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“I did not give myself a chance to feel sorry for my past”
- Life in Zaatari Refugee Camp:
Four Syrian Stories

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how four Syrians, involved as case managers in Questscope’s mentoring program, describe and experience their lives in Zaatari Refugee Camp. The participants were asked to describe their experiences through qualitative interviews. The results were analyzed through the lens of Antonovsky’s salutogenic theory to examine each participant’s sense of coherence and what activities or people contribute towards a strong SOC. The results show that the participants face many challenges in Zaatari Camp, most notably the feeling that their lives have been reduced to a simple existence in which they are expected to be content with food and shelter. They express the feeling that their hopes and aspirations have come to a standstill and that camp conditions do not allow them to move forward in their lives, such as by completing university. However, their stories also include indications of strong SOC in that the participants make sense of their situation, perceive that there are resources available to deal with their situation, and have incentive to persevere in spite of their circumstances. They describe their work with Questscope, through which they are encouraged to take initiative and responsibility, as helpful and motivating because it builds their confidence, gives them purpose and allows them to hope and move forward.

Key words: Syrians, refugee camp, NGO, Zaatari Camp, sense of coherence

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List of Abbreviations

NGO—Non-governmental organization

OCHA—United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

QS—Questscope

SOC—Sense of Coherence

UN—United Nations

UNHCR—United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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1. Introduction

Thousands of lives have been affected by the ongoing conflict in Syria and the resulting refugee crisis. As of May 2014, the UN Refugee Agency estimates that approximately 598,360 Syrians are currently registered as refugees in Jordan, Syria's neighboring country. Of these, roughly 92,000 reside in Zaatari Refugee Camp in northern Jordan (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2014a). Research has shown that although the refugee camp is a systemic approach used to protect refugees, many times camp conditions affect the physical, mental and social wellbeing of refugees. The way that refugee camps are often organized can generate passivity, dependence and hopelessness (Damme, 1995).

To fulfill a university requirement, I interned with Questscope for Social Development in the Middle East (QS), an NGO based in Jordan. One of the ways that Questscope is using to respond to the Syrian crisis is their mentoring program that they are implementing in Zaatari Camp with Syrian youth. The program's main objective is to encourage positive adult-youth interactions through a basic mentor-mentee relationship. The purpose of these relationships is to promote the development of pro-social behavior and community engagement in at-risk youth. These at-risk-youth signify marginalized youth such as refugees, those in conflict with the law or those entangled in violence and conflict (Questscope, 2014). Case managers, who are university students or graduates, are recruited to oversee the mentor-mentee relationships (Questscope, 2012). The internship with QS has allowed me to meet and develop friendships with a few of the Syrian case managers and mentors who presently live in Zaatari Camp. I have observed that parallel to their existing suffering, they also seem to radiate the determination to persevere, in spite of their circumstances in a refugee camp.

This study seeks to make known the experiences of four case managers currently active in Questscope's work in Zaatari Camp. The participants of this study are a selected group and in certain respects share a few characteristics. However, it is not the aim of this study to generalize their experiences but rather to gain knowledge of this particular group's individual experiences. Refugee camps exist in many places around the world and social workers continue their efforts in the hopes of assisting refugees. Therefore, it has still been deemed relevant to explore the experiences of this specific group who are included in Questscope's social work interventions in Zaatari Camp.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to gain deeper knowledge into how four Syrians, who are involved in Questscope's work as case managers and currently reside in Zaatari Refugee Camp, describe and experience their lives and situation.

- How do these case managers describe their life situation?
- Do the descriptions of their lives include an extent of high comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness (sense of coherence components)?

- What activities or people do they describe as possibly contributing towards the development of a strong sense of coherence? And how?

1.2 Definitions

- Cope= “*to deal with successfully*” (Chambers Dictionary, 1979:286).
- Refugee= In the first article of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the person who receives status as a refugee is one who “*owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it*” (UNHCR, 2010:14).
- Resilience= “*the ability to regain one’s energy after adversity drains it. It is more than ‘bouncing back,’ which implies regaining the status quo; rather, it means rising above traumatic and ambiguous loss by not letting them immobilize and living well despite them*” (Boss, 2006:27).

1.3 Thesis Outline

This study consists of eight chapters. The first chapter introduces the subject of this thesis. It also includes the aim, research questions and definitions. The second chapter consists of background information regarding the context that surrounds the topic of this thesis. The third chapter accounts for Antonovsky’s theoretical perspective that is used to analyze the participants’ descriptions. The fourth chapter comprises of a literature review, which in brief consists of research that have previously addressed the context and topic of refugee camps. The fifth chapter is an elaboration of the decisions and underlying reasons relating to the process, choice of method and other social-scientific considerations. The sixth chapter discloses the results of the interviews according to the themes: First Feelings upon Arrival to Zaatari Camp and Questscope, Life in Camp: One Year After Arrival and Life and Future: Fears and Hopes. The seventh chapter is composed of the analysis. The results, methodology and suggestions for future research are discussed in the eighth chapter.

2. Background

Since its establishment in 1950, UNHCR has a mandate to lead and manage international action to protect refugees. Its objective is to defend the rights for any person to seek refuge in another country and to return home if requested. It also works toward helping refugees exercise their right to seek asylum or to resettle in a third state (UNHCR, n.d.). By the early 1990s, UNHCR came to realize that its capacity was not adequate to deal with the magnitude of the world’s challenges. Therefore, the role of NGOs has become vital to ensure refugee protection. UNHCR relies on the support of NGOs to complement its work with specialized skills and resources to help refugees (UNHCR, 2004).

As of early 2011, political protests and the government's response have created an insecure environment in Syria causing many families to flee. As of July 2013, over 100,000 people are estimated to have lost their lives to the conflict, according to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. OCHA, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, estimates that the number of internally displaced have reached as many as 4.25 million Syrians (Human Rights Watch, 2014). The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, estimates that the conflict has driven nearly two million refugees to flee Syria to neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2014b). With the increasing refugee outflow, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres says the Syrian refugee crisis is the worst the world has seen since the Rwandan genocide nearly twenty years ago (Hunter, 2013).

UNHCR co-manages Zaatari Camp in cooperation with the government of Jordan and the Syrian Refugee Camp Directorate (SRCD). Jordan has been concerned that it does not possess sufficient capacity for high numbers of refugees to settle into Jordanian communities. As a result, Syrian refugees have been placed in Zaatari Camp as of August 2012. The camp landscape is desert with a layer of rocks; wind and dust storms are frequent. Many who flee arrive during the night often with limited belongings. The majority of refugees in Zaatari Camp have lost ties with families and are now forced to live in a culture where they are dependent on aid workers for daily necessities (International Medical Corps [IMC], 2013).

Questscope is an NGO that was founded in 1988 in Great Britain and their work of social development began in Jordan in 1994. Questscope's fundamental goal is to improving the wellbeing of vulnerable people by engaging them to become central actors in the development of their context and community (Mihyar, Elbastami & Rhodes, 2002). Besides out-of-school educational programs, Questscope provides psychosocial support for at-risk youth by training young adults to become mentors for younger children and youth who due to lack of education or significant role models have limited economic or social opportunities. The "mentoring program" has been developed by Questscope to encourage a sense of social inclusion and community engagement in young people, who live in difficult circumstances. The mentoring program is implemented through three categories of young people. The first group consists of the "mentees", who are the children or youth at-risk of developing antisocial behavior and, therefore, may be in need of support. The second group is composed of the "mentors", who are young adults trained in child protection and assigned five mentees each. They build supportive relationships with their mentees through goal-oriented activities over a period of six months (Questscope, 2012). The third group consists of the "case managers". These are university students or graduates who are recruited to oversee the mentor-mentee relationships and to monitor their development (Mihyar, Elbastami & Rhodes, 2002). The mentors and case managers are young adults (over 18 years old) who have gone through applications and individual interviews before being selected. The mentors and case managers are chosen according to their previous experience with youth and their educational background. Once selected, the mentors and case managers receive training from Questscope regarding topics such as the ability to identify needs among youth, communication skills and problem solving (Questscope staff, Personal Communication, June 3rd, 2014). Every sixth-month cycle, the mentoring program in Zaatari Camp has approximately 350 Syrian mentees, 70 Syrian mentors and 14 Syrian case managers; this study focuses on those in the third group, the case managers (Questscope, 2013).

3. Theoretical Perspective

In this chapter, the theoretical perspective is outlined and the key concepts are defined. These concepts are *salutogenic model*, *generalized resistance resources (GRRs)*, *sense of coherence*, *comprehensibility*, *manageability* and *meaningfulness*. Their relevance and application for this study are also explained.

3.1 The Salutogenic Model

In 1970, Aaron Antonovsky (1923-1994), a professor of medical sociology, conducted a study attempting to understand how women of different ethnic groups in Israel adjusted to midlife. Among these women were a group of concentration camp survivors. Although the percentage of survivors in good overall mental health was significantly lower than the remaining group, Antonovsky found it interesting that as many as 29% of the survivors were found to be reasonably healthy both physically and mentally. He posed the question: how are some people able to remain healthy despite having experienced traumatic or difficult circumstances? This drove him to develop the *salutogenic model*, a perspective that focuses on the origin of health instead of sickness (Antonovsky, 1987).

In the salutogenic model, Antonovsky debated a view on health and disease in favor of a continuum perspective rather than a dichotomy perspective. A dichotomy is a “division into two strongly contrasted groups or classes” (Chambers Dictionary, 1979). A dichotomy perspective entails that a person is considered either healthy or sick. Antonovsky argued that it was more constructive to consider that every person is positioned on a continuum; a person could be more or less sick while, at the same time be more or less healthy. He reasoned that to some extent we are all terminal because we will all die. At the same time, as long as a person has breath then that person is also healthy to some degree. Instead of focusing on eradicating all form of disease in order to classify someone as healthy, a continuum perspective allows efforts to be concentrated on helping individuals move towards the health pole of the continuum while still acknowledging the presence of suffering and difficulty (Antonovsky, 1987).

3.2 Sense of Coherence (SOC)

Initially, Antonovsky (1987) proposed the term *generalized resistance resources (GRRs)*, to indicate any factor that is helpful in confronting demands that do not have given responses. However, in order to alleviate the work of identifying each and every GRR as effective, he developed an answer to the salutogenic question by analyzing the common effect of all GRRs. He came to the conclusion that all GRRs helped to make sense of the numerous demands that a person can encounter. Over time, if a person repeatedly experienced such feelings then a person would develop a strong sense of coherence. In order to make the concept practical, Antonovsky conducted in-depth interviews with fifty-one people who had both experienced major trauma and were coping with it remarkably well. The goal of the interviews was to understand how they saw their lives. Approximately 34% of the interviewees were classified as having a strong SOC while the rest were found to have moderate SOC, weak SOC or neither. As he compared the two extreme groups, he identified three themes that were present in the strong SOC group but were absent in the weak SOC group. These have become known as the three main components of the SOC concept:

comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. As a result, Antonovsky officially defined **sense of coherence** as:

“... a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli deriving from one’s internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable and explicable; (2) the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement” (Antonovsky, 1987:19).

