them should be discussed and set together. It is important for a counselor to keep in mind that some clients may not have the experience of counseling services thus it is the responsibility of the counselor to explain the processes of counseling to the client. It is important to also note that a client and a counselor should be working together in the process of counseling, which can often be challenging due to cultural differences. (Launikari & Puukari Ed. 2005, 35)

According to Launikari and Puukari a single theory or even a combination of theories cannot cover all the aspects of multicultural counseling. Theories need to be utilized flexibly and creatively. Furthermore theories have their own limitations and need to be developed through practice. That is why learning from clients and working with them and critically assessing the existing theories is crucial to the counseling process. (Launikaari & Puukari Ed. 2005, 86)

#### 4.5 Previous study

Niskanen and Peltonen (2010) studied immigrants' employment processes at Työvalmennussäätiö Tekevä in the MaMuPlus- and MaMuNu -projects for their bachelor thesis called "Immigrant's experiences of the employment process and the role of the individual coach at

Työvalmennussäätiö Tekevä”. The aim of these two projects was to improve employment of immigrant clients and to prevent their social exclusion. The purpose of the thesis was to study different phases of immigrants employment process. Individual coaching was used in order to improve employment of immigrants. The study consisted of 17 individuals with immigrant background that have used the services of MaMuPlus and MaMuNu projects. In the process of the study the immigrant clients stressed that individual coaching was very important in their employment process. Without individual coaching the informants did not think that they could reach the wanted results. Individual coaches not only helped the immigrants in their job seeking process, but also in other various matters e.g finding housing. Group sessions talked about Finnish culture and thus advanced integration process of the individuals. Also from the group sessions the immigrant clients felt it easier to approach the coaches. Effective coaching relationship was built on trust between the coach and the client. In order to help in the integration process the project workers explained about working culture in Finland. In order to understand individuals' strengths and weaknesses, individuals ethnical background and families were taken into consideration in the coaching sessions. It had resulted that poor Finnish language skills prevented individuals from functioning individually in the society thus the clients of the projects needed practical help e.g. with filling in job application forms. (Niskanen & Peltonen 2010)

Niskanen and Peltonen (2010) used the term individual coaching in their study. However the coaching processes they describe is what we understand as multicultural counseling. Based on reading the descriptions of the projects and the work they do with their clients it seems very similar to the work that Bridge project does. Bridge project offers personal meetings or in other words ”counseling” sessions where various of issues can be discussed. Even though Bridge is concentrated on employment issues, the project still provides help also in various other daily matters such as finding housing or spare time activities. Apart from individual counseling meetings, Bridge projects also organizes group meetings in forms of workshops. In these meetings specific skills can be learnt and cultural aspects are translated to the immigrants. As Niskanen and Peltonen (2010) point out in their study, practical language help is needed among unemployed immigrants; this is the main task of the Bridge project at the moment.

## 5 Conducting the study

### 5.1 Objective of the study and research question

The English language degree options have made it possible for people to study in Finland without knowing one of the two official local languages. Many immigrants study here for a number of years and graduate with a professional degree yet many of them find it hard to

enter the working life after they graduate. In this study we wanted to look at this phenomenon through the experiences of those who have received multicultural job counseling.

The objective of the study was to explore the experiences of immigrant students on multicultural counseling offered by the Bridge project in the job seeking process. Based on qualitative interviews we aimed to discover what kind of counseling unemployed immigrant students or graduates might need when looking for work in the capital area and how the Bridge project has met these needs.

The personal objective for choosing this particular project was to broaden our knowledge and understand the current situation of foreigners in the Finnish labor market. We familiarized ourselves with some of the issues that non-natives face while looking for work in the capital area. We acquainted ourselves with services that the Finnish society offers for unemployed foreign students; it also gave us an idea of the integration process in Finland as a whole. We hoped that the acquired information would be useful in our future careers. We also became familiar with the process of conducting a study. This involved retrieving information, interviewing informants, analyzing the data and writing the results.

The research question of the study was how do the immigrants that have graduated or are still studying in Finland, experience counseling provided by the Bridge project in their job seeking situation?

## 5.2 Research method

The thesis is based on the qualitative research methods. According to Descombe (2003) qualitative studies in-cooperate various social subjects as social psychology, sociology and social anthropology. (Densombe 2003, 267) Berg states that qualitative research attempts to answer the question by paying attention to people and their social settings. Qualitative researchers explore and analyze how individuals behave in their surroundings and also how they explain and understand the environment around them. (Berg 2007, 8) Furthermore Descombe (2003) states that this method focuses on cultural aspects such as rituals, traditions and human relationships. (Descombe 2003, 267)

Qualitative research is interested in the way that people view and interpret phenomena surrounding them and it studies matters in their natural environment. (Denzin & Lincoln Ed. 2005, 3) Qualitative method is suitable for the purpose of this study because we are looking at how people experience and interpret their situation and a certain phenomena. Qualitative research method, and interviews in specific, allows us to be flexible with the questions we ask our informants. This method gives the informants the space to express themselves freely

and openly, giving the opportunity for them to raise issues that might be unexpected for the researchers.

