Migration and its impact on children's lives

A literature review

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Abstract

Migration affects children in a variety of ways and can be both a positive and a negative experience; it is a complex process with obstacles and opportunities, which influences children's development. This thesis is a literature review regarding migrant children and the issues that shape their settlement experiences in host countries and the impact of migration on children's lives. The migration experience affects children's academic performance, children's social integration and emotional wellbeing. Research shows that migrant children face a broad range of different educational needs and that parental involvement influences children´s academic achievement as well as language proficiency. Migrant children come from different backgrounds, which might create challenges in the educational system. The circumstances surrounding the migration play a very important role in the emotional wellbeing of the child as for instance the way that children identify themselves within a community. Furthermore, there are a variety of factors that influence the psychological wellbeing and self-esteem of migrant children. Some of those factors are the age of the migrant child when the migration occurs; the adaptation process is easier for younger children. Another factor that affects migrant children and their experience of migration is the general attitude towards migrants in the host country and the strategies offered by the government regarding migrant children adaptation experiences.

Foreword

This work is a 12 ECTS B.A. thesis in Social work from the School of Social sciences of the University of Iceland. The supervisor of this thesis was Anni Haugen assistant professor of Social Work, to her I owe thanks for her good guidance and assistance. The personal experience of being a migrant influenced the interest in the topic of this thesis. Migrants, family and children have always been issues of interest.

   I would also like to express my gratitude to my boyfriend for his support, to my children Paulo Mateo and Baltasar Óli for their unconditional love and patience. I would like to thank all my family, my sister, my mother and my parents in law for all the good advice, their help and support. I would like to especially thank my friend Paola for all the help and guidance while writing this thesis.

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Introduction

Childhood and adolescence are important life stages that involve great changes for the individual. The social and cultural environments along with family circumstances are some of the factors that influence children's development. Furthermore, migration is also an important factor that affects children and families. Migration is a worldwide phenomenon that has always been part of human history. Moving to a new country may impact children and adolescents in a variety of ways, including their family relationships, and their social and educational performance (Watters, 2008; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Migrating to a different country has important psychological and social implications for the individual and the family. For instance, these implications may involve less informal support or assistance that was previously provided by family, friends and schoolmates. Furthermore, it might signify having to learn a new language and new social norms to adjust to new social and cultural environments. For these and many other reasons, as education, race, social class, trauma, age and gender, migration can be a challenging experience for children. The outcome of migration for children depends on a variety of issues, including the reasons for their families' decision to migrate, families' settlement experiences, and availability of informal and formal support (Council of Europe, 2010; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Watters, 2008).

There are many reasons why families migrate but one of the most evident reasons is the desire for a better life. Migration is a complex phenomenon that depends on the individuals and the circumstances for migration as well as the environment of the host country. Unfortunately, for some families migration is not a choice. Because of war and famine many families have had to suddenly leave their homes in search of shelter and security. Many families seek refuge in neighboring countries and often have to dwell in refugee camps until they are relocated into permanent living conditions in countries where they are granted asylum. For these reasons, migration might even be a more stressful experience for refugee and asylum seeker children and their families. Because of the complexities related to these children's experiences this essay will not focus specifically on refugee nor asylum seeker children but rather on migrant children in general. Nevertheless, it is expected that some of the experiences of these children and migrant children might be similar and common to both groups.

The personal experience of being a migrant influenced the choice of topic of this thesis as well as the great interest in how migration affects children. Having worked with native children and children of foreign background I wanted to learn more about how children cope with the migration process. Migration is one of the most important social developments of our times and I believe that learning how to work with migrant children and their families is essential to improve services and offer better life prospects for migrants.

This essay is a B.A. paper in social work studies and involves a review of the literature regarding migrant children and the issues that shape their settlement experiences in host countries. The main questions explored in this thesis are:

- How does migration impact children's lives?
  - How migration affects children's academic performance, social integration, emotional state and family life?
- What role does social support play on children's integration experience?
  - What types of support and services does the government provide to improve migrant children's conditions?

Ethnic identity and ethnicity are also important issues discussed in this essay. Children´s ethnic socialization is examined in order to better understand the ways in which group relationship affects development. Ethnic socialization can shape children's self-concept and self-esteem, their attitudes and behaviors towards their own and other groups as well as the way they are seen by others (Rotheram & Phinney, 1987).

This essay reviews international and Icelandic literature on migrant children and issues shaping their experiences, integration and assistance for migrants within the fields of social work and related fields of sociology, anthropology and migration studies. It is expected that the reviewed information gathered from countries other than Iceland is relevant to the situation of migrant children in Iceland.

This essay is divided into six different chapters. The first chapter is a general overview of the essay. The second chapter focuses on the different concepts used in this thesis to give a better understanding of the context of this paper. This chapter reviews the definitions of first and second-generation migrants, ethnicity, culture and the relevancy of these terms to comprehend the migration process as a whole. The third chapter analyzes migration from different perspectives. The fourth reviews the

background and the history of migration in Iceland. This chapter also reviews the flow of migration and the number of migrants in Iceland to the present day. This chapter also explores literature on how children perceive the migration experience. The fifth chapter explores the cultural, social and emotional effects of migration on children and the views of society towards migrants and migrant children. The sixth chapter reviews the different approaches that social workers should have in mind when working with migrant children. Additionally, this chapter reviews social work with migrants in Iceland and the role of the social worker within the subject. The last chapter is a discussion that answers the research questions of this literature review on the impact of migration on children and the reflections that migration has on children's school performance, emotional wellbeing and the role of the social worker in this process.

2 Terms and definitions

In this chapter a number of key concepts are described and defined in order to provide a better understanding of the context of this literature review. Numerous scholars have discussed these concepts and put forward comparable definitions. Similarly, the concept of migrant has received many different definitions depending on the purpose of the task. Nonetheless, independent of the reasons why the concept is defined, it is important to have in mind that migrants are anything but a homogeneous group; however, sharing similar experiences (Statistics Iceland, 2009).

2.1 Migrants

According to the Ministry of Social Welfare (Félagsmálaráðuneytið, 2007) „The concept of migration refers to migrants that have settled long-term in the country but have been born abroad or whose parents are both born abroad or have had foreign citizenship. Migrants share in common the fact that they have another language than Icelandic as a native language; here, native language refers to the language that the child learns first" (Velferðarráðuneyti, 2001).

2.2 Migrant children: First and second generation

For the purpose of this literature review paper, the term *migrant children* will be used in accordance to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child (2007), that defines the term *child* as any person under the age of 18 (Unicef, n.d.).

According to the report published by Statistics Iceland the concept of *first generation migrant* refers to an individual born abroad whose parents or guardians are born abroad and whose grandparents are also born abroad (Statistics Iceland, 2009). The term *second-generation migrant* refers to an individual who was born in the place of settlement but whose parents were both born in a foreign country and whose grandparents were also born abroad (Statistics Iceland, 2009).

In this thesis the term second-generation or descendants of migrants will be used to refer to a child who is born in the new country or whose one parent or both parents are migrants. These individuals have a close connection with the country of settlement as well as the country of birth of their parents (Statistics Iceland, 2009). Furthermore, in this paper the term *second-generation* migrant will refer to those children whose guardians are migrants regardless of the place of birth of the child.

2.3 Family

The concept of family has changed and developed through time. The concept has changed depending on social, historical and structural factors of the time period. As a result, it has been difficult to determine a specific definition of family. The Ministry of Social Welfare in Iceland and social workers often use the definition of family associated with family and the family policies as follows (Velferðarráðuneytið, 2001).