In other words, a person with a strong sense of coherence is able to feel confident that factors (internal or external) affecting his/her life can be understood, can be managed, and are meaningful. According to Antonovsky’s salutogenic theory, a strong sense of coherence is an important factor to maintain and move towards the health pole on the health-disease scale (Antonovsky, 1987).

Comprehensibility (C) is further defined as:

“... the extent to which one perceives that stimuli that confront one, deriving from the internal and external environments, as making cognitive sense, as information that is ordered, consistent, structured and clear, rather than as noise – chaotic, disordered, random, accidental, inexplicable” (Antonovsky, 1987:16-17).

This means that a person with high comprehensibility can act rationally, find stability and make sense of their situation in spite of experiences, even difficult ones such as death, war or failure. This person has an ability to evaluate reality so that when surprises occur in their lives, they are able to explain and make sense of them. In contrast, a person with low comprehensibility perceives their reality and lives as chaotic, random, perplexing, sudden and unfathomable (Antonovsky, 1987).

Manageability (MA) is defined as:

“... the extent to which one perceives that resources are at one’s disposal which are adequate to meet the demands posed by the stimuli that bombard one” (Antonovsky, 1987:17).

Manageability refers to the degree in which a person feels there are resources available to them that they can use to deal with life’s demands. Resources at one’s disposal do not only represent individual abilities or characteristics but can also include resources in other people one can trust such as friends, family, God, colleagues etc. Events and their consequences can be seen as experiences that one can cope with or even that one can learn from. Individuals with low manageability may see themselves as the sad sack, the one that continually suffers unfortunate events in life. This may in extreme cases take the form of paranoia. The higher sense of manageability a person feels, the less they will feel like a victim of their circumstances. Instead, they will feel they are able to rise above the difficult circumstances and leave grief behind (Antonovsky, 1987).

Meaningfulness (ME) is defined as:

“... the extent to which one feels that life makes sense emotionally, that at least some of the problems and demands posed by living are worth investing energy in, are worthy of

commitment and engagement, are challenges that are 'welcome' rather than burdens that one would much rather do without" (Antonovsky, 1987:18).

In short, the meaningfulness component can be considered as the emotional counterpart to the comprehensibility component. Individuals often speak about aspects that make sense to them emotionally, not just cognitively. These include areas of their lives that they consider important to them and that they care about. A person with high meaningfulness tends to be motivated to confront at least some challenges because they consider them worthy of their investment and commitment. Besides the determination to overcome their circumstances to the best of their abilities, high meaningfulness enables a person to set goals for the future, even when life takes unexpected turns (Antonovsky, 1987).

3.3 Correlation Between the Three Components

Although the three components together make up SOC and are therefore intertwined, it is possible to have a high sense of one component and low sense of another, for example, a person may experience that they are able to understand their situation (high comprehensibility) but do not find meaning in it (low meaningfulness). Depending on the combination of high and low components, a person may feel pressure to change one or more of the components. For example, if a person cares (high meaningfulness) and believes that they understand problems they are faced with (high comprehensibility), they may be driven to seek out resources that can help them deal with challenges (low manageability) (Antonovsky, 1987).

Though the three components are necessary to develop a strong sense of coherence, they are unequally important. The component of meaningfulness carries the most weight because without it, neither high comprehensibility nor high manageability are likely to remain for long because one will not be motivated to understand or to face challenges. On the other hand, a person with high meaningfulness and low on the other components will most likely be driven to find answers and resources. Comprehensibility comes next in importance because manageability is dependent on a degree of understanding (Antonovsky, 1987).

A person with a strong SOC does not necessarily perceive their whole world as coherent; it suffices to find importance and relevance in certain aspects of one's life and to find other areas to be irrelevant. One person may set their boundaries relatively narrow while another has a much broader perspective on their lives. However, both may still have a strong sense of coherence because it is in relation to their point-of-view. What marks a strong sense of coherence in a person is not whether they have an interest in international politics or religion but that there are aspects of life that are subjectively important to them (Antonovsky, 1987).

Finally, Antonovsky reasoned that it would not be possible to have a strong SOC while having such a narrow perspective to the degree in which important aspects in one's life did not include inner feelings, immediate interpersonal relations, major activity and existential concerns (Antonovsky, 1987).

3.4 Application of Theory

The salutogenic model and the sense of coherence concept were chosen as the theoretical perspective for this study based on an argument that Antonovsky laid forth. The purpose of this study is to understand the stories of Questscope case managers, Syrian refugees who work with Questscope and live in Zaatari Camp. Naturally, the experience of not only fleeing war but also of living in a camp as a refugee for an extended time causes many negative consequences. But is that all there is to their stories? Focusing solely on their difficulties and problems diminishes the possibility of knowing more about their inner strength and resilience or about other aspects surrounding them that have helped them cope and do more than just survive. What are their stories? How do they see their lives? What helps them make sense of their lives? What helps them deal with their situation? What gives their lives meaning? Essentially, what gives them a sense of coherence despite their difficult circumstances? The focus of this study will be placed on SOC as a means of evaluating aspects in the participants' descriptions that promote salutogenesis according to them. Questions in the interview guide have been derived and based on the three components of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness in order to make the sense of coherence concept more tangible and applicable.

4. Literature Review

Section 4.1 in this chapter discloses the search process and a general overview of the studies found. The sections following 4.1 are themes that can be related to this study. The themes have been organized so that the first theme (4.2) brings to light research on the refugee camp and the refugee experience as a phenomenon. Section 4.3 brings up research that focus on resilience, protective factors and coping in refugee camps, all of which can be seen as similar or comparable concepts to the SOC concept. Section 4.4 focuses on research that lift up personal refugee experiences, as told by refugees. Section 4.5 is a summary of the research and its relevance to this study.

4.1 Selection of Literature

The abstract level was raised to include search words such as *resilience*, *coping*, *protective factors* as well as *refugee camp*, *sense of coherence*, *meaningfulness* and *salutogenic*. Databases used were Academic Search Premier (EBSCO host), Science Direct, ProQuest Platform, ProQuest Social Sciences, Google Scholar and Stockholm University Library. Literature was also found in the reference lists of other students' theses. Some literature was also made available to me through Questscope. Because the purpose of this study is to explore how a few Syrians experience life in a refugee camp, I have chosen to only include studies conducted on refugee camp settings and humanitarian emergencies. As a result, I have deemed it irrelevant to include studies concerning refugees who are either placed in non-camp settings or who have taken refuge in developed countries, however in some cases they have been included. I have also chosen to exclude studies regarding PTSD and trauma, as these are not the focus of this study.

When studies on refugee camps were searched, there were few that had the approach that this study has. Although extensive research has been conducted on refugee camps, most address other aspects of camp life. There are quite a few studies concerning the needs and challenges of women in refugee camps or in humanitarian emergencies (Gasseer, Dresden, Keeney & Warren, 2004; Khattak, 2007). Gender-based violence

as a result of insecurity in the camps is also a frequent topic (Farmer, 2006; Ho & Pavlish, 2011; Lukunka, 2012; Mulumba, 2011; Ward & Vann, 2002) as is the impact displacement in a refugee camp has on domestic violence (Horn, 2010; Hyder, Noor & Tsui, 2007; Khawaja, 2004). Studies have also been conducted on security concerns and presence of violence in refugee camps (Crisp, 2000; Johnson, 2011; Long & Hanafi, 2010). Research has also been conducted on a more political level in which refugee camps have been used as case studies in analysis and criticism of the implementation of human rights and humanitarian work in refugee camps (Bulley, 2014; Holzer, 2012; Kanyengo & Kanyengo, 2011; Kaussen, 2011; Pavlish, Ho & Rounkle, 2012; Verdirame, 1999; Wilde, 1998). Because many refugee camps last longer than the initial emergency response, there is also considerable research and articles published on protracted refugee situations and its repercussions concerning the violation of refugees' human rights and prolonged dependence on humanitarian aid (Deardorff, 2009; Loescher & Milner, 2005; Lui, 2007). Besides one recently published political science master thesis analyzing gender roles in Zaatari Camp (Wiggett, 2014), little empirical research has been conducted on the specific Zaatari Camp situation. Assessments and reports have, however, been published by the United Nations and NGOs directly involved. In the following chapter, research that can be relevant to this study are outlined.

4.2 Refugee Camps and the Refugee Experience

According to Liisa Malkki (1995), a professor of anthropology at Stanford University, key techniques for managing mass displacements of people first emerged in Europe post-World War II. Refugees most probably existed before then, but not as a globalized social category that could be managed in refugee camps. With conflicts continually emerging in the world, it would seem that *refugees* and *refugee camps* would have been a heavily studied area for researchers but every conflict is different and the causes of mass population movements vary. In turn, people who are forced to flee also face different challenges. Refugees are then not kinds or types to be studied but rather include a variety of socioeconomic statuses, personal experiences and psychological situations. Malkki questions why researchers have made the study of *refugees* and *refugee camps* into an experience that can be generalized and referred to as the *refugee experience* as though it enabled the same experience for every person who endured it. She further writes that it would be irrational to claim that displacement does not cause distress. However, she claims that it is wrong to assume that it is possible to know the causes of a person's suffering or the psychological repercussions of displacement, by simply establishing the *refugee-ness* of the person's situation. The refugee experience is not a psychological condition that can be recognized or generalized (Malkki, 1995).

In his analysis of a refugee camp in Goma, in modern day Democratic Republic of the Congo, holding Rwandan refugees after the Rwandan genocide in 1994, Wim Van Damme (1995) questions the use of refugee camps as the most suitable way to care for refugees. In his study, he refers back to 1971 in which some 10 million refugees fled from East Pakistan to India. They were placed into refugee camps along the border that held up to 1,000 people and 10 months later, they returned home to an independent Bangladesh. According to Damme, this was the first time that a successful technique for the care of refugees had been reported. It was successful because the problem was temporary and the refugees were spread over many small camps. Since then UNHCR and other organizations have adopted the refugee camp

as a systemic approach to dealing with refugees even though camp conditions often affect the wellbeing of refugees physically, mentally and socially. Damme further claims that the way in which refugee camps are administered often cause passivity, lack of autonomy, hopelessness and nutrition-related diseases due to the dependence on food-aid that is lacking in quantity and quality. He enquires why the refugee camp as a method has not been questioned when most refugee situations are not temporary and eventually carry more disadvantages than benefits in the long run (Ibid., 1995). Deardorff (2009) wrote of the usual characteristics that make camps different from other forms of settlements: the freedom of movement is restricted, it is meant to be temporary, the approach of governance is often one of control and there is little opportunity for self-reliance—resulting in refugees dependent on aid.