The word qualitative stresses on the quality of the information that is gathered. Qualitative research searches for answers to questions on how a social experience is made and how meaning is created. Quantitative research on the other hand is interested in measuring and analysing the relationship between the variable and is not looking at the process. (Denzin & Lincoln Ed. 2005, 10) However, according to Descombe it is not the topic, nor even the nature of the data collected, that will define qualitative research but it is the approach for the data collection and the analysis that separates it from quantitative research. (Descombe 2003, 267)

Both qualitative and quantitative research are interested in people's point of view. Qualitative researchers believe that they can get closer to the answer by interviewing and observation. Furthermore they argue that quantitative researchers are not able to grasp individuals' views because of the methods and materials they use. Qualitative research uses interpretive methods such as personal stories, still photographs, biographical and autobiographical information as apposed to quantitative research using mathematical models, statistical tables and graphs. Some quantitative researchers view qualitative interpretive methods as unreliable and subjective and they don't approve of such information because it interferes with the development of generalization. While qualitative researchers argue that detailed description of the society is valuable. (Denzin & Lincoln Ed. 2005, 11-12)

### 5.3 Participants

For the purpose of this study we intended to interview immigrants that are currently studying or have graduated with a professional degree in Finland. In this context our definition of immigrant is a person whose mother tongue is neither Finnish nor Swedish and he/she has been born somewhere else than Finland. In addition the participants had to be seeking employment and living in the metropolitan area.

The informants were selected using a purposive, non probability sampling technique. (Descombe 2003, 172). When using a purposive sample, researchers use specific knowledge about a certain group of people in order to find a suitable representative of that group. (Berg 2007, 44)

We discussed the possible opportunities to get in touch with appropriate informants for our thesis process with the project coordinator, and we decided to attend workshops that Bridge was organizing for individuals that are interested in getting information about employment.



The assumption was that most people attending those workshops are Bridge project's clients, immigrants and looking for work in the capital area. From this group we would then present the opportunity to take part in our study to those individuals who have studied or are currently studying in Finland.

We participated in four workshops that the Bridge project organized as part of their information series called "What is in it for me? The Job Seeking Package". Three of these workshops took place in October 2009: "Manpower Career Coaching", "How to Write an Effective CV" and "Job Calls and Job Interviews". In these workshops we personally introduced ourselves to the participants and briefly described the aim of the thesis. Also a paper description of the study was given to the participants of the workshops (appendix 1). In the end of the workshops we asked if anyone would like to take part in our study and we wrote down the contact information of the possible voluntary informants. After participating in the three workshops we had less than the intended number of willing participants, thus we decided to attend another workshop in May 2010. Once again we introduced our study in the beginning of the seminar and in the end we collected the contact information of those who might be willing to participate in our study. The intended number of informants for the interviews was from four to eight. We ended up taking five interviews, after which we realized we need more data. The sixth informant was found on a different basis than the previous ones; we will discuss this more on data collection.

In each of the workshops provided by Bridge there was a guest speaker from co-operating agencies, such as the employment and economic development office, Manpower employment agency, and other instances in the field. In the beginning of these workshops the project coordinator of Bridge briefly introduced herself and the project, welcomed the participants of the day and then gave the floor to the guest professionals. After the presentations there was always an opportunity and space to ask questions. One of the workshops we attended also had a group exercise in form of role play in addition to the presentation. Most speakers were also willing and able to answer to some questions the participants wanted to ask in private in the end of the workshop. In each of these workshops there were a small number of participants, on average 10 participants per event. Since the number of the participants in the workshops was small, we choose not to disclose in this thesis the ethnic origin or background of those who took part in the interviews in order to protect their identity.

The client group of Bridge project is diverse, all coming from different cultural and educational backgrounds and all having different experience with the project. The most common working method of the project worker is meeting one-on-one with those who need help in adjusting to the Finnish culture or working life system. First we thought that she could hand out our request to take part in the study to all her clients, but after thorough consideration

we decided that it would not be the best way. Since the project coordinator is usually the only person that the Bridge client has contact with, her giving out the request might have seemed like something that she was asking the client to do. We wanted to make sure that anybody willing to participate in the interview would understand that our study had directly nothing to do with Bridge and had no influence on their job seeking process or anything else that Bridge might be helping them with. When Bridge started the workshops on different topics on job seeking we thought these meetings would be a good chance for us to meet Bridge's clients without the project staff having to be the link between us and her clients. We could assume that the people attending the workshops are probably looking for work. According to the project coordinator many of the clients were also students and some of them were expected to come to the workshops.

Finding informants through the seminars was the most ethical way we could think of and it also seemed like the most practical way to find suitable representatives. This method was successful when it comes finding informants. However after having interviewed five participants in the seminars, it was apparent that they were not the best possible representatives of the group that we were studying. The problem was that our informants had had only little experience with the project. Now we understand that more suitable representatives of the group of our interest could have been found using other method for selecting informants. And on the other hand the selection of informants that we had would have been more fruitful for a study with a different focus.

#### 5.4 Data collection

Interview is suitable for data collection when the information is based on feelings, emotions and experiences. (Denscombe 2003, 165) In this study, one of the purposes is to investigate client's experiences of the Bridge project in their job seeking process. In semi structured interview the interviewer prepares the issues that have to be addressed during the interview. However, the interviewee has the freedom to speak freely about the issues and at the same time develop new ideas related to the topic. Basically and interviewee can decide the flow of the interview. (Denscombe 2003, 167)

The method used in this study follow the guidelines of Denscombe's semi-structured interview. The questions are the same for all interviewees yet we are prepared to change them some or ask additional questions if we feel it's necessary in the course of the interview. Semi-structured interview method is challenging because it requires the researchers to possess good interviewing skill in order to get informative data. (Denscombe 2003) We are aware that there is a variety of factors influencing the outcome of the interview. These may include per-

sonality, culture, language, age, gender or social status of the informant. Due to these factors level of verbal expression may vary among the informants.