> A group of individuals who share a home and where the individuals enjoy leisure activities, emotions, finances, rest, share responsibilities and tasks. Usually the members of this nucleus are two adults, or one adult, with a child or children. The members are committed to each other with mutual loyalty and morally (Júlíusdóttir, 2001, pg. 140).

As the concept has developed so has the definition. Family is all about care and trust and it is characterized in the context of lasting relationships. Families can be kin and non-kin (Murray & Barnes, 2010).

2.4 Integration, culture, acculturation and ethnicity

2.4.1 Integration

When individuals migrate to a new country they often have many challenges to overcome as they adapt to a new society. Integration refers to the process that occurs when migrants move to a new country and try to assimilate the culture of the new country while maintaining their own language and culture. Integration signifies having equal rights to participate in all aspects within society but still giving special importance to maintaining ones own culture and language (Rudiger & Spencer, 2003).

2.3.2 Culture

According to Triandis (2007), the term culture primarily develops in adaptive interaction between individuals and environments. Secondly, culture consists of common features. Thirdly, culture is passed on across generations and time.

Similarly, culture has been defined as the different socially transferred beliefs, values, behaviors and knowledge among individuals of a community independent of their genetic factors (e.g. Parsons, 1949). As well, the NASW (National Association of Social Workers) defined culture: „The word 'culture' is used because it implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group".

In other words the term culture refers to the behaviors, customs and traditions from generation to generation. This includes the ways in which individuals from different backgrounds experience the world around them (NASW standards for cultural competence in social work practice, 2001). A related concept, cultural identity, has been defined by Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones (2006) as the part of social identity that reflects the individual's self-definition and self-perception as a member of a cultural group and cultural heritage. Cultural identity is influenced by a variety of factors such as social class, religion, sexual orientation, migration, and family dynamics (McGoldrick, Giordano & Garcia-Preto, 2005).

2.4.3 Ethnicity, ethnic identity and ethnic socialization

Ethnicity, or ethnic groups, may be described as characteristics that group members share including physical appearance, religion, values, ancestry, history, social customs, behavioral roles, language or dialect, and rules of social interaction (Barth, 1969). Ethnic identity is how individuals identify themselves within an ethnic group. It refers to the feeling of belonging to an ethnic group and for instance the thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and behaviors that are due to ethnic group membership. Ethnic socialization, on the other hand, can be described as the way in which children develop a sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the way by which they acquire the behaviors, perceptions, values and attitudes of an ethnic group and come to see themselves and others as members of such groups (Phinney & Rotheram, 1987).

2.4.4 Acculturation

Acculturation refers to the process in which individuals become acquainted by taking on or borrowing traits from the new environment and culture to acquire knowledge, social norms, and skills needed to interact effectively in a society (Council of Europe, 2010).

3 Approaches to migration

There are many reasons why people decide to migrate but the most apparent one is the desire for a better life. Migration is one of the most important social developments of our time. Throughout human history, individual factors and socioeconomic factors have encouraged migration. It is a process that has an impact on families, children and individuals in general. For some individuals, like refugees, migrating to a new country is not a personal choice but a forced one. For refugee children the experience differs greatly from that of children whose families moved by choice (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

There are various approaches that try to explain the migration process. One is the push and pull approach that conceptualizes and explains migration as a product of two interrelated processes. The push and pull factors are the forces that induce or force individuals to migrate. These factors can either be cultural, economic, political or environmental. Another theory is the historical-structural approach influenced by Marxist theory, which suggests that migration is a consequence of economic inequality among countries. In other words, migration is due to individuals seeking for better economic opportunities. Additionally, another approach that attempts to explain the migration process is the systems theory that explains migration as the interaction between micro and macro levels. Micro levels refer to the individual's reasons for migrating, as for example social networks within the new country. Macro levels, on the other hand, refer to the relation between countries in terms of policies, demographics and cultural factors. Another approach trying to explain migration is the transnational theory that suggests that individuals migrate to where they have social connections, cultural similarities or chances for better economic opportunities (Moyo, Nicolau, & Fairhurst, 2012; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Watters, 2008). Here below is a more thorough explanation of these theories.

3.1 Push and pull theories

In the push and pull theories the push factors can be seen as those that might influence a decision to move from one's country. These factors may include poor living conditions, weak economy, and lack of educational opportunities, environmental disasters, and persecution. Pull factors may comprise the perception of superior

economic conditions, reunifying with family and/or friends, language, better wages, and safety. Some of the push factors that influence migration are related to delinquency and violence such as famine, extreme religious activity and human trafficking. Another push factor might be an unstable economy that affects the individual in both social and financial ways (Parkins, 2010). According to Watters (2008), the push and pull theories see the migrant as a sensible agent assessing the pros and cons and comparing the situation of their country with that of the country of migration. Even though the push and pull theory has proven to be useful in understanding migration, it fails to give us a clearer understanding of forced migration. Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001), suggest that migrants who move by force do not have a choice about leaving their country and they don't always have the privilege of deciding where they are moving.

3.2 The historical-structural theories

According to Watters (2008), the historical-structural approach attributes migrations to the disparity between the economies of countries, emphasizing this factor as the main reason of migration. This approach explains that the movement of migrants from developing countries to developed countries is due to the migrants' pursuit of better economic benefits. Economic and social inequalities between countries are explained as the reasons for the force migration of asylum seekers and refugees (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Furthermore, this approach focuses on the macro economic factors as the main reason for migration but fails to explain the individual reasons for migration. Here, macro economic factors can be understood as the policies developed by international organizations and national and local governments (Cooke & Bélanger, 2006; Piché, 2013; Moyo, Nicolau, & Fairhurst, 2012).

3.3 Migrations systems theory

Migrations systems theory explains migration phenomenon as an outcome of different factors that vary from micro-level to macro-level factors. The micro-level factors in the migration systems theory try to understand migrants' individual motivations for moving to another country. For instance, the personal decision to move or the decision to seek protection in another country. On the other hand, the macro-levels factors see migration as due to economic aspects and political relations between countries (Watters, 2008). According to Jennissen (2007), the migration systems theory tries to

explain migrations as a result of a combination of cultural, social and historical factors at a micro and macro level. This approach offers a useful framework to analyze the concrete situations of refugees and refugee children (Cooke & Bélanger, 2006).

3.4 Transnational theory

Another approach that attempts to explain the reason of migration is the transnational theory. According to Watters (2008), this theory suggests that individuals migrate continually between countries where they have better economic opportunities and social networks as friends, relatives or friends of friends. According to this perspective, individuals seem to be in perpetual motion, moving to places that have cultural similarities, focusing on the cultural reasons behind migration or creating a link between the country of origin and the country of settlement (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). This theory stresses the conservation of the national identity of the individual and the loyalty towards maintaining their traditions. The theory emphasizes that children in transnational families face several challenges because moving from one place to another might make it difficult to build social networks and might affect their school performance (Moyo, Nicolau, & Fairhurst, 2012).

In general, all theories see migration as a complex process that affects individuals and families in a variety of ways.

4 Migration to Iceland: Social and legal history

Migration has a long history in Iceland. The island was discovered by Irish monks and anchorites, known in Iceland as *papar* who came to Iceland around AD 800. The *papar* left the island as soon as the settlers landed on Iceland before AD 1000. During this time the *Althingi* was founded making the oldest parliment of the world . Christianity was established in Iceland around the same time and was influenced by the Norwegian king of this period, Olaf Tryggvason. During this time Iceland was independent but due to internal conflicts the country was subjugated to Norway in the early thirteenth century until the fourteenth century when Denmark became the ruler of Iceland until the 19th Century (Jóhannesson, 2013; Karlsson, 2000).