Pottier's (1996) study revealed how Rwandan refugees in Lumasi camp, Tanzania and Mugunga camp in Goma, Congo experienced aid in refugee camps. The refugees shared that they experienced the international community did not know about their culture, economy and politics. They did not know about the Rwandan population's food preferences and so this forced them to adapt in ways that became detrimental to their health. Humanitarian agencies' and workers' ignorance to the particular situation of the Rwandans caused the refugees to lose confidence in them. Pottier writes that gaining understanding of refugee communities instead of treating them homogenously could result in better responses to refugee needs.

There are two studies, however, that bring to light how refugees have agency and make the best of their situation even if it is difficult and camp confinement has taken away much of their freedom. In one case, it was shown that Karenni refugees were able to find creative ways in order to attempt to feel at home in the camps. They were able to construct through physical and sensory habits, a feeling of home even in an unfamiliar situation (Dudley, 2010). Another study brought attention to refugees who in spite of a bare and voiceless life in a refugee camp were able to defy their state of victimization by constructing shelter to address their housing needs. Through their built environments, their agency became evident (Sanyal, 2011).

4.3 Resilience and Coping

Research has been conducted on the presence of resilience and protective factors among refugees that help alleviate the effects of trauma and risk factors. Boss (2006) gives a definition of resilience as

“the ability to regain one's energy after adversity drains it. It is more than ‘bouncing back,’ which implies regaining the status quo; rather, it means rising above traumatic and ambiguous loss by not letting them immobilize and living well despite them” (p. 27).

Boss conducted a study of individuals who were able to live well despite experiencing ambiguous loss. While resilient individuals considered stress to last a long time, it was still considered manageable. Religious beliefs were among the things that helped give them meaning in their loss. Realizing that there are things out of their control and finding ways to accept the situation were factors present among resilient individuals. Besides the individual's ability to cope with loss, Boss showed that maintaining relationships was an important coping strategy to deal with loss successfully (Boss, 2006).

The NGO International Medical Corps conducted a relevant mixed methods assessment in July 2013 on mental health/psychosocial and child protection among Syrian refugee youth (ages 12-18) in Zaatari Camp. The assessment measured perceived safety in the camp, perceived support, perceived resilience and local mental health syndromes. In the perceived resilience results, parents and youth in focus groups were asked, “What are qualities and personality traits of youth who are doing well, despite going through a lot in their lives?” Resilience and protective factors involved both personal strengths and supportive contexts. Once the resilient traits were identified, a quantitative survey asked adolescents on their perceived level of identification with the traits. The traits included factors that were individual (personal strength, coping), family (parenting and supportive relations), peer (friends) and community levels (supportive community members). The most common coping strategies among the 255 youth who participated were to withdraw/hide (71%), cry (38%), go to parents (31%), find things to do (31%), sleep (29%), play with friends (24%), pray/read religious (23%) and distract self (23%) (IMC, 2013).

In another assessment of Syrians in Zaatari Camp, the most frequent problems reported by key informants were camp conditions, such as heat & dust and struggles in obtaining basic needs such as food. Other frequent problems were worry and fear about family in Syria and the current situation in the camp. The most common coping methods reported among the male Syrians (in ranking order) were praying or reading Qur’an, seeking out time alone, talking to family & friends, walking and visiting family & friends. For female Syrians, the five most common coping methods reported were household chores & cooking, talking to family & friends, praying or reading Qur’an, walking and going to work (IMC, 2012).

Gwyneth Overland (2011) conducted a study relating to Antonovsky's salutogenic theory in a refugee context. She conducted research among Cambodian survivors after experiencing traumatic events and human rights abuse of the Khmer Rouge regime. The aim was to find out how they explained their remarkable wellbeing and how one could learn from their biographical narratives of their resilience. Instead of developing PTSD, the research participants of this study had shown resilience, an ability to cope and adapted well to unforeseen risk. However, the results of this study were in an unpublished master’s thesis that was not accessible (Overland, 2011).

4.4 Refugees’ Own Reflections

There are a few studies that document how refugees describe life experiences of their daily lives in refugee camps. One study recounts in depth the story of Sahar, a thirty-four year old married Palestinian woman, who was born, grew up and continues to live in Amari refugee camp on the outskirts of Ramallah in the West Bank. Sahar tells of the physical dangers she and her family faced in the al Aqsa intifada but also tells of her strength to increase the welfare of her children and establish independence for herself and her family. She is able to manage the warlike conditions around her but has a hard time dealing with the moral wrongs that occur in her proximity, such as rumor and gossip (Johnson, 2007).

In another study, forty-four Liberian refugees, who had been confined to a refugee camp for more than 11 years, were asked to reflect on their stay in Buduburum Camp in Ghana. Some described how they attempted to obtain livelihoods in the structure of the camp through petty trading or being employed in the camp. Others tried to

establish social networks with the local population in order to gain economic support. Cultural differences between the refugees and the locals became a source of discomfort among the refugees. The older refugees who had witnessed the civil war in Liberia described still experiencing flashbacks and trauma. Although the government of Ghana provided basic security, the refugees reported that they still felt insecure. The refugees' negative and positive experiences depended on their individual abilities and agency, and external factors such as social networks (Tanle, 2013).

Pavlish (2007) conducted research on the life experiences of twenty-nine Congolese refugees dwelling in refugee camps in Rwanda. Themes that were present among the women's stories were that they had left a better life behind; that they worried about their daughters being exploited; that they felt ambivalent about marriage and that they lacked hope for their situation and their future. Themes that were present among the men's stories were that they also had left the good life back in Congo; that they felt no peace in their hearts because they were not able to provide for their families and that they feared the future would mean even more difficult and frightening circumstances than they had previously experienced.

Nina Gren (2009) of the University of Gothenburg conducted one year of ethnographic fieldwork in a West Bank refugee camp as her doctoral dissertation. The study showed how the refugees maintained their daily routine and attempted to create normality in the midst of uncertainty. The refugees' stories revealed creative ways of establishing feelings of hope and trust even in the midst of difficult situations. Due to the ongoing conflict, the refugees felt that they were living in a constant state of emergency. Though they looked to the day when they could return "home", Gren noticed the concept of resilience among the Palestinians. They were striving to keep their integrity intact even when they experienced that their physical and national existence was being threatened.

A needs assessment of Kosovar refugees in Albania, one month after they arrived to a refugee camp, revealed themes of trauma but also of a desire to feel self-determined and have purposeful activities. They shared that they thought it would be helpful to talk to someone, in a counseling role. They also felt that they lacked information on their loved ones left in Kosovo, which resulted in that they worried for them. A third theme that arose was the refugees' longing for activities that were meaningful. They expressed that they wanted to have more control over their circumstances and daily lives (Drumm, Pittman & Perry, 2004).

4.5 Summary

The primary aim of the literature review is to compare the results of research with the results of my own study, in order to identify if there are recognizable traits and factors that arise. This may be able to strengthen both the validity of this study and the ability to generalize (Bryman, 2012). However, I argue that there is no general refugee experience. The experiences of refugees are unique and cannot be generalized due to the simple fact that every mass population movement is caused by different events, historically and politically. In addition, people who then as a result find themselves in a position of displacement are all individuals who undergo different situations and challenges (Malkki, 1995). Therefore, even if studies have been conducted on other refugee populations in refugee camps, researching on the situation of Syria and the challenges Syrians face in Zaatari Camp is worthwhile. Their experiences do not

necessarily liken those of other refugees with various backgrounds who have experienced displacement or taken refuge in camps. While the studies outlined in this review may provide an important base, this study attempts to fill a gap in the research field by examining the situation of refugees in a refugee camp as they tell about both their struggles and strengths. Almost all of the research that allows refugees to describe their life experiences have been done on a big scale in which the results have not accounted for the details of each individual; rather they have been told as general experiences. I hope with my study to communicate in-depth the stories of a few in order to reveal a richer, more in depth picture of their lives.

5. Methodology

The following chapter accounts for the methodological decisions made in this study. Although it is long, the ethical considerations involved in this study have led to the vitality of showing transparency concerning the whole process.

5.1 Chosen Method

The method chosen for this study is semi-structured interviews. The interviewer listens to participants' dreams, fears and hopes; listens to them express their opinions in their own words; and gathers knowledge about their situation, their family and social life (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In a semi-structured interview, the researcher often prepares an interview guide, a list of questions or rather specific topics to cover. The participant, however, can reply freely. The interviewer may also ask questions that are not included in the guide in order to follow up on the participants' replies. (Bryman, 2012). Semi-structured interviews have been chosen in order to explore in depth the experiences and feelings of individuals and how refugee camp setting affects them as individuals. While the results have less ability to be generalized, this method has been deemed most relevant because it allows the researcher to concentrate on the individual rather than the group or community.

5.2 Research Process

5.2.1 Evaluation of Sources

The Syrian war and its effects are ongoing and there are many uncertainties involved. Political and personal interests can be involved in the information reported. Therefore, it needs to be taken into consideration while reading this thesis, in particular in the introduction and background chapters, that the sources used to describe the conflict and the situation of Zaatari Camp can be questionable. I have tried to avoid writing about statistics but when I do, I have done it to give a general overview. Therefore, the reader should keep in mind that by the time this thesis is being read, those numbers and circumstances will most probably have changed. To help increase reliability to as much as is possible, I have tried to use official documents such as UN regional reports (UNHCR, 2014), or from other NGOs (IMC, 2013), even though these may also be prone to political bias. In the literature review chapter, I have only referred to research that has been peer-reviewed.

5.2.2 My Role

I have reflected over my role in the process of this thesis. As I consider the participants to be my friends, I have had to consider from a researcher point-of-view how interviewing people I know differs from interviewing people I have not met before and how it affects the validity of this study. I have found it more ethically justifiable to interview people who I know because of the sensitivity of their feelings and their situation. However, while my feelings for them are strong and give me a drive to write this thesis, I am aware that it might affect my sense of objectivity in the process. With that said, the knowledge that I am attempting to attain through this thesis is not based on a positivist, objectified truth but rather of an interpretivist truth that is achieved through the interaction of the interviewer and participant (Bryman, 2012). Miller, Kulkarni & Kushner (2006) support the view that participants should be allowed freedom to express their central concerns in a relational context, so that one can avoid the treatment of participants as though they are rats in a laboratory cage. In this case, I have deemed it important and valuable that relationship is already present between the participants and me because it helps me understand them better. It may have even helped them feel more comfortable to tell me their feelings. Although they expressed an eagerness to tell their stories and some expressed disappointment that they were not chosen, there is a possibility that they may have answered according to what they thought was expected of them.

5.2.3 Sample and Sampling Process

This study uses a purposive sampling approach, which means that the sample is not intended to be random but instead is consciously chosen to be directly relevant to the study's research questions. As a result, it is not possible for the researcher to generalize to a larger population (Bryman, 2012). For this study, the context chosen is Zaatari Camp and specifically the Questscope work. In order to ensure that I could write about this subject, I contacted QS, by email, to ask for permission to return and to write my thesis by interviewing the Syrians working with QS. I have chosen to be in complete cooperation with QS regarding what is possible. QS have been willing and generous to receive me again.