Research on interviewing has showed that individuals react differently depending on how they perceive the person asking questions thus personal identity of the researcher influences the answers of the interview. The data that the informants are willing to give depend for example on the sex, age and ethnic origin of the researcher. How much identity of the researcher affects the interview depends on the matters that are discussed in the study. If the topic is sensitive, for example religious beliefs, income, sexual relationships, personal health or any other similar issue, the identity of the researcher is most likely to influence the data gathered from the interview. In some cases the informants may be embarrassed, feel awkward and defensive. In other cases the informants may fulfill the perceiving expectations of the researcher in order to keep them happy. (Denscombe 2003, 170) In this thesis unemployed immigrants that are looking for work were the subjects. In their eyes we were students, thus our status is not above them, but on a similar level. One of us is a foreigner, thus we can relate to their integration process in Finland. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) the quality of qualitative interview depends on the theoretical knowledge of the interviewer, however his or her personality is as important. Interviewing requires intuition, creativity and improvisation. The knowledge of the subject becomes important while asking further questions after the answers received. (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 82) Before conducting the interviews we acquainted ourselves with theoretical background of the topic.

The first five interviews were conducted in summer 2010. However, in the fall 2010 after transcribing the interview material and having started analyzing it we realized the limitations of the results. We chose to attend the seminars as our way of selecting the informants because we thought it was the most ethical and reliable way. We thought meeting Bridge's clients at the seminars is a natural way at a low threshold place to ask if anybody wanted to volunteer in the study. However, what we did not know then is that for many of the people at the workshops it was the first time they come to Luckan or hear of the Bridge project. The story of these individuals and their insight of Bridge is valid and useful to us, but in order to add the perspective of someone more familiar with the project we decided to find one more informant. This time we were in contact with the project coordinator and asked her if she can think of a client that has studied in Finland and is more familiar with the project. The Bridge project worker suggested one person and this person was also contacted by Bridge to ask if he/she could contact us in case he/she is willing to take part in the study. We all agreed it would not be ethical for the Bridge project worker to give a client's contact information to us. This person did agree to participate and so we had one more interview in the fall 2010.

We asked all our informants where would be the most convenient and comfortable place for them to take part in the interview. Based on their wishes, three of the interviews were conducted at the informant's home, two at public cafeterias, and one in the Luckan premises. Before the interview we went through the rights of the informants together with them. We made sure that our informants were aware that participation in the study is voluntary, and that they can withdraw at any time and for any reason. We were aware of the possibility that the informants might think that participating in our study would influence the services they receive from the Bridge project and thus feel they have to give positive feedback for the Bridge project. That's why we made sure that the informants understood that we are not in any way connected to the Bridge project; no matter what the answers are, they will not be treated differently as Bridge's clients. A consent form of agreement to participate in the study was introduced to the informants, discussed together and signed. The interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the informants. The duration of the interviews varied; the shortest one took 30 minutes and the longest interview was two and a half hours long. The other interviews were about 45 minutes long. The consent form can be found in the end of this thesis as appendix 2; the interview guide is appendix 3.

## 5.5 Data analysis

Processing qualitative data leaves room for interpretations. Field notes and transcriptions of tapes are not really "facts" but results of the researcher's observation and participation in the interview. The researcher needs to be aware of the historical and social context in order to determine how it affects the interpretations of the data. (Miles & Huberman 1994, 10) Along the same lines Denscombe argues that the researcher cannot quote an interview and regard that as a fact. In fact the majority of the qualitative researchers support the statement that values and beliefs of the researcher are inevitably a part of the analysis of data. (Denscombe 2003, 268) Kvale and Brinkman go on stating that interviewer is a "co-author" in the conclusions of the interviewee; that the course and outcome of the interview are co-determined by the person asking leading and follow-up questions. (Kvale & Brinkman 2009, 192)

Kvale and Brinkman emphasize that the method of data analysis should always be thought out before starting the research. When this is done the selected method will guide the whole interview process; analyzing meanwhile conducting the interviews directs the process into the wished direction by bringing out the relevant questions in the interview situation. Ideally the findings should be processed while the interview is taking place. Thus the final transcriptions have more relevant information and they are easier to analyze. (Kvale & Brinkman 2009, 190) They also encourage to not mistake the transcripts as the data, but remember that tran-

scripts are notes of the conversations held in the interviews and as such already hold meanings and interpretations. (Kvale & Brinkman 2009, 192)

We chose to use the method of inductive content analysis as a tool for analyzing the data. Inductive reasoning uses the collected data and draws conclusions of it where as abductive reasoning aims to verify some existing ideas and theories. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2007, 136) Content analysis is a research technique that is used to analyze content of documents, which in the case of our study are the interviews. The method will help to broaden the knowledge on the studied phenomena. Content analysis is a tool that anyone at any time can use and with the same data get the same results; it is a replicable method and thus reliable as a study technique. (Krippendorff 2004, 18) Denscombe breaks content analysis into six steps as follows. First the appropriate sample text is chosen from the data and then broken into smaller units, which can be anything from one word into a whole paragraph. The next phase is refining the relevant categories for analyzing the data, after which they can be coded to align with the created units. Finally the frequency of the units appearing will be calculated. The last phase is analyzing the text based on the found connections between the units. (Denscombe 2003, 221)