In 1918 Iceland and Danish representatives reached an agreement in which was stated that Iceland was a free and sovereign state. However, the Danish king remained the head of state and authorities in Copenhagen kept handling Iceland's foreign affairs. On 17 of June of 1944 and after a long struggle against Danish rule, Iceland was declared an independent republic. Furthermore, during this time Icelandic society experienced a great deal of change and underwent an economic expansion that led to an increase of internal migration as well as external migration (Jóhannesson, 2013).

There is a long history of migrants moving to Iceland from numerous countries and for different reasons. Moreover, one of the main documented reason for migration to Iceland throughout history has been the search for job opportunities. For instance, from the early 19th century until 1914, French men came to Iceland to fish around the coasts. Furhtermore, during the second world war, British occupation of Iceland began and lasted throughout World War II when many soldiers were stationed in Iceland. When the British ocupation ended, American troops took over. The Americans used Iceland as a strategic point to land their planes when travelling between America from Europe during World War II. In 1951, the U.S. Air Force stablished an Air base in the town of Keflavik that operated until 2006. This occupation led to an increase of job opportunities for Icelanders who moved to the town to work.

While the internal migration in Iceland incresed a lack of labourers in the rural areas led to the Agricultural association of Iceland to search for German workers. Many German women came to iceland to work during different periods of time. Some of the Germans who came to work stayed and married and established themselves in Iceland (Eiríksson, 2008; Jóhannesson, 2013).

Icelandic economy has expanded throughout time. In recent years the economic development of the country has continued to grow and this has led to an increased need for various types of labor. This has resulted in the rise of foreign labor in various sectors specially in the areas of construction, fishery and service (Félagsmálaráðuneytið, 2007).

The migrant population in Iceland has also increased throughout time. As shown in figure 1 in 1996 the migrant population in Iceland numbered 5.357, second generation migrants were 345. By the year 2009 the number of migrants in Iceland was at its peak at 28.664. Even though the number of migrants declined, the second

generation migrants and migrants born in Iceland increased gradually from year to year. In the year 2014 the migrant population in Iceland numbered a total of 27.447, second generation migrants numbered 3.532, migrants born in Iceland but having one parent born abroad numbered 11.501 in total (Statistics Iceland, 2015a).
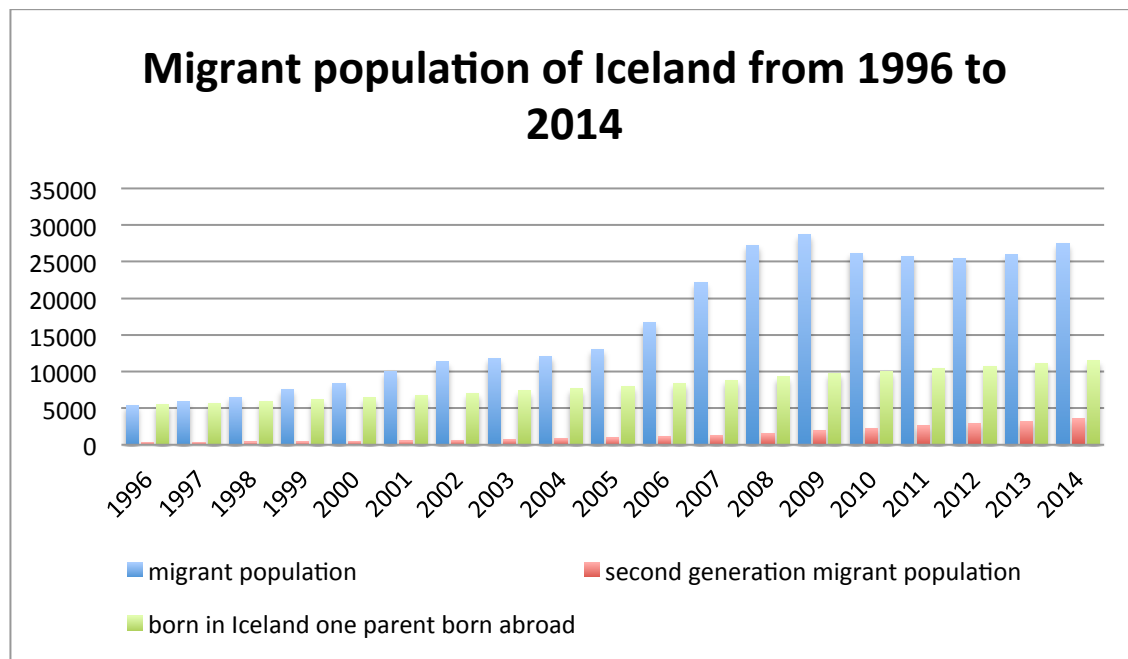
Figure 1 **Migrant population in Iceland between the years of 1996 and 2014**

According to the same source the number of children in Iceland with a foreign background in the year 2013 were 11.518; of which migrants were 2.142, second-generation migrants were 2.944, and children born in Iceland who had at least one parent born abroad were 6.432 (Statistics Iceland, 2015b).

As shown in figure 2 the largest migrant groups in Iceland nowadays come from Europe; Poles, Lithuanians, Germans, Danish, Latvians, British and Portuguese. Another large group of migrants in Iceland are the Americans; others come from different Asian countries as the Philippines and the Thais (Statistics Iceland, 2015c).

Largest groups of migrants in Iceland
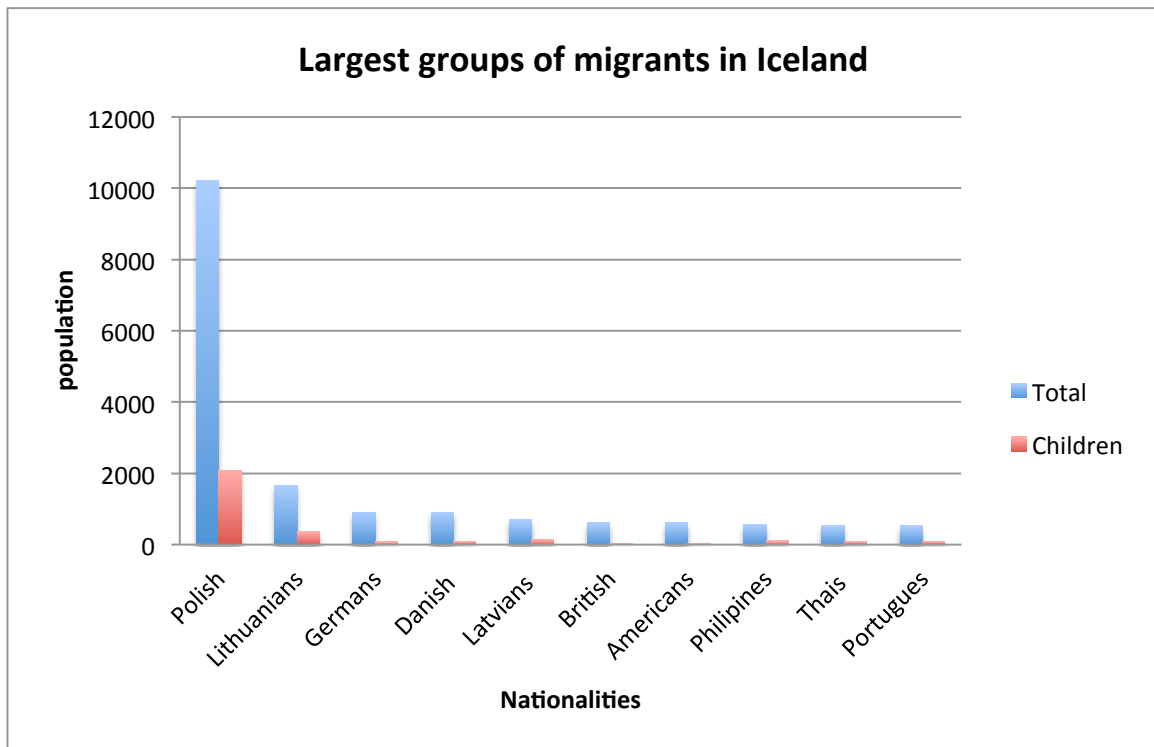
Figure 2 **Largest groups of migrants in Iceland by total, both adults and children**