I chose to interview the case managers as opposed to the mentors and the mentees because they have more responsibility in QS's Zaatari work. I assessed that they would be in a better place to talk about their situation than younger children would. I also wanted to interview Syrians to whom I had talked to before and with whom a level of friendship had been founded, in order for them to feel comfortable. I chose to interview the case managers as opposed to other people in the camp not connected to QS because they have a support community in the form of QS staff and other Syrian case managers and mentors. Interviewing a select group means that there is a probability that these case managers differ significantly from others residing in the camp. As a part of QS's work, they may have had more opportunity than others to develop a strong sense of coherence. However, it is not the purpose of this study to determine whether they have a strong sense of coherence or not but rather to find out how they see their lives and what it is they describe that may contribute to a strong sense of coherence. As a result, their stories cannot be generalized to other Syrians in the camp.

I wanted to document stories of both genders so I decided on a quota, two of each, and kept them few, in order to write in depth about their experiences rather than document lightly the stories of many. After I had written down and translated a

presentation and interview guide, I discussed my thesis and the ethical considerations with one of QS's project coordinators in Zaatari Camp. He requested to see my interview guide in order to ensure that the questions were sensitive to the wellbeing of the case managers. He approved. One day when we went to Zaatari Camp, we set up a meeting with about ten case managers, four women and six men. I decided to have the presentation with a group in order to ensure that they really knew what it was about before they agreed to take part in it. In the presentation, I discussed the purpose of my thesis and the ethical aspects that I had considered (see Appendix A). Although I had translated the interview material on my own and knew sufficient Arabic to communicate with the case managers, I had planned that another QS project coordinator would join the meeting and the interviews to translate in case we needed it. However, she was not able to attend and no other QS project coordinators were present. This meant that I held the meeting on my own which gave me a good opportunity to find out how they really felt about having QS staff present during the interviews. They expressed very clearly that they did not want a QS employee present; they trusted that they could make themselves understood and that I would understand. They said that they felt more comfortable just talking to me.

Since I have a personal connection with them, I started the presentation with expressing my respect for them. I shared how I wanted to share their stories and experiences of the camp because they are important and people need to know. However, I also expressed that above my thesis and telling their stories, the most important thing for me is that they are well. I wanted them to be aware that even though I had taken all measures I could to ensure that I would not ask questions that would bring up hurtful feelings, there might still be some possibility if I interviewed them that it could bring up feelings. I said this in order to ensure that they really understood what they would be a part of. I also ensured them that if they felt that the interview brought up bad feelings, then we could together make contact with one of the QS employees for personal counseling. I also expressed that they were free to stop the interview or skip a question at any time. I asked permission to use a recording device (an iPhone) in order to record the sound so that I would remember what was said. I also explained that I would delete the recordings once I was finished with them. I clarified how I would change their names and they requested which names to represent them.

I wanted to avoid any feeling of obligation on their part to participate, so I asked those who wanted to take part to write down their names on pieces of paper. I let them pick out two pieces of paper that represented male names and then two that represented female names. This also helped me avoid making a personal choice and I was able to establish a form of random sampling. I knew and had conversed with three of the case managers individually, prior to the presentation. I spoke separately with the one whom I had not conversed much with previously, to ensure that she felt comfortable. We did not know each other very well and so I wanted to give her opportunity to change her mind.

5.2.4 Interview guide and Interviews

The interview guide (see Appendix B) was divided into six sections. The first included questions that provided some basic information about who the participants were. The second section was comprised of questions that asked the participants of their experience in coming to the camp, which I expressed was optional. The third section

was composed of questions that allowed the participants to describe how they experienced the camp at present day, how they saw their lives and how they saw their futures. The fourth, fifth and sixth sections were questions that were directly related to the sense of coherence concept. The questions in the first three sections were questions that covered areas that could be considered relevant to know about their lives from their point-of-view. The questions on sense of coherence were based partly on Antonovsky's sense of coherence questionnaire in order to make concrete the concepts of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. The interview guide was approved both by my professor and then by a Questscope employee in order to ensure it was appropriate and sensitive to the well being of the participants.

The interviews were conducted the day after the presentation when the participants had been selected. The time for each interview had been decided the previous day. The interviews took place in Zaatari Camp on the Questscope site, which is also the workplace of these case managers. Initially, the aim was to find a place where it was quiet and secluded. However, this was not possible because of the other activities going on at the same time. The interviews were conducted without an interpreter and the Questscope staff did not know whom I was interviewing.

The first two interviews took place inside one of the caravans while there was some activity going on. Although we sat to the side and talked with low voices, the presence of others in the room could have affected how comfortable the participants felt. After five minutes of the third interview, the remaining interviews took place outdoors because there were too many disturbances. People around could see that we were sitting to the side but it was also a more open space so that less people could hear what was being said. The second two interviews were a little more casual and conversational than the first two, which could depend on a number of factors that are hard to determine. Perhaps it was the setting that affected how comfortable they felt or how comfortable the participants felt talking about the subject. The interviews could also have been affected by how much more comfortable I became as an interviewer. One of the participants shared after the interview that she had wondered after the presentation what sort of questions might arise. She shared that for some time, she had felt tired and wanted to share with someone. After the interview, she said she felt relaxed and thankful to share her story.

5.2.5 Complications

A few complications arose that delayed the work. The first complication was that I was dependent on the Questscope staff concerning when it was possible to go to Zaatari and conduct the interviews. Due to security and other work-related reasons, I had to wait for an opportune moment when it was alright for me to go, which took time. A second complication that arose was that of transcription. As I began to transcribe, listening to the Arabic while translating directly into English, I realized it was taking me unusually long time to do this due to my limited Arabic vocabulary skills. In order to ensure the right content of the interviews and to save time, I sent the interview recordings by e-mail to a professional transcriber in Lebanon, who would not be able to identify the participants. He transcribed directly into Arabic and then sent them to me after two weeks, which was a longer time frame than I had expected. Due to this delay, I decided to send the Arabic transcriptions to my father, who is a native Arabic speaker, and he helped me with the translations while I worked on other parts of my thesis.

5.2.6 Results & Analysis

Owing to the fact that content can get lost in translation because of language differences and human interpretation that comes with translation, I compared and made use of both the Arabic transcriptions and English translations during the process of writing out the results, especially when writing out the quotations. I compiled the participants' answers side by side and then I paraphrased and wrote out their stories. The themes were derived from the topics that came up during the interviews. The themes were ordered in the following way: first, their first feelings upon arrival to Zaatari Camp and Questscope; their feelings about the camp after a year; their view of their lives and future. The answers to the questions that were aimed directly at the sense of coherence concept (see Appendix B), were incorporated into the themes according to their relevance.

The quotes that are included in the results chapter are not verbatim because they have been translated from Arabic. They have also been slightly altered in order to make grammatical sense in English. However, they have been written in quotation marks in order to emphasize their meaning in the context. The sign /.../ indicates that a portion of the quotation has been left out. The results were coded according to the sense of coherence components and the literature review in order to facilitate the analysis. Due to the size of the results, the results were analyzed through a selection of examples from each participant. Then, each example was analyzed through the SOC concept as outlined by Antonovsky.

5.3 Validity, Reliability & Generalization

Reliability and validity are criteria used to assess the quality of research. They were initially developed for quantitative research so their relevance for qualitative research has been questioned since measurement is not the major aim (Bryman, 2012). However, reliability, or the stability of research, could be evaluated in relation to the extent in which a study can be replicated by other researchers. For example, will participants change their answers during an interview or give different answers to another interviewer? Validity is concerned with if conclusions and arguments of a study can be considered sustainable, well grounded, strong and convincing. It is closely connected to what is considered to be truth. The validity of this study is based on the concept that truth is constructed through dialogue and knowledge can be validated through discussion and different interpretations of concepts (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

For this study, validity may have been strengthened in the way that no Questscope employees were present for the interviews which also was personally requested by the interviewees. They expressed that they felt more comfortable if they could speak to me directly. Another aspect that may have increased the reliability of this study is that of getting help from native Arab speakers for the transcription and translation of the interviews. Although I am of Arab decent and can communicate in Arabic, my vocabulary skills are limited and therefore inviting Arab speakers in the process may have helped ensure the reliability of the content. The validity of the interviews may have also been strengthened by my previous encounter with the participants because I could understand their answers from a bigger context than the time allotted for the interviews. I have also attempted to document and justify every step of the research process in order to increase the transparency of this study. The validity of this study

may have been strengthened by the choice to separate the results chapter from the analysis chapter in order to differentiate the participant's answers from my analysis. The reliability may have been weakened by language differences as content may have been lost in translation. In addition, reliability may have been affected by my lack of experience as an interviewer and by the lack of a test interview, which could have shown which questions were not formulated well or clearly enough.

In the case of qualitative interviews and especially purposive sampling, Bryman discusses the possibilities of generalization. Can a few cases be representative for all cases? He argues that they cannot because a case study is not representative of a known population and perhaps that is the purpose. However, he mentions two arguments that can make generalization relevant for qualitative research. Instead of generalizing to a population, qualitative research can generalize the quality of the theoretical perspective used. Another function could be that the results can be seen as a broader set of recognizable features so that results from other studies with similar groups can be compared (Bryman, 2012). This has been the approach to generalization in this study because as it is a case study of a selected, relatively homogenous group, the results cannot be generalized to the bigger population of Zaatari Camp or to other refugees. However, the results of this study may be able to test the quality of the theoretical perspective as an analysis tool when exploring the experiences of people in difficult circumstances.

5.4 Ethical Considerations

The author Alan Bryman (2012) discusses four ethical principles that need to be taken into consideration when conducting social research. Research is considered by most to be unacceptable if it is likely that harm can come to participants. By harm, he means physical and psychological harm, such as stress or loss of self-esteem. This can be addressed by maintaining confidentiality of their identity and answers. To address this, I have evaluated that the level of trust established with the case managers and with Questscope can ensure that the study can be conducted with confidence that harm to participants can be avoided. I have valued that my previous contact with the Syrians is especially important because they have seen and interacted with me over time and may therefore feel more comfortable with me. However, I am aware that previous contact can also affect how they feel expected to answer. In order to ensure the anonymity of the participants, I have changed their names and removed identifiable details. In order to ensure informed consent, I asked permission: first, from Questscope staff, then the case managers as a group, which led to the voluntary participation of the case managers. To address the aspect of privacy invasion, I have expressed both during the presentation and the interviews that the participants are free to refuse questions, they feel uncomfortable answering. I have also tried to explain, as clearly as possible, the study's aim and how their answers are used.

6. Results

6.1 Presentation of the Participants

The names have been changed and some details have been left out in order to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

Amira is 27 years old. She had just started studying at university when she fled Syria with her mother, siblings and uncle's family. She loves music and had a dream to learn how to play piano. She has been in Zaatari Camp for one year and two months. She has been working with Questscope for a total of five months.

Ahed is 25 years old. In Syria, he finished his university degree and worked as a teacher. He loves traveling and reading. He fled Syria with his family. He has been in Zaatari Camp for a year and a month. He has been working with Questscope for a year and a few days.