The interviews were transcribed word to word during the late summer 2010, thus the transcriptions became the data used in this study. In the case of our study the reduction and grouping of the material started taking place already before the last interview was conducted. We noticed that some phenomenon were present and repeated in many of the interviews. Based on these observations as well as reading the interview material various times, we created eight groups with the following working titles: "Feedback for Bridge", "How Bridge was found out about", "Cultural considerations", "What happened in Bridge", "Expectations for Bridge", "Bridge setting", "Experiences of the Finnish system", "Personal background and future plans". We printed out the interview transcriptions and started cutting out most of the quotes that fit any of the categories. Some quotes that were very similar to ones we already had we did not cut out. The total number of quotes that were placed in the preliminary groups was 130. Hirsjärvi and Hurme refer to this phase of the analysis as classification of data. The process of classification helps to arrange the interview material and bring out the important points. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2007, 147)

Once the data was placed in the preliminary groups we felt the need to read our theoretical background and remind ourselves of the research question and objectives. We also continued to read the data and gradually it started to become clearer to us what the key findings of our study were. In the process two of the working group titles were left out, three of the titles formed one group and two titles were paraphrased. The working title "Cultural considerations" was left out due to different understandings of the concept of "culture" between us and

our informants. In fact the informants' understanding of "culture" was mainly language, ethnicity and customs; thus the participants found no cultural aspects in the workshops they attended. A more specific description of the data analysis process, with examples of quotes, is found in picture 2.

Quotes	Working Title of a Group	Group
<p>"..it's very unusual for me that um..how should, uh... that Finnish, a Finnish organization is trying to get immigrants to settle into their society, it's quite good I guess, it's really good."</p> <p>"..they can do some sort of advertisement about it in the university as well 'cause there are many..I guess foreign students here and it would be helpful if they could advertise something here as well"</p>	Feedback for Bridge	Working methods of Bridge
<p>"We were talking a lot, and she was trying to help, but she was just, doing how it has to be done, write CVs in the internet..."</p> <p>"Because mol is all in Finnish, so she helped me register and I got some e-mails and I phoned them.."</p>	What happened in Bridge	
<p>"...cause there were not many people there and uh, it seemed like a friendly sort of a talk I guess. So the setting that wasn't very intimidating, it was conducive to asking questions and learning about things, which is good I guess. And umm, it was very easy to catch hold of the speaker and the organizer so..contact was easy"</p> <p>"..I think it was nice because it was easy to participate, maybe one reason was because there were not so many people, so everyone can give his or her input there, so I think it was easy, everyone was listening to each other and it was easy to see and hear everybody. That was nice."</p>	Bridge Settings	
<p>"I wanted to know some information about seeking jobs in Finland, "</p> <p>"...just to get information, from where we get help to get job, ...they will just give us some information about some other platforms from where we can get information about the job. "</p>	Expectations for Bridge	Needs of Students that are seeking for work
<p>"It would be very nice to find a job in Finland but I don't know. If I'm looking for two years now and I cannot find anything, I'm starting to believe that maybe it's not the place for me, even if I like it here, so maybe I should go back."</p> <p>"at this stage I'm not thinking about settling in Finland as such. The idea is to complete my studies and go back"</p>	Personal background and Future Plans	
<p>"I think there is something wrong with the system, in that way that educated people, who are willing to work, pay taxes do not get any support. I do not mean financial, but just some support in finding job."</p> <p>"Then they say, we don't need foreigners.. but we pay taxes. For Finnish social system."</p>	Experiences of the Finnish System	Informants' perceptions of job seeking in Finland
<p>"...the thing we talked the most is Finnish culture."</p> <p>"and she told me everything about Finland and employment situation and she helped me register at mol which helped me to get a job"</p>	Cultural Consideration	Not Included in Findings
<p>"I went to Employment Office and they told me the students cannot register as unemployed so they asked me to come to Bridge"</p> <p>"This student gave me this information about Bridge project, she said that they will need some workers or volunteers, so she gave me this brochure."</p>	How Bridge Was Found	Not included in Findings

## Picture 2: Analysis process with examples of quotes from the interviews

The process of dividing findings into different groups was challenging because many of the key points are overlapping and linked to each other. In discussion we explain and discuss the findings and their relation to each other. However for the purpose of making our research process more clear for the reader, we decided to present the findings, along with examples from the data, in the three groups we created.

## 6 Findings

### 6.1 Working methods of Bridge

Most of the informants got some useful information through Bridge and all agreed that it is good that such project exists. For half of the participants Bridge was the first time they had been involved with an agency that helps in the job seeking process in Finland or other countries. For them it was a positive new knowledge that such service exist. However a lot of the information given at the workshops was familiar to the participants. Many of them mentioned that similar information one can get from school or from friends.

“It’s really interesting ‘cause there are not such activities (in home country) and these are really good activities in that sense. Basically there job seeking is about looking after everything yourself, there are not many sort of helping organizations of people guiding you about it.” (Informant A.)

“What’s in it for me” -workshops were found to be good forums to talk with employment professionals and ask them questions about job seeking. Some also found the opportunity to discuss their personal employment situations with the guest speakers and consult them.

“The meeting, for me it was really good. --- The best thing was that I could show my CV and ask what I’m doing right and wrong.” (Informant D.)

In addition to attending the workshops two of the participants got one-on-one counseling at the Bridge front office. These meetings mostly involved translating job descriptions and filling in applications on the internet. One person found a job so he/she found this activity useful. However the other person mentioned that filling in applications on mol.fi -pages is not how one finds work, so in retrospect he/she thinks it was a waste of time. Some of the informants became skeptical about sending job applications. Three of the informants discussed that this has resulted into feelings of low-esteem and lack of motivation.