4.1 Reasons for leaving - migrants in Iceland

Individuals migrate for a variety of reasons. After the end of the World War II, three main groups of migrants have been identified. The first group consists of individuals who migrate permanently to another country to settle. The second group includes those individuals who choose to temporarily move due to better labor opportunities in the host country. Finally, the third group consists of individuals that flee their homes because of war and/or political conflict. These movements of individuals call for family reunification and this promotes more migration (Jóhannesson, 2013; Skaptadóttir, 2010). One example of the different groups that migrate to Iceland are the Asian women, more precisely the Filipino women who came to Iceland in the late 1980s to the early 1990 to marry Icelandic men. Then after these women settled in Iceland they sought for family reunification and in some cases they helped family members to move to Iceland, helped them to find job and assisted with the paper work necessary to stay and this led to the increment of Filipino population in Iceland (Skaptadóttir, 2010).

As mentioned before the number of migrants has increased significantly in Iceland and Icelandic society has changed greatly and become a more multicultural society. Today, the population of Iceland includes people of different backgrounds,

cultures and with different religious beliefs and different mother tongue (Félagsmálaráðuneytið, 2005).

There are many different reasons why migrants decide to move to Iceland but these depend on the time period and the purpose of the move.

In the past years, and before 2008 when the economic crisis hit Iceland, one of the main reasons migrants came to Iceland was due to the economic expansion of the country. In the beginning, most of the individuals came to work in fish processing plants and in jobs related to the service sector such as in cleaning and care. These jobs were considered female appealing which attracted many women to migrate to Iceland. Until the year 2004, women were the majority of migrants in Iceland. Subsequently, the number of migrant men increased due to the growth of the construction industry in the capital area. Furthermore, many migrant men moved to work in the building of power plants, hydroelectric power plants and aluminum smelter plants.

As mentioned before, work has been the main reason for migration to Iceland. Nevertheless, family reunification and education are important factors as well (Skaptadóttir, 2010 & 2010).

As mentioned before the Polish migrants are the largest group of migrants that reside in Iceland and according to Wojtynska (2012), the main reason for migration of Poles out of Poland is related to the labor market opportunities in the host country. Furthermore, the most predominant reason influencing Poles moving to Iceland is the link they have to people already living in the country; such as friends, family members, or a spouse or partner. Additionally, they are influenced by the belief that they will have better job opportunities in Iceland. There are different reasons of why individuals migrate and those reasons have an impact on the adaptation process of families and their children (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

The experience of migrants moving to Iceland varies depending on the individuals' country of origin. In Iceland, applying for a working permit is much easier for individuals coming from countries of the European Union and the European Economic Area making it easier for them to settle. Individuals coming from countries outside the EU or EEA have more complicated paper work to complete (Skaptadóttir, 2010).

5 Family and migration

In all social systems, family is a unit and the most significant emotional foundation in the life of an individual. Families go through different life cycles in which all the members of the family experience changes; boundaries shift and roles between family members are constantly being redefined. All families go through life cycles and all the members of the family experience changes as individuals as well as a group. Relationships between siblings, parents and other members of the family go through transitions as they move along the life cycle. These cycles help family members develop as a family, influence their environment and help them develop their own individual identity (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005).

There are several factors that affect the way individuals experience life through different cycles. Some of those factors are; culture, migration, divorce, illness or death and economic conditions. Furthermore, migration creates so many changes within the family that it creates an entire new life cycle for the families that go through it. These changes might affect the family life cycles for generations. The migration experience causes a connection between two different social environments, the culture of origin and the new culture. While all children learn to define their identity in relationship to their family of origin, peer interaction and social context; migrant children have to learn to define their identity while establishing themselves in a new sociocultural environment. The children´s age, gender, social class and race affects the way children assimilate the migration process. For instance, children who migrate at a young age have greater potential to adapt to a new culture. For individuals who migrate, family members might be the only social networks available to them. Understanding the structure and function of migrant families gives a better perception of how migration impacts children´s life (Carter & McGoldrick 2005).

According to some researchers, the migration experience is a process that has different stages that all members of the family go through. For children the migratory experience is related to different factors, as for example the physical presence of the parents or the emotional availability and the socioeconomic background of the family. These factors become a part of the heritage of each member of the family (Gündüz, 2013; Sluzki, 1979; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

According to Sluzki (1979) the migratory process might be divided into five different stages: (I) *Preparatory stage* is when people decide to migrate for whichever reason, (II) *Act of migration* is when they migrate, (III) *Period of overcompensation* is the period when the migrating families maintain the old country´s norms and reject to engage with the new environment, (IV) *Period of decompensation* or crisis referring to the time in which families must reshape to its new reality, redefine their identity according to the new environment, and (V) *Transgenerational impact* is the final stage in which the family becomes part of a new country or culture, mixes socially with others and adopts the customs and norms of the new society (Sluzki, 1979). These stages affect the way that migrants cope with different difficulties encountered in the migration process.

Migration can affect families' developmental progress by changing the dynamic of how family works. For instance, migration might affect the roles played by members of a family. Moreover, these changes occur at the same time individual´s members of the family go through different periods of the family´s life cycle. Migration is one of the most stressful events that families and its members can undergo, because it changes the environment that individuals are familiar to.

Migration requires individuals to make a connection between the old and new environments. When adapting to a new environment, individuals have to create new social networks, learn social rules and sometimes learn a new language. Furthermore, other factors that influence the adaptation of migrant families and especially children, is the educational and socioeconomic background of the parents because they play an important role in determining which neighborhood the family will move to and which schools the children will attend. The adaptation process of migration takes time for children and their families (Carter & McGoldrick 2005; Crespi, 2014; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

When migrants lose many of their relationships in day-to-day bases, sometimes the family roles shift. Individuals might have to learn a new language and they might lose the roles they played within their community, which gave them a sense of belonging. Furthermore, migrant families experience both individually and together, emotional and psychological changes; such as stress and excitement in the week's prior and after the migration.

During the first weeks after migration, families focus all their energy on attending to the immediate needs of settling in a new country. They might focus on looking for housing, for a job, and enrolling children in schools, leaving little time to process the psychological aspects of the new experience. After settling, some may experience such psychological lows as sadness and depression linked for instance to missing relatives.

The conditions surrounding the migration play an important role on the migration experience. If moving is a result of a search for a better life, a job opportunity or an adventure, family members are more likely to embrace the move positively. On the other hand, for refugees and families that were forced to move due to famine and war the adaptation process is different. Migration tends to have a destabilizing effect on families and creates stresses on the family system that may lead to conflict between family members. For instance, moving to another country often reduces the amount of time that children and family members share together because parents work more in order to provide better opportunities for their children. Furthermore, another factor that influences the adaptation process of migrant families is the culture of the new place. Parents are concerned with losing their children to the new culture and this creates additional stress that affects the parent-child relationship. For many families, migration is a permanent decision and perhaps the most challenging task is to learn to balance the transition process (Sluzki, 1979; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

5.1 Migrant Children

Migration affects children in a variety of ways. Migration can be both a positive and a negative experience; it is a complex process with obstacles and opportunities, which can influence children's development. All migrant children share the experience of having a family that originated in another country and now lives in new a country with a different culture, religion, and sometimes language. Children typically come sooner and more intensely in contact with the culture of the host country than their parents. This happens because in most cases children have a greater exposure to the new culture, for instance through school, and this is why children often learn the language more quickly than their parents and therefore this can make it easy to succeed in the new situation.