Yasmina is 23 years old. In Syria, she was studying at university. She came to Zaatari Camp a year ago with her husband and she has been working for Questscope for about a year.

Karam is 24 years old. In Syria, he was working at a store and studying at university. He came to Zaatari Camp with his family but since his arrival, he has met friends and other acquaintances he knew from Syria. He has been in the camp for one year and ten days and with Questscope for about a year.

6.2 First Feelings Upon Arrival to Zaatari Camp and Questscope

Because of the fear and panic she had experienced on her journey, Amira says she had felt relief once she had arrived at the border. However, at Zaatari Camp, she had to share a small caravan with her family and her uncle's family causing her to become distressed and unsettled. She says that although she is usually a calm person, she became very angry and frustrated. Seeing the conditions and situation of the camp makes her wish she was still in the state of fear fleeing Syria, which to her would have been more bearable than staying in the miserable camp. She wonders what life in the future will be like when the duration of their stay in the camp is so uncertain.

At the beginning, Amira had worked with another organization and she had loved the work with children but eventually she felt that she had to leave because she no longer felt comfortable working there. She had, then, started with Questscope, which she had been connected to through another case manager.

"If you do not make an effort no one will help you."

At QS, she feels the work atmosphere is relaxing and enjoyable even if they at times feel pressure. Amira continues to work at Questscope not so much for the organization in itself but because she prefers to work rather than staying home and being unproductive. One thing she does not like is the feeling she has that the Jordanian Questscope staff often overlook people who do not work as they should. She wants to be perceived as a person who works hard, is productive and does not waste time. She would like to see the QS case managers and mentors improve as a team and learn to work together. All the same, she describes how she does not have other opportunities to pass the time. She comes to Questscope to find friendship and talk to others. She feels less lonely at work than at home. When she does not have contact with her family in Syria that is when she says she feels extreme loneliness. At first, she had felt frightened to go out among people in the camp because she had not expected the refugee camp to be like it is. While leaving Syria, she had pictured coming to the border to find a forest and beyond that some houses built with concrete

and stones. She had never expected to travel by bus so far from home, only to end up in the middle of the desert.

“I never imagined that we would be in a place like this”

She concludes that the reason why she had decided to get employed had been to change her mood and to avoid staying at home. At first she had felt scared, as nothing seemed familiar but the more she comes to QS, the less scared she feels.

Yasmina says that her initial feeling of the camp had been shock. She had wondered how they could live in a place where the conditions of tents in the middle of the desert makes it look so rough and unbearable. With the commencement of work with QS, Yasmina says she felt it had given her a chance to forget her misery. She feels that her life and thoughts needed to be occupied with other things than the melancholy of her situation. She says that if she had not found employment right away then she would have been depressed and might have returned to Syria.

“As time passed, I started to forget my misery. I did not give myself a chance to feel sorry for my past”.

Ahed describes that upon arrival, he had felt out of place. He had felt troubled when crossing the border, thinking he might never return back to Syria. He could not get used to the reality of living in a camp nor the

“/.../something called a refugee. In Syria, we never expected this would happen to us”.

Ahed continues his narrative by describing how confusing and problematic it had been upon arrival because nothing was familiar inside the camp. The procedures, how things operate or how to find food had not been known. He had not known what to do or who to turn to. He explains how he feels that the Syrians arrived at the camp, dropped off in the middle of a desert and are expected to fend for themselves. He had begun by exploring the camp but in a place where nothing is familiar, he had gotten tired. He had started to investigate who was responsible and how things worked in the camp. He had started searching for a job and although, he had gone from place to place, he had felt that no one cared for his situation. He feels that as refugees, they are not supposed to look for work or do anything productive. Instead, they are expected to simply stay inside their tents.

“/.../ as a refugee, you only need food and sleep”.

When Ahed came to Zaatari, he had one thing on his mind. He had heard that there were schools in the camp and he thought he could get employed with the help of his certificate and accreditation but it did not work out as he had hoped. Many NGOs had not been offering jobs to Syrians until he came across Questscope, which is one of a few things that for Ahed made Questscope stand out in comparison to other organizations.

“They [Jordanian QS staff] really care and identify with the suffering of the refugees. If there is something I like about Questscope, it is the attitude of the staff. /.../ Even though they are my supervisors, I see them as my friends”.

He also feels that there is humility among the staff, even among the head of staff, and that no distinction is made between Arab nationals and foreigners so that he does not feel like a strange person or that others are more special than he is. He does not feel that there are special areas only accessible to certain staff based on levels of responsibility or that they, the Syrians, are limited to certain areas. He has encountered other NGOs where staff are treated differently and hold different privileges depending on whether they are Syrian or foreign. For example, a Syrian may not be allowed to enter a certain caravan or to express an opinion. At Questscope, he feels free to express his opinions and to even point out mistakes made. In fact, he experiences that people welcome and accept positive criticism.

“Even if someone makes a mistake, they give them a second chance, sometimes many chances /.../ What I have learnt is that we should give others a second chance. We should not judge people from their first mistakes or even from the first impression. We should communicate, be patient and walk with them even if they make mistakes. This is what I love about Questscope, they make me feel like there is family, that there are friends”

Ahed feels that he has found himself within the work of Questscope because he feels he has been given a chance to discover his talents and abilities. He feels that the Syrians are encouraged to take initiative and are supported to achieve what they want. He feels that the workshops, he has been appointed to train others with, also benefit him as they relate to his life experiences. He feels equipped with more knowledge and many new friendships with people from different regions of Syria.

“There is a nice motto that I like within Questscope, and that is to put others first. This means a lot to me. They give people a chance to become leaders”

When Karam first arrived, although insecure in the new situation, he had thought of himself as strong and able to make any place his home, wherever it may be. He had thought to himself that he must be strong and he must succeed, whether inside Zaatari or outside it, even if he had to go to another country. He adds, however, that he realizes that no matter where a person travels to and no matter how comfortable a person may feel in that new place, nothing can replace one’s home country.

“I have a principal in life, that any person can determine how he lives, it is the person who creates the place and not the place that makes the person. The person can turn any place into paradise or else miserable like hell. Life is short, and I must live it no matter what happens”.

Karam describes that in the beginning, most of his time had been spent searching for job opportunities in the camp but quickly, he discovered that most organizations did not hire highly qualified people but rather hired people who had connections on the inside. A lot of people had received jobs, he says, that they are not qualified for while others who are qualified had work as day laborers, such as building tents. He had started working with Questscope as a volunteer but then he had stayed on, as he likes the work with children.

“/.../I feel like we are family, the other colleagues and I /.../ I really like the work atmosphere here at Quest”

6.3 Life in Camp: One Year After Arrival

Ahed analyzes the reasons for why he is in Zaatari. He says that perhaps it could be because of his own choice to flee, or from a religious standpoint, perhaps it is a test of patience inflicted by God but it could also be caused by the mistakes of others. He begins to describe and discuss the internal and world politics leading up to the war. He sees the war as something that several parties in Syria had interests to start even before the revolution. He goes on to say how the powerful countries of the world have the ability to stop the war if they wanted to. Ahed says he is worried about the future and that he cannot deny it.

“There is a limit to every act of aggression. Sometimes it lasts 20 days or a month but in the end, it has to stop. But I believe this is an ethnic religious war that is going on. It is not merely between the government and the people but rather the people are fighting each other. This is what makes it hard for other countries to intervene and stop it /.../ But the regular citizens are paying the price with their blood. It is not difficult for them to destroy Syria altogether and wipe out 27 million people, only to replace them with other people to settle in the land. No one cares about the existing people of the land. This is what scares me about the war prolonging”

Ahed gives no credit to any organization or country for the changes going on in Zaatari Camp. He says that it is the Syrians who are developing the camp by establishing shops, the market place, maintaining the hygiene of toilets and converting construction caravans and containers into semi-permanent living homes. It has changed due to the efforts of the Syrians. He says that if it had been up to the camp managers, they would have returned it to the way it had been, to a camp like the camps in Somalia and Sudan. He sees the Syrians as a proud and strong people that do not stop but instead keep moving on with life. Although Ahed says he is gaining experience by spending most of his days and time at Questscope with people and children, he says that it is very difficult to come to terms with being inside a refugee camp.

“My presence inside the camp is very difficult. Yes, I am learning a lot of new skills but from my point of view, I am losing /.../ I am losing a lot of what I had hoped to achieve in my life. Time passes by, yes I gain new experiences but I am missing out on a lot of other things. I am losing days and opportunities”

Ahed says he needs to know how genuine his friends are, both during times when they agree but also when they disagree, before he can share personal secrets with them. A friend may be a good friend but if they have not had any arguments or disagreements, how can he know if in the future the friend will not go and share his secrets with others? Although he would like to share with others, he prefers to keep many issues private. Ahed likes to sit for himself and think through situations when he encounters challenges. He listens to music and does not want anyone to bother him. He does not think that there are any problems that are impossible to solve. There may be things that are difficult to solve but in one way or another, whether on his own or with the help of others, solutions always present themselves with time. He says that the people who give him strength to face difficulties are the true friends who he senses understand his feelings, who can tell if he is hurting or in trouble and then come to help. This gives him optimism and strength.

Ahed does not like making mistakes but rather likes to be organized and to work hard. The friends that mean most to him are those who he feel he can talk openly with such

as serious issues. A sense of trust is important to him in a relationship. Being with the children and working alongside others who have a genuine desire to help makes him happy. He likes trying to help others fulfill their desires.

Yasmina says simply:

“We came as refugees. We know that we are refugees. No matter what comfort and aid other people try to provide we feel like refugees and strangers away from home. This is not our land, or country, and we came here as refugees”

Although Yasmina says that living conditions in the camp have improved since the beginning, she says she still feels that she is not meant to be there. She does not like to think about her situation too much because life is difficult inside the camp and she says she would not be able to live if she does not try to occupy her mind with other things. If anything good has happened to her, she says that work with QS has benefitted her by giving her experiences even in spite of difficult circumstances.. On the other hand, Yasmina least likes the problems she has to face on a daily basis. Problems at work are perhaps necessary, she reasons, because they help her grow. All the same, even if she senses she can gain life experiences from them, she does not like when small difficulties become big problems, such as she feels arise at home where her big family are all living under the same roof. However, she says that she realizes that she is not the only one who feels under pressure. So she feels she must be considerate and try to avoid conflict to the best of her ability.

Seeing the ability of people around her to handle their situation is for Yasmina a way to go on because it as though they are together in this. Together they can handle the situation because they are enduring the suffering together. The employment opportunity at Questscope is an important form of support, according to Yasmina. As she, along with the other case managers and mentors, help and empower others, she feels assistance is also available to her when in need. She says that she feels like she is doing the right thing and that it is meaningful to help others.