“After many months of unsuccessful looking for a job, I got depressed and it is difficult to be confident that I will find a job in Finland.” (Informant D.)

All our informants found the workshops as well as the personal counseling meetings to be pleasant and relaxed. They thought that the Bridge facilities and setting were informal and made it easy to come to. Those who attended the workshops were surprised by the low attendance but were also pleased by it since they felt more comfortable and had more space to ask personal questions.

Our informants did not seem to have a clear idea of what the Bridge project does and what services it provides. They mentioned that they might have used more services had they been aware of them. Many also suggested that Bridge could advertise their activities more, for example in different schools and universities. Many of the participants seemed to expect more contact from Bridge after attending the project once. Two of them mentioned that they would have liked to be informed about the activities the project had to offer, for example via email updates. They might have attended more workshops or set up a personal counseling meeting if they had known about the opportunities. On the other hand, the same informants mention that they probably could have found the information on the Bridge website if they had really needed to. For them the project coordinator contacting them would have been a nice reminder and maybe made it more clear what Bridge actually has to offer.

“I think it depends from what point of view you are looking at it. Because if they like me to participate or people to participate, they should pay more attention on advertising it and getting in touch with people. But I think if I would be interested I would probably have to look at web site and so on...” (Informant D.)

## 6.2 Needs of students that are seeking for work

Majority of the informants knew some basics on how to navigate in the Finnish society. They all knew how to write a CV, how to fill in job application forms and how to find open vacancy adds. However, the kind of help they described to need was help with the Finnish language since none of our informants speak Finnish. When asked how else the Bridge project could have helped them, all participants bring up the need for specific individual help and guidance. Many find it hard to navigate in the Finnish system and find out information about the companies without speaking the local language. One of the informants mentioned that it is more difficult to find a job because of the restrictions that students have, e.g. limits of working hours because of classes and visa. However all our informants stated that the key obstacle for them not finding a job is their lack of Finnish skills.



“I do not know Finnish language, so employers are not interested in me.” (Informant A.)

Most also emphasize how difficult it is to create contacts into working life and that help in that would be needed. Half of the informants think that what Bridge front office does now is not enough or working sufficiently; their ideal job seeking service would help one to make personal contact with companies and connect employers and job seekers.

“Social networking works here and social network also help find job. Now I know this system. It took me two years to understand how it works here.” (Informant F.)

### 6.3 Informants' perceptions of job seeking in Finland

Half of the informants mentioned that they had come across with prejudices toward foreigners when looking for work in Finland. According to them this has appeared as rejection from Finnish employers despite them being qualified for the position. One of the informants mentioned that he/she had come across rejection in the job market based on skin color of the applicant. Another informant pointed out that immigrant job seekers are discriminated against on the basis of their cultural origins and that while there is discrimination against foreigners, the Finnish employers try to cover it up by using various excuses e.g language skills. According to the informant people in Finland are aware of this phenomenon but they are not willing to do anything about it. All informants agreed that to some degree there are prejudices toward non-native job seekers in Finland. On the other hand, one of the informants justified the hesitancy of Finnish employers to hire foreigners.

“Although my take on this is different from what you people have. I would say that since it’s Finland, obviously if they don’t uh, if they have a preference for Finnish people for jobs I can understand that ‘cause it’s Finland. It’s their country, so what’s the problem with that. I mean we would do the same thing in my country. (Informant A.)

Three of our informants had strong opinions about the effectiveness of the help that Bridge offers in the job seeking process. They say that the only help they received from Bridge was assistance in translating CVs and filling in applications and that this is not enough. These three informants imply that sending out applications is pointless since for them or their friends this method has not brought results.

“We were talking a lot, and she was trying to help, but she was just doing how it has to be done, write CVs in the internet, these CVs in the internet nobody reads. I was writing thousands of CVs with (the Bridge project worker), nobody doesn't even look

at it. Nothing, no answers. I sent CVs to many companies, but they don't read it. But I know this. Many people tell me that don't do that because they will never read it.”  
(Informant F.)

## 7 Trustworthiness and ethical considerations

In this bachelor thesis process we are aware of the general codes of ethics. We also abide by the Laurea thesis guidelines (2007) and Laurea code of research ethics (2007) during the thesis process. The study was conducted in an ethical manner and according to our observations the participants were free of physical and psychological harm. According to Sapsford and Jupp (2006) one of the most important principals of ethics in research is that an informant should never be harmed by the research. The participants should be protected from distress, physical discomfort, personal embarrassment and other harm. (Sapsford & Jupp 2006, 294)

Denscombe (2003) points out that ethical issues such as participation consent, confidentiality, reliability, validity, objectivity and transferability have to be considered in a research. It is the responsibility of a researcher to explain the nature and purpose of the study to the participant as well as to the readers. (Denscombe 2003,163) Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002) express that while evaluating trustworthiness a researcher needs to take several aspects into consideration such as the objective and the purpose of the study, individual commitment as a researcher, description of data gathering and analysis, the informants of the study, the relationship between the researcher and the informant, the length of the study and finally the reliability of the study. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 135-138) We are going to briefly take a look at these ethical concepts mentioned above.

Before starting the interview we gave each informant a consent form to be read and signed. We went through the form and made sure that the participants understood their rights. We also mentioned that they are allowed to stop the interview at any point. According to Berg (2007), there is a chance that individuals may feel pressured or manipulated to participate in a research. (Berg 2007, 71) We were aware of this possibility and thus the opportunity to take part in our study was presented during job seeking workshops where the project coordinator did not have to be the link between us and possible informants. We were mindful about the danger that informants might feel obligated to participate in order to improve their situation or to look good in the eyes the Bridge professional. In order to prevent this we emphasized the fact that participation in the study will nor harm or improve their relationship to Bridge project or their job hunting process.