Furthermore, it is easier for children than adults to learn new languages because they receive more efficient teaching in schools (Rauði Kross islands, 2006b).

When it comes to learning a second language it is important for children to have a basic foundation and good mother tongue knowledge and skills. Additionally, it is very important when it comes to teach migrant children, both first and second generation another language that they are taught as well as their mother tongue (Menntamálaráðuneyti, 1997). Different studies have shown that good mother tongue skills have a positive influence on children's school performance in bilingual children including learning another language (Genesee, 2004; Lindberg, 2008; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Conflicts related to language proficiency are common in migrant families. Even when parents still use the language of origin at home, the level of children's fluency in the mother tongue might be affected by learning the new language. They have to deal with new roles as translators in medical, or legal situations and other social settings and this may affect the way that they perceive parental authority. These circumstances can destabilize the structure of the family both in the outside world and in the intimacy of the family (Rauði Kross Íslands, 2006b; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). According to this it is fair to say that both languages, the mother tongue and the new language, play an important role in the adaptation process of children to the new country (Menntamálaráðuneyti, 1997). As well as the fact of how children identify themselves within a community and how they assimilate the migration process (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

5.1.2 School and academic performance and learning a new language

There are many factors that affect how migrant children adjust to a new country such as the personal factors, social factors and communal factors (Ragnarsdóttir, 2007). Research shows that migrant children face a broad range of educational needs and circumstances. There are factors, like socioeconomic background, residential mobility and coping with emotional stress of migration due to changes of the new social environment and new school environment. Furthermore, refugees and children seeking for asylum may also be dealing with trauma related to war, family disruptions or

separation (Abubakar, van de Vijver, Mazrui, Arasa & Murugami, 2012; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Migrant children come from different backgrounds, which might create challenges in the educational system in the new country influencing the children's experience. According to Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001), children fleeing conflict and trauma arrive in the new country with a host of special needs and often require counseling and assistance in settling before they are ready to deal with school.

According to Suárez-Orozco (2001) the level of adaptation of children in the place of settlement is reflected by their school performance. Furthermore, Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001) and Watters (2008) reviewed the important role that schools play in children's academic performance and found that schools should address the need of children proactively. Good schools share common characteristics such as positive leadership, high academic expectations of all students regardless of their background and high staff morale. Furthermore, they also found that good schools value their students' culture and language.

Chiu, Pong, Mori & Chow (2012) conducted a research between migrant and native children in 41 countries. The results of this study shows that migrant children often have positive attitudes towards schools and that teachers' behavior plays an important role on migrant children's school engagement and feelings of belonging. This study shows somehow the importance of teacher-student relationship in general and the implications that they have in the academic performance of children and more important among migrant children.

According to Glick & Hohmann-Marriott (2007) all migrant children come from different backgrounds and experience migration in different ways. Family resources and parental involvement are also important factors that influence children´s academic achievement. The study shows that migrant children's school performance is different for children of third generation migrants and the generations after that. Moreover, this study shows that there is a connection between ethnic origin and language proficiency on children's´ academic performance.

One way of communicating is through language and migrant children often have to face the challenge of learning a new language. Bilingualism and bilingual education influences the experience of migrant children in schools. Research in migrant's

achievement in a second language is related to the skill of the child's first language. Some bilinguals are more dominant in one tongue but language proficiency may differ in different situations; for instance, migrants may find it easier to speak their native language in family contexts (Genesee, 2004; Lindberg 2008; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Children who interact with people with a good proficiency in their mother tongue have less difficulty in learning the language of the country of settlement. For instance, Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001) found that migrants usually have the desire to learn the language of the place of settlement and concluded that for migrant children it is important to learn the new language without abandoning their own. Furthermore, the study showed that for adult migrants learning the new language became more difficult if they lived in an environment where almost everyone spoke the first language of the migrant. For instance, many Spanish-speaking migrants in the United States work with other Spanish-speaking individuals and live in neighborhoods were the majority of the residents have a Spanish language background. Nonetheless, the study showed that this is not the case for migrant children of this group since these children intermingle more with non-immigrants helping them learn English much quicker than their parents and with better proficiency. English even becomes the dominant language of some of these children while they maintain some of their cultural practices; this is a process is called acculturation (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Additionally, parents who are highly educated are better prepared to help and guide their children with schoolwork (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Watters, 2008). Schools are an important site of cultural contact for migrant children as they interact with teachers and children from different backgrounds. According to Watters (2008), children's school achievement is positively related to social environments around the child as well as parent-child relationship.

A study conducted in Iceland by Tran and Ragnarsdóttir (2013), revealed that the more attention that parents give their children´s education, the better academic results. Migrant children perceive and experience school in the new country of migration with regard to their experiences of the country of origin where they follow other rules and norms. For migrant children it can be very difficult to switch between different school

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systems and this transition can cause confusion and insecurity in the child. Moving to a country were there is a considerable cultural difference, the school system is different to the school system that the migrant child knows and the language is different might cause insecurity and confusion (Jónsdóttir, 2007; Traustadóttir, 2001).

5.1.1 Identity, self-esteem and emotional wellbeing

There are a variety of factors that influence the psychological wellbeing and self-esteem of migrant children. Some of those factors are how they identify themselves within a community and the set attitudes and behaviors that are adopted. Research results have shown that it is more difficult for adolescent migrants than young migrants to adjust to the new society event if they are trying to reside permanently in the new country (Tyack, 2003).

A study conducted by Bjarnason (2006), showed that migrant children in Iceland feel worse in comparison to their Icelandic peers in terms of well being at school and social relationships. Furthermore, this study also revealed that migrant children have poorer self-esteem, are depressed, are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs and more likely than Icelandic children to engage in risky behavior and be exposed to bullying.

A research conducted by Abubakar, van de Vijver, Mazrui, Arasa & Murugami (2012) indicated that children with a well-established ethnic identity showed signs of better psychological wellbeing than children with weaker ethnic identities. Literature in this subject shows that ethnic identity interacts with the acculturation process and that there is a positive correlation between these issues and the psychosocial adjustment, self-esteem and educational achievement of children. The main aspect that influences ethnic identity is which ethnic group the child identifies with. This choice plays an important role in the acculturation process. Migrant children have to cope with the influence of two different cultures, the culture of their home or country of origin and the culture of the country of settlement. According to the same study, children that are more involved with their own culture and maintain a positive attitude towards the culture of the country of settlement have better emotional outcomes (Abubakar, van de Vijver, Mazrui, Arasa & Murugami, 2012).

Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001), suggest that there are a variety of aspects that affect how children assimilate the migration process. For instance, innate

factors like personality and temperament as well as their psychological and physical health previous to the migration. Once individuals are established in the new settings, social networks are very important. According to Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001) nothing is better for the mental health of a child than having friends and family around to give advice and guidance in different situations. Furthermore, the relationship with friends and relatives helps children to have better self-esteem and a better sense of belonging. Similarly, multiculturalism could be relevant when adolescents are struggling with identity formation. Children respond in a variety of ways to their separation from loved ones and family members and it could be a traumatic process or stressful depending on the migration experience.