Yasmina says that she has many close friends, within Questscope and among her family members, with whom she can share her worries and inner feelings that she cannot share in public. For matters she can control, she makes her decisions by thinking and analyzing the situation. Depending on the difficulty of the situation, she either looks for ways to tackle the problem or if she cannot find a solution, she seeks the advice of others around her. She sees difficulties as something that she is able to deal with, if not her own then at least together with the help of others, as she considers there is always someone available to help.

“The problems that we have encountered here in Zaatari are, shall we say, have to do with daily necessities so we have been able to deal with them. But the biggest challenge is that we are here and only time can tell if our reality will change”

The best part of her day is laughter, she says. She loves to laugh, smile and to enjoy life. The person she loves to spend most time with is her husband. Because they are not only husband and wife but also friends, she feels she can tell him everything, which in turn strengthens their relationship, she says. With him by her side, she feels he is continually a source of strength in her life. Another source of motivation and strength are the activities that she is responsible for as a part of her work with QS.

Although there are a lot of organized activities such as playing games or making handcrafts that the girls enjoy, sometimes just spending time together and laughing can be enough to help them develop friendships and bring them closer to each other. Seeing the girls forget their hardship and have fun means a lot to Yasmina. When she sees the smiles on the girls' faces then she feels she can forget and be better.

“I love these days, they are special times for them and for me. When I see these girls enjoying themselves, laughing and playing together, I feel that I am doing something right. It means a lot to see their smiles, it makes me feel that these activities are helpful”

When asked if she has experienced anything pleasant since arriving to Zaatari Camp, Amira says there is nothing.

“This is no life. Zaatari is not life /.../ No one cares, there are no real services, no incentives to go on in life and nothing that encourages you to do anything”

Amira says she feels she does not understand why she is in Zaatari Camp. When her brother tells her that there has never been a camp that has closed down, once opened, the idea depresses her. She says that if she ever had any hope or optimism, then that statement diminishes it. She expresses that she feels upset when she sees people in the camp building houses with ceramic tiles because it looks like people are trying to settle down and build something permanent. She tells an anecdote of when she had first arrived and her mother had gone to the market to buy basic necessities such as blankets, plates, cups and other items for the household. She says she would get upset and ask her mother, “Why are you buying these things? How long do you expect to be here?” She says her mother would convince her by saying, “If we stay one day or a hundred years, we still need these things for daily use”. At times, she says she feels relaxed and can make clear conclusions but other times, she feels confused and troubled. It depends on the situation such as, just one week previously, when her brother-in-law had to undergo an operation while her sister was getting married. She describes that day as a difficult day because the wedding party had not been as festive as it would have been had they been in Syria and her brother-in-law's operation had been an overshadowing element. As she talks, she becomes upset and says that she feels sorry for the bad luck and bad circumstances her two sisters have endured.

When asked if there is anyone with whom she can share her deepest feelings and needs with, Amira answers that there is but not in the camp. She talks with her sister, who lives in Amman, the capital of Jordan but other than her, she does not really have anyone that she confides in. She describes that she misses the closeness she had once shared with her siblings in Syria. She says that there may be some problems that she discusses with certain people but her inmost feelings, such as being bothered by someone, she tends to keep to her self. She says that she does not like to confront people but rather tries to let go and avoid the thing that bothers her. On the other hand, she says that when she is faced with a problem, she tries to deal with it right away.

Amira describes the training workshops and retreats with Questscope has helped her by giving her tools to overcome difficulties and giving her strength for the future. The way she sees problems is that she can handle dealing with most of her problems and she cannot imagine a major catastrophe ever happening to her.

“There is no problem too difficult to solve or which I cannot face head on. The only thing that is unsolvable is death and you cannot bring back life. This is the only impossibility but as to other things, if you think clearly enough then you can find a solution”

According to Amira, the best part of her day is when she spends time with her nephews and nieces because talking to them helps her forget her hardships, at least for a moment. The workshops and the responsibility she has been entrusted with at QS she describes has built her confidence. Organizing and preparing activities for the mentees is something that Amira finds a sense of fulfillment and hope in because she feels that her work is rewarding when she sees the mentees enjoying themselves.

Karam says that he is in Zaatari due to war and lack of security in Syria. He says, in general, he does not consider himself to be a fearful person. If he had been in Syria, he would not panic from the shelling because ultimately he believes that God ordains his time.

“It is up to God to determine if I have completed my mission here on earth. Time is limited and how long I live is determined by God”.

Karam says that although there are people that have come to mean a lot to him while in Zaatari and that he misses when they return to Syria, it is not possible to feel secure or settled in the camp. Even if living conditions in the camp have become a little better since the start, nothing compares to home.

“Even if all the facilities were provided like in paradise, still it is and will remain a refugee camp. But we must get used to it and we need to conform to life as if it were paradise and not hell”

What bothers Karam most is that there are no opportunities to continue university studies. He regrets that he never finished but he feels he should be content with what he has now. However, something he says still bothers him is seeing “bad” people being offered opportunities while other “respectable” people receive none. He could not accept how people with no qualifications could come to Zaatari and then act as though they were rulers and could give orders to people. Another challenge that he says he has had to face is the lack of paying job opportunities inside the camp. He says that there are not many options for him. When he started with Questscope, he has felt a lot of self-satisfaction but he wishes that he could have completed his university degree.

“No university, no degree and people do not appreciate my past experience and qualifications. Every person needs to feel appreciated, for his education and his character”

He says that sometimes he feels secure and relaxed but other times he feels worried and anxious but that it depends on the circumstances that come with every day. For example, he tells of the time when he had been on a field trip with the other case managers and he had felt happy. Being with people he likes helps him relax. Other times, he is disturbed by people who he describes have become empty on the inside and because of that cause trouble or annoy him. He says he meets many people in this state in the camp but at the end of the day, it does not bother him too much. He has hope that he will not remain in the camp.

Karam shares that the people he feels he can share the most with are his neighbor in the camp and a friend still in Syria, whom he still has contact with. He says they have developed a close friendship, like brothers. He feels that they care about him and always check up on him. He feels comforted when talking to them. When he faces challenges, Karam first tries to think it over and evaluate the situation. He thinks about where it originates from and what is its possible outcome. According to Karam, no problems are impossible to solve. He says that God does not allow a difficulty in our lives without providing a solution for it. He thinks that people should have faith in God and that there are also friends who can give good counsel. One thing that has helped him deal with challenges are the people he has met through Questscope. He likes the creativity of the staff and of the organization as a whole. He says that he has received encouragement to strive for more when he sees foreigners [some of the QS staff] speak Arabic fluently, work hard and care about them. He considers it to be an achievement that he has learnt from and that if ever he travels to a non-Arab country, he feels he knows how to treat people with respect just as others have interacted with him.

Karam most enjoys when he manages to speak and can make himself understood in English. Being able to communicate in another language, without the need of a translator, facilitates communication and gives more freedom to speak one's mind, Karam says. Socializing and spending time with people brings relief and comfort to Karam but at the end of the day, Karam longs to return home. It does not matter where you go or for how long, he considers it important to be determined to survive and not give up.

“What is important is that people should have hope, should strive to achieve and bring pride to their homeland. No matter where I travel to and no matter how far away I am from my homeland, I am Syrian. I must lift the name of Syria, even if nothing remains, not even a stone. Even if all that is left is earth and soil like a wadi [dry riverbed], I am from Syria. I must honor it and one day, God willing, I will return to Syria”

6.4 Life & Future: Fears and Hopes

When asked how they evaluate their lives as it is now and how they look at their future, Ahed answers that as it is now, his hopes in life have come to a complete stand still. He still has wishes and aspirations, as he says no human being is without them, but he feels restricted by the inability to leave the camp or travel to another country. Ahed dreads that his stay in Zaatari will last a long time, even permanently. He tells how he has heard that it is rare for a refugee camp to ever close once it has been opened. His feeling is that Zaatari will not remain as a simple camp but will become more permanent like the Palestinian camps in Jordan and Syria. He says building blocks may be allowed in order to rise up buildings and Zaatari may become a permanent dwelling place for Syrians. He speaks of his fear that the Syrian crisis will last a long time and he laments over the loss of education for people inside the camp and the seemingly lack of care from the outside world to provide it.

“The percentage of highly educated people inside the camp is high. What will happen to these? We are now entering the third year, even the fourth year for the crisis, what will happen to these young men and women? Those who arrived here with one year of university studies, should have by now completed the third year and those with three years of university studies

should have now graduated. Those with Baccalaureate degrees [high school] should now have been attending university. Who is responsible for the continued education of all these people? Who is addressing the needs of these potential students inside the camp?

Do you think it is enough simply to stay alive? To eat and sleep and finish my high school education? Is this what life is all about? I do not know if this applies to other refugee camps, it certainly does not apply to the Syrian refugees. The Syrians are not satisfied with this, they are not satisfied and we have greater dreams and aspirations. If you conduct a census, and ask some of the families why they are returning back to Syria, they would say 'please allow me to return even though I may die there but let me return back to university'. A university student, Ok, would prefer to risk dying from bomb shelling rather than to remain illiterate or uneducated.

Now look at the youth, they know there is war, death and destruction in Syria but they wish to return. They know that as a man or a woman there is a risk of getting killed /.../ but there is a pressing need to continue their education. UNICEF and other organizations, have they not thought about starting universities inside any refugee camps? Camps were established since 1948 but since then, some 50 or 60 years later, why have they not planned for providing university studies to refugees. Are we not human beings, or part of the human race? Are we second-class citizens? Or are we dealing with dictatorship regimes? This is what makes any refugee feel sad and regret living inside a refugee camp”¹

In spite of all this, Ahed trusts God that in the near future things will get better. He says they have seen the good times, have endured through bad times but in the end, a solution will be found. He says he is still determined and that a person must always strive and remain optimistic. He still hopes to complete his university studies, to travel abroad, to start a family just as he has always dreamt of before. Life will not cease to exist.

He feels that in the process of working with QS, he has not only acquired skills to help children but he has also developed as a person. Ahed hopes that in the future, he will return to Syria and be able to use what he has learnt in his work as an educator and teacher. He says that he has benefitted even for when he has children of his own. He sees how Questscope's method is applicable everywhere because children exist everywhere and all children are vulnerable to dangers, even those who live in small communities. He wonders what it would be like to apply what they have learnt in Zaatari to a big nation, such as Syria, where young and old, parents and children have suffered from traumatic experiences and live in a constant state of worry and fear. He expresses concern for how he and the other Syrians will survive through this.

“There is an expression. I am walking but I do not know where to. Yes, I am walking, moving and there are things I wish for but I do not know what the future holds for me. I am walking on this journey but will I arrive or not? Will I benefit or not? I do not know”

Amira says that if she sits down and thinks she feels that things are ok; her main concern is not where she lives but that people close to her are safe and healthy. Her biggest fear is that something will happen to people important to her, such as family who are still in Syria. She says that what she has or does not have does not matter to

¹ It has been decided to include this section as a long quote so that Ahed's lamentation on the loss of education can be understood with stronger emphasis.

her at present time. As for dreams and wishes, she has stopped thinking about these things now.