Berg (2007) describes the concept of confidentiality as an attempt to remove from research records all evidence that may lead to participants identity. Anonymity means that the par-

ticipants remain nameless. (Berg 2007, 71) The identity of the participants has been protected in this study by removing all referrals to personal background information. Since the number of participants in the workshops was small, we chose not to disclose informants' ethnic background in order to protect their identity; throughout the thesis we refrain from mentioning origin of the informants. For the same reason, we refer to the informants as "he/she" throughout the text. Even after the thesis is completed, the confidentiality will remain as all identity records will be destroyed after finishing the thesis process. We are conscious of being under oath of the confidentiality stated in the Finnish legislation. (Laki sosiaalihuollon asiakkaan asemasta ja oikeuksista 2000/812/15§)

Reliability is being able to produce the same results when repeating the research process. In other words, reliability can be described as consistency and trustworthiness. A research is reliable when another person, when repeating the analysis process, would come up with similar conclusions. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007, 226), (Denscombe 2003, 300) Hirsjärvi et al. explain validity as the ability of chosen research method to measure or describe what was intended. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007, 226) Half way into the interview process we noticed that our definition of culture is different than that of some of the informants. We started to pay attention to this in the remaining interview situations as well as in the data analysis. In the end of our thesis process we realized that this should have been better taken into consideration when making the interview questions. There is a chance that we might have gotten more relevant information about our research question had we been more thoughtful of different definitions of culture in the beginning of the study. On the other hand Wolcott (1995), as referred to in Hirsjärvi et al. (2007), argue that all descriptions of people or culture are unique, thus it is challenging to measure the validity of qualitative data. As Hirsjärvi et al. (2007) reason based on Janesic (2000), the best way to ensure the reliability and validity is to describe what the researchers have done and how they came to the findings. This explanation should include detailed description of every step of the analysis process. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007, 227)

Miles and Huberman (1994) talk about the concept of objectivity in research. Identity and personality of the researchers influence the process of the study. Researchers need to bear in mind that they might have biased attitudes, assumptions and values. (Miles & Huberman 1994, 278) Denscombe (2003) adds that the researcher needs to reflect and analyze on the significance that his or her own personality has on the research. (Denscombe 2003, 273) Throughout the study we have tried to evaluate possible views and attitudes we might have towards informants and the phenomenon we are studying. Reading the interview material various times in course of the study helped us to put our own perceptions aside and find different aspects to the phenomena in the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) explain the concept of transferability. It means that the conclusions of the study can be transferred to other circumstance, in other words the conclusions can be generalized. (Miles and Huberman 1994,

279) The data of this study consists of only six interviews thus it is rather small and therefore it is challenging to generalize the findings. Also the fact that our informants have attended different activities of Bridge project makes the data too narrow to be transferable. Also our data consist of experiences of individuals that are personal and therefore it is difficult to generalize them. This study is not concerned with generalizability, instead it concentrates on describing experiences.

The biggest concern in the process of producing a valid study was the lack of relevant data. On the contrary to our expectations, our informants were not frequent users of the services arranged by Bridge; four of our informants visited Bridge once and the fifth informant two times. Due to this we did not receive as broad or in depth information as anticipated. In the beginning of our analyzing process we decided to find at least one more informant that has been using the services on a longer period of time in order to get more data on the planned subject. Thus only the sixth additional informant had used the Bridge services frequently. Still with six informants we felt that the gathered data is limited. However, because finding informants had been a time consuming process and we had to finish the thesis in a certain time frame, we were not able to look for more informants.

Throughout our studies we have been learning about multicultural issues and discussed immigration and integration issues. We are interested in these subjects thus it was natural to choose a thesis topic related to them. We have met with the project coordinator and conversed about Bridge's needs before setting the topic for the thesis. We considered the phenomenon about immigrant students studying in Finland; the government provides free of charge education and attracts international students to study in English, yet the society is not ready to employ these immigrants that attained degree education in Finland. We agreed that this matter was important and current.

The first idea paper for this thesis was drafted in the spring 2009 and the conclusions were drawn in the fall 2010. Most of the literature was reviewed and written almost a year and a half before the analysis process and writing of the thesis. We have considered the different steps of the thesis writing very time consuming and difficult, thus towards the end of process we were on a strict deadline. We realize that many studies and articles that are relevant for our thesis topic have come out since we finished writing the literature review. Lately there has been a lot of discussion in the Finnish media on how the last recession has impacted people's perceptions of immigrants. For example this study would have been interesting and valuable background information for our study. Also the process of creating the new law on immigration, and articles and statements regarding it, are the kind of information that would have made our study more up to date.