According to Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001) and Watters (2008), the way children experience the separation and their social conditions back home and their perceptions of what is going on plays a critical role in their adaptation in the host country. The cultural frame for separations will influence how the child internalizes and responds to the experience as well as the expectations of the host culture. Psychological adjustments in transitions are always stressful situations and sometimes might hinder adaptation in new settings and this could lead to serious consequences as segregation, depression, isolation and social rejection. Research indicates that many migrant children experience high levels of violence in school and neighborhood and this affects their wellbeing (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

For families, it is very important how the child adapts to the place of settlement, there are other number of factors that shape significantly how children respond to the transition. Some of the factors are related to issues that the family brings with them or with the situations they encounter in the new country. The circumstances surrounding the migration play a very important role in the emotional wellbeing of the child. For instance, whether the family moved by choice or was forced to move by external factors, like socio-economic factors or violence (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

5.2 Public views on migrants

Attitudes towards migrants are influenced by a variety of factors. These factors may affect positively or negatively the attitudes people hold towards migrants. There are several studies that conclude that education; values and beliefs, nationalist sentiments

and age have an influence on attitudes towards migrants (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007; O´Rourke & Sinnott 2006; Önnudóttir, 2009). Other studies found that the working situation of the natives might also be factors in the development of attitudes towards migrants (Bauer, Lofstrom & Zimmermann, 2001; Constant, Kahanec & Zimmermann; Gang, Rivera-Batiz & Yun, 2002). Additionally, the studies conducted by O´Rourke & Sinnott (2006); Zimmermann et al. (2007), indicated that in general attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers are different than to regular migrants. Furthermore, research done in Iceland indicates that attitudes towards migrants vary depending on gender and level of adjustment of the migrants (Sigfúsdóttir, Ásgeirsdóttir, Kristjánsson & Sigfússon, 2005). According to a survey conducted by Önnudóttir (2009), attitudes towards migrants in Iceland are positive when Iceland is compared to other countries

According to Ooschot & Uunk (2007), attitudes towards migrants were related to the economy and social status of the citizens. The study indicated that these attitudes were associated with the native's experiences on employment completion and general values and attitudes towards social equality. The ones who were educated and had better social status had more positive opinions towards migrants.

A longitudinal study on the attitudes of Icelandic adolescents towards migrants conducted by Sigfúsdóttir and others, between 1997 and 2004, indicated that the most significant factor that influences the attitudes towards migrants is the gender of the study participants. The study showed that adolescent boys have more negative attitudes towards migrants than adolescent girls. Moreover, another factor that showed to influence positive attitudes of adolescents towards migrants in Iceland was an optimistic approach to life. The results point out that positivism and gender may play a role in the development of young people's attitudes towards migrants (Sigfúsdóttir et al., 2005). As a consequence, negative attitudes towards migrants can affect children's wellbeing.

A study conducted by Naysaa Gyedu-Adomako, Sigfúsdóttir & Ásgeirsdóttir (2000) revealed that young people in Iceland with a foreign background feel worse, both within and outside the school environment, than the young native Icelanders. Research in Iceland has shown that attitudes towards migrants have become more negative with the increase of the migrant population and the decline of the economic situation. From this research it is reasonable to expect that attitudes towards migrant

children have also become more negative and might affect migrant children as they adapt to a new culture.

5.2.1 Discrimination

According to Vedder and Van Geel (2012) discrimination can have an adverse effect on migrants. The authors conducted a study in the Netherlands, more precisely in the areas between Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and analyzed the wellbeing of Islamic migrant adolescents in a multicultural school setting. The study revealed that many Islamic migrant adolescents experienced some kind of discrimination at some point in their lives and these incidents affected their wellbeing, health and social environment.

Vedder and Van Geel's (2012), study, reviewed other studies that have shown that discriminatory experiences have a negative impact on the psychological and physical health of migrants. Migrant individuals that experience frequent discrimination are found to suffer higher levels of depression, lower self-esteem, more stress and anxiety. Also children who have been exposed to negative stereotypes of their own ethnic group may have negative feelings about their own ethnicity. Additionally higher levels of discrimination are associated with high risk of engaging in violent behaviors. However, their study showed that discrimination has a negative effect on the adolescent´s self-esteem and this was also reflected in their behavior. To cope with discrimination migrants develop some kind of cultural pride and ethnic identity to neutralize the impact of discriminatory experiences. Migrants do this in order to feel more connected as a member of their own group than as part of the population country were the migrant experiences the discrimination (Vedder and Van Geel, 2012).

5.2.2 Support networks and policies for migrants

Migration policies, refers to the actions taken by governments and or qualified institutions. The purposes of governmental policies are to assist migrants and help them integrate to the new society by learning more about the social, economical, cultural and the political issues of the host country. Additionally, these policies are designed to provide services, as information and guidance to migrants (Council of Europe, 2010).

Migrant integration is easier for those individuals who learned the societal norms, cultural rules and the language of the country of settlement (Banks, 2007). Integration is a process, involving the integration of both the migrant and the host

society. Countries that develop multicultural policies have better results in integrating migrants (Harles, 2004). The goals of these policies is to ensure that migrants have the same opportunity as the other members of society and have the opportunity to be active members of society (Félagsmálaráðuneytið, 2007).

In the past decade the government of Iceland set various committees to work on other issues regarding migrant individuals. One of the oldest committees was appointed by the Ministry of Education that published a report in 1997 regarding the issue of migrants, concerning integration and participation of migrants. The report discussed the status and participation of migrants in Icelandic society and examined issues regarding social and educational issues for migrant children as well as legal and health services offered to migrants. This report summarized the important issues that affect the migrant children adaptation process in different periods of their lifetime as in kindergarten and in primary school. As for example, migrant children do neither receive special courses to learn Icelandic nor courses to reinforce their mother tongue in the school (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 1997). Additionally, more material came from various committees in a report of the committee on the integration of migrants to Icelandic society (Skýrsla nefndar um aðlögun innflytjenda í íslensku samfélagi) this report emphasized the importance of the adjustment process for both the host country as for the migrant. For instance, that the migrants learn about the values and habits of Icelanders and that the host country offers language courses to learn Icelandic and these are the key elements to adapt to the new society (Félagsmálaráðuneytið, 2005). Another report is the build a better society, a guide to integrate migrants into Icelandic society (Byggjum betra samfélag. Vegvísir til aðlögunar innflytjenda í íslensku samfélagi) by Rauði Kross Íslands, (2006a), this report analyzed different aspects of the adaptation process of migrants with individuals of different ages, from children to adults. The results of the study suggested that for migrants, language is one of the most important factors of adaptation. These committees developed and introduced new policies to help migrant children in their adaptation process when coming to Iceland.

An article published by Ragnarsdóttir in 2004, cited the importance of effective policies in schools to ensure equal opportunities for migrant children. According to Ragnarsdóttir, migrant children often need a lot of help in the first years of their schooling. The author mentioned that the City of Reykjavik has a receiving unit

(Móttökudeildirnar í Reykjavik) that is in charge of helping migrant children who do not have sufficient knowledge of Icelandic to adapt and to study in mainstream classes. Children in this department receive classes of Icelandic for about a year and that there are three schools in Reykjavik that offered the service and eight schools in total in Iceland (Ragnarsdóttir, 2004).

Ragnarsdóttir (2007), also conducted a study on families and migrant children experience in the first years in Iceland. The study looked at migrant children's adjustment to the new society and school. The author considers that it is necessary to develop ways to promote and improve the situation of migrant children in kindergarten and schools and that it is important to consider common values to an active participation in a multicultural society.