Karam says he does not know when he will return back to Syria but he looks on his time in Zaatari as a transitional and temporary period. Although he prays and hopes that he will return tomorrow or the day after, he says tomorrow brings no security. He does not expect the situation in Zaatari to improve much. Karam says that he is thankful to God no matter what but that he is afraid of the future. He is afraid he may never get a chance to complete his university degree. However, he also expresses that he has hope to travel to another country, a non-Arab country because he feels that he may find more respect for people there. Karam describes that his personality and character give him confidence for his future. He considers himself to be a person who can handle challenges and overcome difficulties and that he is creative. Even if at times, he can find it hard to finish what he has started, he feels that he can be creative and successful.

“Anyone can get an idea and God gave each of us a mind to use. Each is able to think, make logical conclusions and be creative but few are able to execute and bring the idea to reality”

He means that in some ways the conditions in the camp do not differ from those in Syria, such as if you are able to connect well with those of power and influence, then it gets you farther than your qualifications or creativity. There are no human rights or fair opportunities.

Although Yasmina feels there is no way to know what is in the future, she hopes for the best as there is no one who does not hope for better things. All the same, there is no stability, no sense of security or settlement. She expresses that she still feels affected by the fact that they had to flee from Syria and come to Zaatari as refugees. She does not expect the effects to go away even a year from now. She says, though, that she is not really thinking about it now because she tries to leave it in the past. The camp and the services provided are more familiar now but it is not home. Yasmina feels security in being close to her family but she worries for family in Syria. She continually thinks about them and wishes they could be near her. She expresses that even though she is not in immediate danger, it is hard to know that she has family in Syria who are enduring attacks such as gunfire and shelling.

“Right now it is fine, but there are many things that I long for. But I try to adapt to whatever is available here. I must be strong in order to survive, as there are both good times and bad times. I think of this situation as a test or trial that I must live and benefit from. That is how I evaluate my life”

She hopes to be back in Syria one day but she is worried about her future. She wonders what will happen to her in the future. Will they be in Zaatari for a long time?

“I am also very worried that I may not return back to Syria to continue my studies, to return back to a normal life, to our home /.../ I am worried about the future but I try to be optimistic”

7. Analysis

In this chapter, the results are analyzed using the theoretical perspective and the literature review. The presence of the three SOC components is analyzed through examples from two participants in each of the first three sections respectively (7.1-7.3). Section 7.4 analyzes the correlation of the three components in each participant. This section also includes the analysis of the aspects that the participants identified as possibly contributing towards a strong sense of coherence. Section 7.5 comprises of an analysis of the results in relation to the literature review. The page numbers are references to pages in the results chapter.

7.1 Comprehensibility

High comprehensibility (high C) indicates that a person makes cognitive sense of stimuli that confront one, whether internally or externally, so that it is perceived as information that is ordered, structured and consistent rather than as chaos, perplexing or incomprehensible (Antonovsky, 1987). When sharing about how he came in contact with QS, Karam shows signs of high comprehensibility when he reasons that it was difficult to find a job because most people, according to him, were being hired on the basis of their social connections and not necessarily that they owned any relevant qualifications. Even in the chaos of the camp, Karam recognizes that there is a system in place that prevents qualified people from getting hired and allows unqualified people to receive jobs instead (p.27).

Amira rationally infers that no one will help her if she does not make an effort. Perhaps, she deduces that she cannot expect others to help her if she does not first help herself. Although she had been scared, she figures that it must be better to actively seek employment rather than stay at home doing nothing. It could be interpreted that she seeks out the resource of employment for the purpose of dealing with her loneliness and boredom in the caravan, which could be a sign of seeking out high manageability. This might further show that she has some sense of high meaningfulness because she thinks it is worth investing effort in leaving her caravan to seek out work (p.28).

7.2 Manageability

High manageability (high MA) signifies the degree in which a person perceives that there are resources, both personal traits/strategies and relationships, available to them to help them deal with life's demands (Antonovsky, 1987). Traces of high manageability can be found among the participants' stories such as when Yasmina explains that the QS work has been a good resource to help keep her mind off of her difficult situation. She seems to be aware that working is a way for her to deal with feelings of depression and hopelessness over her situation. She further identifies her husband, close friends and other significant people at Questscope, as people she feels are available to help her when she needs assistance. Although she also realizes that she is capable to think of solutions on her own, she feels that there are people in her proximity who are ready to step in when she cannot manage on her own (p.24, 28).

Ahed also shows awareness of resources in his proximity and within himself that help him deal with challenges. Relating to work, he describes the QS staff as friends, who understand and identify with his plight as a refugee. Friends who understand him are people who give him strength to handle his situation. Training sessions he provides for mentors have not only helped him empower others but have also benefitted him

personally because he feels that they relate to his own life experiences. He also seems to identify an ability within himself find solutions to problems because he says that he takes time to think the situation through (p.25, 27).

7.3 Meaningfulness

High meaningfulness (high ME) represents the extent to which a person feels motivated to face challenges and worth investing time and energy in because they result in emotional meaning (Antonovsky, 1987). An example of how Karam's story may include a sense of high meaningfulness is that he finds meaning in learning English as he sees how it could help him start anew in another country, if he does not return to Syria. This could indicate that he is motivated to learn English because he sees it as a way out of Zaatari Camp (p.31).

Another example of high meaningfulness among the participants could be found in Yasmina's description of her work with QS. She describes that in spite of her hard circumstances, she feels that the activities with mentees that she is responsible for helps her forget her hardship, even for just a while. Seeing the girls' smiles means a lot to Yasmina because she feels she is doing something right by helping others forget about their hardships (p.28-29).

7.4 Sense of Coherence

In the development of a strong sense of coherence, Antonovsky (1987) seems to imply that the SOC components are not fixed but rather are prone to change depending on the strength or weakness of the remaining components. According to Antonovsky, the presence of a strong SOC, or a view on life as one that includes aspects of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness, is vital for a person to maintain and move towards a more healthy state of mind. The results of this study could exemplify how SOC is not a stagnant state of being but rather can change over time depending on circumstances. In a general sense, all of the participants' SOC seem to vary significantly as they describe different times of their lives which can be illustrated in the following themes: the beginning time upon their arrival, the present time of their daily lives and the future time as they expect or hope for. All of the participants include in their stories, the four significant aspects (inner feelings, immediate interpersonal relations, major activity and existential issues) that Antonovsky reasons are impossible to be without in a strong SOC.

Upon arrival to the camp, Amira describes how seeing camp conditions had made her wish she was still fleeing Syria in a state of fear because staying in the camp felt, at the time, so unbearable. This could make it seem as though her SOC is weak because she cannot seem to make sense of the reasons for being in Zaatari (low C), she views the conditions as unbearable (low MA) and she would rather flee than try to live in camp, in other words she does not see how any part of camp life can motivate her to move forward (low ME). However, in spite of her fear to go outside of her shelter in Zaatari to meet people, she shows agency by realizing that staying inside, avoiding people in camp will not help her (high C). She seeks out a sense of manageability and sense of meaningfulness by leaving the confines of her shelter and applying for jobs because she deduces that finding something to do will be better than not doing anything. Antonovsky (1987) notes that high comprehensibility combined with low manageability can lead a person to feel a strong pressure to change. The direction of

the change depends on the third component, meaningfulness. In her daily life, Amira seems to fluctuate in her SOC because while she says that she does not understand why she is in Zaatari (low C) and she says she finds no incentives to go on (low ME), she says that when a problem comes up, she deals with it and she feels that work with QS has given her tools to deal with difficulties (high MA). She also finds that QS work has given her a sense of fulfillment and reward when she sees the positive effect it has on the mentees (high ME). As for her future, Amira says that as long as her family is alright then where she lives does not matter to her. For the time being, however, she has stopped thinking about her dreams and wishes. This could indicate a high sense of comprehensibility and manageability but perhaps low meaningfulness, as she does not want to think about dreams that might motivate her to go on.

Yasmina speaks of the beginning as a time in which she was shocked and she had wondered how it was going to be possible to live in such a rough and unbearable place. These feelings could demonstrate low comprehensibility and low manageability as she could neither understand the situation nor how she was going to manage it. However, as she starts work with QS, she feels that it has helped her keep her mind off her hardship (high MA). She perceives her daily situation in Zaatari, as a refugee living in conditions that have somewhat improved although do not change her feeling of displacement. She seems to show strong SOC through high comprehensibility of her situation, as difficult as it still is. She appears to show high manageability when although she dislikes the daily problems that arise, she experiences that QS work, her husband and close friends give her strength to deal with her difficulties. In addition, she might be demonstrating high meaningfulness when she explains how the activities with the mentees give her motivation to go on because seeing them smile helps her forget and be better. On the other hand, when she talks of how she sees her life in the future, she articulates that she hopes for the best but that she still feels the effects of the flight and difficult camp conditions everyday. She displays signs of high comprehensibility as she evaluates her life and signs of high manageability as she pronounces that she tries to adapt to what is available and that there are people ready to help. Even so, she is worried for her future and wants to return (low ME).

When he first arrived, Ahed explains how he had felt out of place and confused because nothing was familiar inside the camp. He did not know what services were available (low C & low MA). However, it could be interpreted that he already then felt a sense of high meaningfulness because he was driven to understand the system of the camp and to find resources to help him deal with his difficulties as he searched for work. It would seem that in between that beginning time and the present, his SOC has changed because in his reflections of his life at present, Ahed appears to show traces of high manageability in that he feels support from QS staff but also defines an ability within himself to think of solutions to challenges he faces. The work at QS has also given him tools to deal with difficulties. In spite of daily challenges he is faced with concerning both camp conditions and life as a refugee, he looks as though he finds meaning in work with QS both as a means of purposeful activity but also because he considers it rewarding to help others fulfill their desires. Ahed gives the impression of high comprehensibility throughout his description because he continually analyzes and evaluates his situation and circumstances. Upon arrival, he describes the camp as an institution and he gives an account for many faults and points of improvement such as the food distribution. When describing his present situation, he speaks of the situation and conflict as a whole; who is to blame and what should be done by outside countries to intervene. In this way, he demonstrates a very

broad perspective. He not only mentions that the camp has somewhat improved but has come to the conclusion that it is not due to the work of the humanitarian agencies but due to the efforts of the Syrian community. Even when he talks about his future, he analyzes how the lessons and methods he has learnt with QS can be used to help other people in traumatic situations, such as in Syria. At the same time, he also laments at the loss of higher education that so many Syrians are experiencing in the camp. While he has evaluated it, he expresses how he does not understand why higher education is not available in the camp.