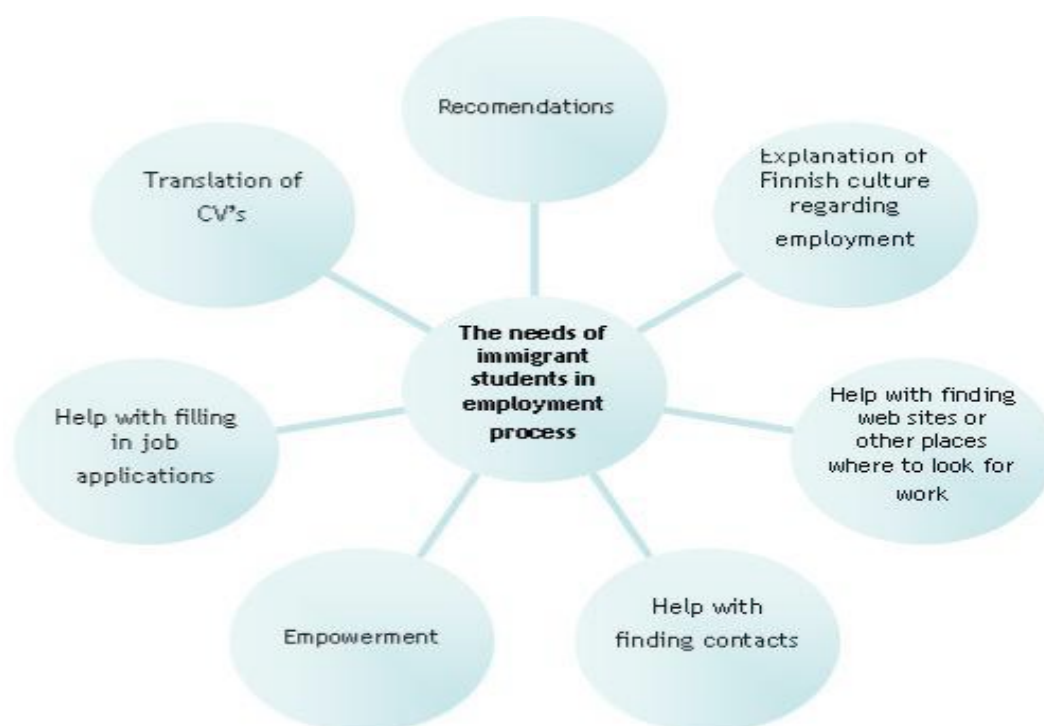
Densombe 2003 points out that the identity and personality of the interviewers play an important role in the course of an interview. (Densombe 2003, 170) Before conducting the interviews we were not sure how our identities and personalities would affect the interview situations. To our knowledge our identities as both being caucasian females, Finnish and Russian, 26 year old and students did not have a negative impact on the results of this study. Trustworthiness of a study can be evaluated by looking at the process of the study. We have tried to be detailed and honest in describing the every step of our study process. The purpose of looking at Bridge's clients' experiences of multicultural counseling was reached, even though the data was not as extensive as we had hoped for.

## 8 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to take a look at students' experiences of multicultural counseling in their job seeking process in order to understand the relevance of it. The qualitative research process consisted of carrying out six semi-structured interviews and analysing the data using the method of content analysis. All the informants of this study live in the Helsinki metropolitan area, are students and at the time of the interview, looking for work. They represent five different ethnic backgrounds.

All of our informants appreciate the existence of Bridge project. The majority of them found the project to be useful and they mention having received valuable information in the meetings Bridge has arranged. Five of the informants participated in the "What's in it for me" -job seeking workshops that were organised by Bridge in 2009 and 2010. The setting and atmosphere of these gatherings was described as nice, relaxed and comfortable. Therefore our informants felt that it was easy for them to talk about personal job seeking related issues and ask relevant questions. Many valued the opportunity to discuss their CVs with a professional of the field since it is rare to get such help in person. Also the project coordinator and the working methods were liked and appreciated. However, our informants point out that it was difficult to stay updated on the Bridge events. And since the project was held in high regard by our informants they suggested that the activities and workshops that Bridge offer should be more advertised. More students in the capital could benefit from the Project if it would be more known to the immigrant students. Before coming to Finland, our informants were not familiar with employment services since such services do not exist in their home countries. Thus Bridge project was thought to be unique. Because of not having previous experience of the concept of getting help in job seeking, many might not be able to seek for and use such services. We conclude that it is cultural to provide counseling for people that are looking for work.

In the end of the research process we found a connection between different findings of the study. We were able to reach a conclusion that we think is the key outcome of this study. We will describe this in detail. Immigrant students living in Finland struggle with finding employment and thus need help in it. Based on the findings of this study we have specified some of these needs. We are aware that these results do not include every possible aspect of the topic, but they are the ones that came apparent in our study. In order to clarify this conclusion we have attached a picture that summarises the needs. More in depth explanation follows.



Picture 3: Counseling needs of immigrant students when looking for work

Usually persons that are studying in Finland possess the basic knowledge on how to look for jobs. Even if they have not learned this in their home country, they will usually become familiar with the process when studying at a Finnish university or college. However language is often the biggest obstacle in the beginning of the job seeking process. There is the need for help in knowing where to find job adds, how to fill them in, and translating CVs and applications to Finnish or Swedish. Also so called "cultural translation" about the specifics of the Finnish working life and navigating in it is often needed at an early point in the job hunt. Sometimes schools offer this information but if they don't there is a gap to be filled by other organisations. An example of this "cultural translation" is a role play that we participated in at one of the workshops organised by Bridge. In the workshop there was teaching on how to behave in an interview situation with a Finnish employer and the point of the role was to try to put the gained knowledge into practise.

Once our informants have been able to respond to numerous job ads most often it does not produce the wanted results. Often individuals start by applying to positions responding to their professional qualifications. However because there are no positive results they gradually lower the standard of the kind of job they want, yet no matter how flexible the job seekers are, there seem to be no results. For example we came across a person with a master's degree applying for a cleaning job and still not being able to find employment. Our informants explain this with the vast number of people applying for the same positions found in the web pages of major job seeking forums. Many of them seem to have come to the conclusion that sending out job applications without personal contact with the employer is useless. In fact they agree that in Finland most jobs are found through existing personal or other social contacts. This observation aligns with Ahmad Akhlaq's (2005) study that brings forth the same phenomena of social networking being relevant in the job seeking process in Finland.