6 Social work and support to migrant children

Social work with migrants presents multiple challenges due to the issues related to the migration experience of the individuals. The factors that influence the adjustment of migrants in a new country vary from individual aspects to federal aspects such as policy making. The chapter below analyses theoretical concepts of the framework used when working with migrants. These theories are used in assisting and guiding professionals to develop the skills needed to understand the complex requirements when engaging social work practice with migrants and migrant children (Garcia, 2008).

According to Farley, Smith & Boyle (2009) there are different factors that social workers should have in mind when working with migrants. These aspects might affect the outcomes of the assistance and the relationship between the practitioner and the migrant. It is important for the social worker to help and understand the migration process from the migrant's point of view. Social workers shall always work within the ethics and standards of the profession and yet examine their own values and beliefs regarding migrants, family, children, culture as well as their own prejudice to improve their service. Working with migrants requires understanding and learning of the differences between cultures, customs, the differences of norms and values within each culture. Additionally, is very important for social work practitioners to be able to apply

their knowledge and skills in different situations with different cultural groups (Farley, Smith & Boyle, 2009; NASW standards for cultural competence in social work practice, 2001).

Furthermore, it is important for the social worker to have overview and knowledge of the resources and service offers that are available to migrants by the community. The role of the social workers is to encourage their clients to access information in their own language or with the assistance of interpreters (NASW, 2001).

6.1 Social work approaches in working with migrant children

Social work with migrants poses challenges related to the migration process that goes from individual factors as the experience of migration and to more general factors such as the policies and services offered by the host country. As mentioned before, the migrant experience of migration differs from person to person and is related to individual, social and economic factors that require coping, adjustment and adaptation. Effective practice with migrants involves an evaluation of the migrant's whole environment including the psychosocial ones. When working with migrants, social workers use different approaches to practice. The empowerment theory is an approach that promotes the importance of the role of social power, social support and justice to influence both personal and interpersonal relations. Another approach is the strength-based practice that encourages individuals to work with their own resources and qualities to reach and meet the needs of individuals and their families. The family systems approach focuses on the differentiation of family members, the family emotional status and their situation in society. The ecosystems approach puts emphasis on the importance of understanding behavior of the individual and the role of the individual's environment. The oppression concept enhances practice in the way that it focuses on the importance of the role of social power in the lives of migrants (Garcia, 2008).

6.1.1 Empowerment theory

The empowerment theory is a social work approach that implies that the clients have little power over their own situation due to slack of their social status. Therefore, this approach encourages critical thinking, knowledge construction and the development of strategies, resources and skills to achieve individual and shared goals. This approach

offers different options to reduce isolation and marginalization of migrants. Moreover, this approach aims to change the psychological experience to strengthen connections between individuals and society. This approach aims at opening new options for individuals and provides a framework in which migrants are identified and engaged for specific services (Garcia, 2008; NASW standards for cultural competence in social work practice, 2001; Fong, 2004). The role of social workers using this approach is to promote functionality of certain groups in need of support (Neville, 2004). The emphasis when using this approach in the field of social work is to reinforce the clients' control on their own situation and to increase social equality of the group that the individual belongs to, in this case the migrant group. The aim of this approach is to promote individuals' influence on their own lives in order to achieve their goals and increase their quality of life (Fong, 2004; Neville, 2004; Garcia, 2008).

6.1.2 Strength-based practice

The strength-based practice aims to learn and increase the resources of the individuals to reach a sense of wholeness in the new environment. This approach values the skills, knowledge, potential, social networks and the capacity of each individual. It is important for the social worker to gain knowledge of the experiences that the individual had to cope with to recognize and identify the strength of the migrant in order to offer the suitable assistance. Practitioners using this approach have to work in collaboration with the individuals helping them to help themselves (Garcia, 2008; Pattony, 2012). According to this approach there are positive and negative aspects in the individual's life, the role of social workers is to encourage the individual to use his strengths to deal with the negative aspect in his life (Farley, Smith & Boyle, 2009; Garcia, 2008).

6.1.3 Family systems theory

A theory developed by Murray Bowen in the 1950´s that defines family as a system in which all the members of the family have a specific role and are expected to respond to each other according to it. This approach emphasizes the interaction between individual members of a family system as well as the interaction between different systems. This theory focuses on different concepts that influence the relationship between family members. One concept is the *differentiation of family members* referring to the individual's sense of self within a family. Another concept is *multigenerational issues* as

the emotional processes that are transferred from one generation to another. The *family emotional system* referring to the transmission of emotional problems from parents to children. *Triangulation*, defined as when an individual member of the family feels distressed in relation to another individual member of the family and they bring a third person to act as an ally. *Emotional cutoff,* which refers to the act of reduce or cutoff the emotional contact with the family as a result of unresolved problems. The last concept is the *societal emotional process, which* refers to the social expectations of the family members as for instance the different behavior for each gender or individuals of different racial groups. The application of this approach when working with migrants is important for social workers because it helps them to respect and understand the traditional culture and the relation between acculturation and traditional values of individuals (Garcia, 2008; Brown, 1999).

6.1.4 Ecological theory

The ecological theory is divided into three main factors of the individual environment, the micro, mezzo and macro factors. The micro factors refer to the individual´s characteristics such as genetics and upbringing. The mezzo factors refer to the family, social factors and social issues that influence interaction with the groups that are very close to the individuals as for instance work colleagues and friends. The macro factors refer to the larger groups such as the institutions that offer services to the community (Farley, Smith & Boyle, 2009; Garcia, 2008). When using this approach in social work, social workers examine the individual´s relation with the family, the local community and the community as a whole to see whether there is an imbalance that can cause stress in the individual's life. The role of the social worker is to raise the individual's awareness of his environment and help him to integrate to society without losing the individual's background and culture. As well the social worker could guide the individual to focus on the positive factors that produce positive results (Fong, 2004; Garcia, 2008).

6.1.5 Ecosystems approach

The ecosystems approach is a combination of the different aspects of the individual's environment and the individual´s behavior. The aspects of the individual's environment are understood in the context of systems and these systems play an important role in the migrant adaptation process. For instance, the role of the family and peer support,

other systems that influence the individuals are the social support and community. This approach is important in the field of social work because it helps the social worker to help the process of adaptation between the migrant and the new environment (Garcia, 2009; Mattaini & Meyer, 2007).

6.1.6 Oppression concepts

The oppression concept practice's purpose is to improve the skills and knowledge of individuals as well as the importance of the role of the social power in the lives of migrants, their families and their communities. Social power refers to the aspects that influence the social environment of individuals as for instance the culture, economy, society and community. This approach gives practitioners a better understanding about the influence of the environment on each individual. It is essential for social workers to be aware of the balance between the customers and the providers. When working with migrants and individuals in general the social worker needs to have in mind that what works for one person does not necessarily work for another (Garcia, 2008; Cree, 2003).

Overall, all these approaches help social workers recognize the issues that influence migrant's experiences. They are also applicable to help and improve effective interventions when working with migrant children.

6.2 Social work and migrant children in Iceland

There are different factors that affect the way that migrants adapt to society. Some of those factors are language skills of the migrant, education, family situation, social status and general participation in society (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 1997).

Social workers follow the ethics of the social work association and work against human rights violations wherever they occur. The basis is that social workers respect the dignity and the uniqueness of each individual and believe in his ability to utilize his talents to the full. It is important that the social worker meets the client on his own terms. The goal of social workers is to help individuals to find solutions for both the social and the personal problems and help them fight against social injustice. Furthermore, the social workers should inform their clients of their rights, their obligations and the resources offered. This is very important to have in mind when working with migrants because sometimes they have difficulty in obtaining information

due to their language proficiency. The goal of social workers is to help individuals to find solutions for both the social and the personal problems and help them fight against social injustice. Furthermore, the social workers should inform their clients of his rights, his obligations and the resources offered (Félagsráðgjafafélag Íslands, n.d.).