Karam appears to show signs of high manageability throughout his narrative. Already from the beginning, although he felt insecure, he expresses that he thought of himself as strong. No matter what the situation or wherever he is, he believes that he is able to succeed (resources within himself). He also has faith in that God is the one who ultimately ordains his life and he never allows him to go through difficulties without also providing solutions (resources beyond himself). Other resources, he mentions, as having been a source of strength to deal with difficulties but also have give him meaning for his life and future (high ME), are the people around him, friends and QS colleagues. He sees the English language and hardworking people around him as something that has given him motivation and incentive because he sees it as a way out of his situation and the camp (high ME). Like Ahed, Karam also shows high comprehensibility as he analyzes the situation of the camp, not only the lack of job opportunities but also the lack of higher educational and university opportunities. He gives the impression of high comprehensibility as he analyzes his future. He perceives his time at Zaatari as a temporary period and he does not expect Zaatari Camp to change much. Although he fears that he may never finish his university degree, he says that his personality and character give him confidence that he is creative and can overcome the challenges he faces (high ME & high MA).

7.5 In Relation to Literature Review

The results of this study show some resemblance to the results of previous research conducted. Many aspects that are included in the participants' descriptions of camp conditions coincide with aspects that researchers have written about. To begin with, the approach of this study to interview a seemingly homogenous selective group and yet still find that each person have various experiences concurs with Malkki's (1995) claim that the refugee experience is not something that can be generalized as though it were the same for every person who endured it. Although these participants are in the same context and experience distress over it, as Malkki also writes, their stories vary. Their stories also imply what Deardorff (2009) wrote about refugee camp life including restrictions on freedom of movement and self-reliance, which leads to overdependence on aid. These can be seen for example in Ahed's and Karam's descriptions of difficulties in not being allowed job opportunities and being expected to be content solely with food and shelter. The studies conducted by Dudley (2010) and Sanyal (2011) revealing that in spite of passivity caused by camp conditions, refugees had shown agency and had constructed and rebuilt their environments to adapt to their needs and defy their state of victimization. This can also be seen through the participants' descriptions of how the Syrians in the Zaatari community are those who have improved the conditions of the camp, not the humanitarian agencies.

According to Boss's (2006) study, religious beliefs, realizing that things are out of their control and finding ways to accept their situation, as well as maintaining relationships were distinctive factors found in resilient individuals. Karam expresses that he is not afraid of death because God ordains his life, and he will determine when his time on earth is completed. Although the participants express a sense of comprehensibility over their situation, they also say that the future is out of their control and no one knows what will happen. Relationships are also an evident aspect in the participants' stories that represent sources of strength and hope.

In comparison to other refugees' own reflections, the participants' experiences demonstrate that their stories vary and do not necessarily involve the same struggles. However, aspects such as trying to obtain livelihoods, lack of hope for their situation and their future, attempting to create normality in the midst of uncertainty, desire to be involved in activities with purpose and worry for their families seem to be aspects that were also present among these participants' stories (IMC, 2012; Tanle, 2013; Pavlish, 2007; Gren, 2009; Drumm, Pittman & Perry, 2004).

8. Discussion

8.1 Discussion of Results

The aim of this study has been to acquire deeper knowledge of how four Syrian case managers describe and experience their lives and situation in Zaatari Refugee Camp. In accordance with the results of this study, these case managers describe their life situations in Zaatari Camp as difficult. They were not prepared for the rough camp conditions that they continually face and everyday, they long to return to Syria, their homeland. They describe how it is difficult to feel that their lives have been put on hold, that they cannot continue their university educations or pursue their aspirations. Though there are many uncertainties in their lives, the participants' descriptions include elements of high comprehensibility in that they have evaluated their situation: how they came to Zaatari Camp, how the system of a refugee camp functions and how they are expected to be content with being given food and shelter. Their descriptions also include elements of high manageability in that they show awareness of coping strategies and supportive activities and relationships that help them deal with the difficulties they face in a refugee camp. Several of the participants see problems as something they are able to deal with by thinking through and evaluating the situation. They perceive that there are resources within themselves and in others, such as their friends, QS employees and God. There are also traces of high meaningfulness when they speak of how their work with Questscope has given them motivation to move forward. For example, Ahed considers people at Questscope to be family and friends who give him second chances and give him a place to grow in spite of the circumstances. Another participant, Yasmina, says that seeing the mentees' smiling faces, as they carry on their activities, helps her forget her hardship, if even for a moment.

Their stories demonstrate that they have a strong sense of coherence in the way that they perceive their lives. On the other hand, their descriptions also display how SOC is not a stagnant state of mind but rather that it is prone to change depending on the circumstances and the ability of the individual to grow and develop, even in harsh environments. People that the participants mention as possibly contributing towards

the development of a strong SOC are within Questscope's work, such as employees, other case managers, but also family members, neighbors and friends who are with them in the camp or remain in Syria. The QS training sessions, staff retreats and activities they organize for mentees are among the activities that the participants speak mostly as contributing towards high comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness.

Although the importance of conducting a study, such as this one, has been justified through the argument that it cannot be assumed that all refugees experience refugee camps in the same way or that it causes the same effects, it is interesting that there are elements of the participants' stories that can relate to previous research conducted in refugee camps. For example, Deardorff (2009) claimed that the way in which refugee camps are administered often cause passivity and dependence on aid. This is reflected in the participants' frustration at being expected to be content with aid distribution and not search for work or do anything productive while they wait in Zaatari Camp. The participants also share that they have a desire for meaningful activities which also reflects how Kosovar refugees in Albania also felt (Drumm, Pittman & Perry, 2004). It is interesting that the participants point this out because perhaps there is something that can be done, from a social work perspective, to improve camp conditions for people who are seeking refuge. Another interesting aspect that the participants' speak about is the desire to continue their university educations. Is this something that can be implemented in a refugee camp, especially as many refugee camps become permanent establishments?

The use of the sense of coherence concept when analyzing the way that these Syrian refugees perceive lives could be useful for finding aspects in vulnerable people's lives that show elements of agency, strength and resilience despite circumstances that speak otherwise. Could the SOC concept be implemented as a tool in social work to ensure that refugees are not only seen as victims who receive aid passively but who also are encouraged to be active and engaged people and who can do more than just survive, as some of the participants feel with Questscope? As SOC seems to be a fluid perspective on life, it would be thought-provoking to find out how in a year from now, these same case managers perceive their lives. What has changed or has anything changed? Do the factors that give them a strong SOC now, be the same factors a year from now? It would also be interesting to find out how other Syrians perceive their lives. Perhaps those who have also experienced life in a refugee camp but have come a step further and have found refuge in developed countries, such as Sweden. Are there traces of strong SOC in their lives as well and what factors do their experience as contributing towards it?

8.2 Discussion of Method: Strengths and limitations

I have found it to be a strength in the method that interviews were conducted as opposed to other forms of research because I was able to explore the individual experiences of these case managers. By interviewing these case managers, I was able to find out details that may have not been revealed in any other method. Because they expressed comfort in that a QS staff did not accompany us, individual interviews also made it possible to keep their identity private, as opposed to a focus group or observations where it would have been more evident who the participants were.

A disadvantage with using semi-structured interviewing is that the questions sometimes became a hindrance because I became so preoccupied with the questions that I sometimes, did not follow up on their answers and I regretted this later as I was writing out the results. This could also be caused by my inexperience as an interviewer. Language and the abstract theoretical concepts were two elements that could have affected the validity of this study's results. Misunderstanding and an inability at times to formulate questions properly, could have affected the participant's answers.

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APPENDIX A: Presentation

- Hello, I want to ask you if you would like to tell me your story.
- I am writing a paper for my university and I would like to tell your stories because I think they are important. I want people to know your experiences but also to know how strong you are. I want to ask you about your experience in the camp and how you see your lives now. I will not ask about your experience with the war because I do not want to make you think of bad memories. But if you want to tell me that is up to you. I would like to know what helps you in camp life.
 - What gives you strength, what gives you hope?
 - How do you see your life?
 - What is important to you?
 - What helps you handle your situation?
 - What has made a difference to you?

- What are your fears and hopes?
- What external or internal factors do you think have given you strength?
- Thank you so much for your time! You are strong and an inspiration to me! If I were in your situation, I would not be able to handle it as you do. (Personal words, because I want them to know that I really respect them, and that I really care about their wellbeing).
- The interview will be maximum an hour with about 30 questions.
- During the interview, Xxxxx (an employee at Questscope) will be with me to help me translate if either of us don't understand, is that ok? If there is something you would like to tell me alone, you can do that as well.
- I will record the interview on my phone so that I can remember what we talked about. I will then, together with Xxxxx, write it down and come back and ask for your permission to use it. After I am done with it, I will delete it on my phone so no one can hear it.
- I will also change your names in the report so that no one outside of Questscope staff in Zaatari will know who you are. You can choose the names you would like to have.
- If at any time during the interview, you feel uncomfortable or don't want to answer question, we can stop the interview or you can say pass. The most important thing to me is your wellbeing. I will ask you if you want to answer before every question as well. And at the end I will ask again if there is any part in the interview that you don't want me to write.
- If you feel that you would like to talk to someone after we are finished, because you feel that it brought bad feelings or thoughts, (Xxxx) or (Xxxx) or someone you trust in Questscope will be available.
- Do you still want to do this?
- Is there anything you want to ask about, or you don't understand before we start?

APPENDIX B: Interview Guide

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. How old are you?
2. Did you have a job or were you studying in Syria? What sort of job or what were you studying?
3. How long have you been with Questscope?
4. Tell me something about yourself, whatever you like.

COMING TO CAMP (Now I will ask you some questions about how you came to camp, if you feel at any time that you don't want to answer say pass)

5. How long have you been here in Zaatari?
6. Did you come with someone you know from before? Who?

7. **OPTIONAL:** Only if you feel comfortable, would you like to tell me something about your feelings when you came to camp and how it was in the beginning.

LIVING IN CAMP

8. Who do you live with in the camp?
9. How do you feel now about living in camp?
10. How do you see your life as it is now?
11. What made you join Questscope?
12. What made you continue in the program?
13. Can you tell me about something difficult you feel like you've had to deal with since you came?
14. Can you tell me about something pleasant that you've experienced since you came?
15. What are your fears?
16. What are your hopes?

SENSE OF COHERENCE

Comprehensibility

17. Do you feel like you can understand why you are living in Zaatari Camp? Can you explain to me?
18. What do you usually do during your day?
19. Do you feel like you can expect to know what your day will look like tomorrow?
20. Do you feel like your feelings are mostly stable, or do you feel like your feelings are mostly chaotic?
21. Are there people or activities that you feel like help you see your life in a bigger perspective? What or whom?

Manageability

22. Do you feel like you are able to do what you plan during a day?
23. Do you feel that there are people around you whom you can trust and you can tell what you really feel? Who?

24. How much do you feel that you can control what happens in your day?
25. What do you do when you face difficulties?
26. How do you see difficulties? (Are they something you can overcome or impossible to deal with?)
27. Are there people or activities in camp that you feel like have given you strength to deal with difficulties you have faced in camp? What or whom?

Meaningfulness

28. What parts of your day do you dislike the most?
29. What parts of your day do you look forward to the most?
30. Which people in your life in Zaatari do you like spending time with most?
31. What is it about your time with these people that you like?
32. What activities during your day do you feel are meaningful?
33. What is it about these activities that you feel make your day/life important?