Being unemployed for a long period of time despite continuous attempts to find work often leads to lack of motivation and self-esteem. Our informants had become sceptical about finding work in Finland and thus started to reconsider settling in the country. This situation might result in feelings of depression and anxiety. Morin (2004) explains that having work is vital for the well-being of a human being. Meaningful work advances an individual's sense of belonging and being a productive member of a community. Our view is that a depressed person could benefit from counseling. When this person is from a different culture, the counselor should be aware of the multicultural issues involved.

According to the data we gathered, Bridge project works efficiently in providing its clients with cultural information, as well as practical one-on-one guidance on how to look for work in Finland. However it did not meet the other needs presented above. Bridge seems to only cover the early state of the job seeking process. Nevertheless they refer clients to other agencies that are supposed to help immigrant job seekers later in the process. The informants of this study were not satisfied with the way that these referrals work at the moment. They point out that there should be a service that would link the job seekers and employers that are willing to hire immigrants or students. Sometimes also Bridge might not reach its possible potential when it comes to offering different services because of the unclear description of the project. Also as we have mentioned earlier, not all unemployed immigrant students will seek for help in the job seeking process since the idea of counseling is new to them.

As pointed out by our informants, one of the reasons behind unemployment of foreigners is discrimination on the basis of a person's ethnic background. Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. (2002) argues that having acquired a degree in Finland as well as work experience gained in Finland are supposed to increase one's chances of finding work. One of our informants was hopeful

that learning Finnish would be the key factor in finding employment. Nonetheless, Annika Forsander (2002) opines that some requirements that Finnish employers set for foreign job seekers are unreasonable and can be used as an excuse to discriminate. However, one of the informants justified the selection of a Finn over a foreigner in an employment situation. He/she argued that in his/her country they would do the same.

In our study it became apparent that the students we interviewed already had the basic skills regarding finding employment. They know how to write CVs and how to fill in application forms. Thus the most relevant help they received from the Bridge project was help with the Finnish language. To conclude and give our feedback for the Bridge project; our main concern is that the project has only one worker. Considering the ambitious aims of the project we think the resources they have are not enough. With more workers the project could enhance the services and better respond to the needs of immigrant students. However, in fact we think that less educated individuals can contribute the most from Bridge project and their services. Also the fact that Bridge project is a drop in office where individuals come by with different requests makes it challenging to provide a service that would cover all client groups and their needs. At the moment the Bridge project provides basic information about the Finnish society, help with practicalities of job applications, as well as information about Swedish courses and cultural activities. If Bridge had the resources it would be ideal for the project to have more working life partners so they could try to better connect Finnish employers and immigrant job seekers.

For a further study it would be interesting to compare the findings of this study to experiences of individuals that do not possess basic skills in job hunting process. For example asylum seekers and refugees, that according to Bridge project coordinator are the biggest client group of Bridge at the moment, might have very different experiences with the project than students do. Another interesting topic to study would be the integration process of foreign students and the role of Bridge project in it. On the other hand the perceptions of Finnish employers of foreign employees is also a relevant topic to study. Finally our final proposition for a further study is a comparison of the point of views of immigrants and Finnish employers to what are the obstacles for immigrants finding work in Finland.



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## Appendix 2 Consent form

### CONSENT FORM

We are students at the Laurea University of Applied Sciences. For the purpose of writing our bachelor's thesis we are conducting several interviews. Our interest is to take a look at the phenomena of unemployed immigrants that are studying or have graduated in Finland. We want to explore their point of view on the issue; find out about their experiences in the Finnish labor market and on the services they have received that are aimed to help them in the job seeking process. We are not part of the Bridge project and this interview will not affect your job seeking process in any way.

During this study, you will be asked to answer some questions as to your personal employment history and experiences with the Bridge project. Please feel free to expand on the topic or talk about related ideas. Also, if there are any questions you would rather not answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering, please say so and we will stop the interview or move on to the next question, whichever you prefer.

All the information will be kept confidential. We will keep the data in a secure place. Only the two of us and our thesis supervisors will have access to this information. Upon completion of this project, all data will be destroyed.

#### Participant's Agreement:

I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary. I understand the intent and purpose of this research. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the interview, I may do so without having to give an explanation.

The data gathered in this study are confidential and my identity will be protected in the final study.

If I have any questions about this study, I am free to contact the interviewers:

Kristina Mantilla, (phone number), (e-mail adress)  
Sanna Luhtala,(phone number),(e-mail adress)

Or their supervising professors at Laurea:

Tobias Pötzsch, (e-mail adress) and Hillevi Ukkola, (e-mail adress )

I have been offered a copy of this consent form that I may keep for my own reference. I have read the above form and, with the understanding that I can withdraw at any time and for whatever reason, I consent to participate in today's interview.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer's signature

## Appendix 3 Interview guide

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

- How many years have you been living in Finland?
- Why did you come to Finland?
- Describe your employment history
- Describe your experience with other job seeking agencies or NGO's?
- How did you get involved with the Bridge project?
- What were your expectations of the services provided by Bridge project?
- What kind of services have you received in the Bridge project?
- What was the Bridge setting like?
- What kind of information did you receive?
- How was your cultural background taken into consideration?
- How did you feel about the session?
- Would you like to give some feedback?
- Describe an ideal job seeking service?
- What keeps a person from finding work?