Social work with migrant children focuses on different factors of the system: the individual factors and the institutional factors. It is important for social workers to understand how migration and acculturation experiences affect families and their child welfare involvement. One of the most important roles of social workers working with migrants is to advocate for the group. Just like other minority groups, it is often difficult for migrants to bring their issues forward to the views of the majority. There are many factors that affect the integration process of migrants and how society integrates migrants. Social workers are in a good position in their field to have an overview of the different issues that affect migrants in various areas (NASW, 2001). In Iceland, migrants are one of the three of the must vulnerable groups of society (Rauði Kross Íslands, 2006b, 2010). This is particularly important in the integration process of migrants because the social worker can help the clients to maintain and nurture their own culture and mother tongue and at the same time help the migrant to be an active member of society (NASW, 2001). According to the United Nations convention of the rights of the child accepted and signed in the year 1989, it is the children's right to maintain their mother tongue. Is very important for migrants to learn the language of the host country to integrate within the society (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 1997; Rauði Kross Íslands, 2006a, 2006b, 2010). Furthermore, in the Government´s policy on migration it is maintained that the Icelandic language is the key to Icelandic society and this influences the adaptation process of migrants (Félagsmálaráðuneyti, 2007).

According to Launikari og Puukari (2005), The aim when working with migrant children is both to understand the individual cultural meanings of each individual as well as collective meanings of individuals. Social workers working with migrant children have to face many challenges as they have to work with families and children from different cultures and with different backgrounds. Therefore, the social workers need to be open-minded in their work and be aware of their own beliefs to gain cultural sensitivity and understanding of the many aspects of the family life. Social workers have to be aware of the cultural differences and realize and understand that in other

countries there might be different values and laws that have an impact on their behavior and shape their beliefs, attitudes and customs. As mentioned before, migrant individuals have a different personal history and background and it is necessary for the social worker to look at the needs of each individual. The aim of social workers working with migrant children is to help them to integrate into the new society and to the community. In order to maximize the potential of migrant children participation in a new country it is important to build on previous experience and help them to improve their strength (Launikari og Puukari, 2005).

According to Berry (1997), the process of adaptation is easier for children that migrate at a young age. A study conducted in Iceland confirmed the assumptions implied by Berry. In the study conducted by the Red Cross Iceland, results revealed that migrant children that move during adolescence had more difficulties in adapting to the new country than younger children (Rauða kross Íslands, 2006a). One of the main goals of social workers working with migrant families and children is to ensure that they receive the necessary services to stay together.

According to the „A social worker´s tool kit for working with immigrant families" there are many factors that the social worker has to have in mind when working with migrant children as age, migration status, ethnic identity issues, language proficiency, health issues, mental health issues and behavioral problems. It is important for the social worker to learn about the migrant children experience of migration, learn life trajectory to help them overcome any trauma as well as to offer them the necessary services to adjust. Another important factor for the social worker to have in mind is the acculturation process that migrant children go through and the stress that this process might cause on children. The goals of social workers working with migrant children are to help them to achieve a sense of safety in the new environment, coordinate services with other agencies, promote positive and stable relationships in the life of the child and provide support and guidance to the child´s family and caregivers.

Concluding Remarks

Migration has been part of human history since ancient times. Individuals, groups, families migrate for a variety of reasons. Some of these motives are the pursuit of better quality of life, job opportunities, adventure and some individuals are forced to migrate because of famine, persecution and war. Migration is a complex phenomenon that affects both adults and children in different but also in similar ways. There are various approaches that try to explain the reason of migration. Migration can be explained as the product of interrelated factors. For instance the individuals' reasons to migrate and the external factor that influence migration, some of these factors are family connections, social networks in the host country, culture, relations between countries and better economic opportunities. The experience of the migration process depends significantly on the surroundings of the migration and this plays an important role in the process of adaptation and the individual´s well-being. Ethnicity, family relations, attitudes towards migrants, discriminations are some factors that shape children's life and have and impact on their future. Migrant groups are at a greater risk of being prejudiced by society and this creates negative attitude towards migrants.

Migration is shaping the world and children by forming individuals that have more challenges to overcome, such as learning a new language, adapting to a new culture, building more connections across the globe, raising individuals that are more tolerant to change and to difference, individuals that are less judgmental and more open and accepting of others.

Children of migrating families have different life experiences and different opportunities depending on their background and the social support offered by the host country. As many studies have shown, parental involvement and intervention have positive outcomes for the school performance of migrant children, their emotional state, social integration and family life. Moreover, it is very important for parents of migrant children to encourage them to embrace the new culture and learn the new language at the same time that they maintain the traditions and their own language at home. It is easier for migrant children that speak their mother tongue to learn a new language. It can be said that skills in the mother tongue are crucial to gain proficiency in the second language. Language proficiency skills and parental support help children to feel more secure and self-confident and leads to better outcomes in different social

settings. Migrant children are at risk of losing their mother tongue when moving to a new country and that risk increases when children do not have the opportunity to speak their mother tongue. For these reasons it is very important to have various types of support and help migrant children to maintain stability while adapting to the new place.

An important factor to consider when working with migrant children is to help them to find balance in well-structured systems surrounding the child. Migration can affect the dynamics of the family and create an imbalance in the hierarchy of the family.

Family plays an important role because it shapes children's future outcomes and influences their emotional wellbeing. Social integration, school integration and the community integrations are also important factors that impact migrant children developing self-confidence and the sense of belonging.

On the other hand, discrimination and parental disengagement have negative effects on migrants' wellbeing regardless of their age. Discrimination has psychological and physical outcomes for children including depression, anxiety, more levels of stress and lower self esteem. When working with migrant children it is important to have in mind all the factors that can affect and influence children´s development and sense of wellbeing.

Migrant children need to acquire communication skills for both cultures. In order to do this migrant children need to know both the old and the new language, learn the familiar customs of both worlds and identify themselves with both cultures. In general, it is reasonable to say that integration in schools is important for migrant children to avoid the risk of isolation and segregation from the community. In Iceland, learning Icelandic is an essential requisite for integration to ensure active involvement in the community. Integration refers to adjustment that migrant children experience when moving to a new country with a new culture, new norms and a new language. The goal of governments is to make new policies that easy the process of adjustment and integration of migrants. Migrant integration is important to promote social progress for both the individual and society as a whole. Social workers are the mediators between the individual and society and play an important role in policy making. Policies are important to improve the adjustment of migrant children and should continue to be developed to ensure better participation of migrant children in society.

Social workers working with migrant children have to consider different issues that might influence their job performance such as cultural differences, prejudice and different beliefs. Furthermore, when working with migrant children it is essential to learn first about the services and the social support available to migrants. Social workers working with migrants and migrant children should always keep on with research to understand the constant changes, shaping children's lives and responding to the needs of this group. One of the most important factors when working with migrant families is to help them to find balance in a well structured system and perhaps this is one of the most important factors to shape the well-being and future outcomes of children from migrant families. Providing good adaptation policies is important to prevent social problems and to coordinate services with other agencies. Adjusting to the new country can raise various problems for migrant children that are associated with cultural conflicts, social conflicts and education. Social workers can help migrants adjust to the community by helping them to establish themselves in the new homeland. Integration seems to be a significant factor when it comes to the issue of migration. Additionally, it is very important for social workers working with migrants to make sure that their clients can access information in different languages or with the assistance of interpreters. It is also very important for the social worker to guide migrant children to achieve a sense of belonging and safety in the new environment.

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