

SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF SOMALI REFUGEES IN
SOUTHERN FINLAND

‘Young Males’ Perspective’

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ABSTRACT

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Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki Unit, Degree Program in Social Services.

This qualitative study was aimed to look at the social integration of young male Somali refugees who came to Finland as unaccompanied minors and sought asylum. We aimed to look at their social relationships and their view on Finnish culture. Another objective of the study was to know whether presence and absence of family members has any influence on the integration of youths.

The data was collected by direct personal interviews in the southern Finland. Five young males aged between 19-21 who came to Finland as unaccompanied minors were interviewed. Thematic narrative analysis was used to analyze the interview data.

The results of the study suggest in spite of the difficult transition experiences, most of the participants feel that they are integrated into Finnish society. They have been able to make Finnish friends through school, work, parties and social networks but closer social interaction is mostly with other immigrants and not with the native Finnish people. The participants have a desire for assimilation into Finnish culture while retaining certain aspects of culture of origin i.e. religion.

In conclusion, our data suggests that participants are actively trying to get professional education and have taken major steps in terms of language and employment however; social aspect of the integration can be questioned. Participants have pointed out towards the reserved behavior of the Finns as a major reason for having superficial social ties and interaction with them.

Key word: Integration, social integration, acculturation, refugees, asylum, unaccompanied minors

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Diakonia Ammattikorkeakoulu, Helsingin yksikkö, Sosiaalialan koulutusohjelma, sosionomi (AMK).

Tämän kvalitatiivisen tutkimuksen tarkoitus oli tarkastella nuorten miespuolisten somalipakolaisten sosiaalista integraatiota Suomalaiseen yhteiskuntaan. He tulivat maahan alaikäisinä ja ilman huoltajaa. Tarkoituksenamme oli tarkastella heidän sosiaalisia suhteitaan ja suhtautumista suomalaiseen kulttuuriin. Halusimme myös selvittää onko perheenjäsenten poissaololla merkitystä kotoutumisessa.

Tutkimuksen tiedot kerättiin henkilökohtaisten haastatteluiden avulla jotka tehtiin Etelä-Suomessa. Viittä 19-21 vuotiasta, ilman huoltajaa suomeen saapunutta nuorta miestä haastateltiin tutkimusta varten. Temaattisen kerronnan analyysia käytettiin haastatteluista saatujen tietojen analysoimiseen.

Tutkimuksen tulosten perusteella suurin osa osallistujista tunsu kotoutuneensa Suomeen vaikeasta siirtymävaiheesta huolimatta. Heillä on suomalaisia tuttuja koulun, töiden ja harrastusten kautta mutta lähempi sosiaalinen kanssakäyminen tapahtuu pääasiallisesti muiden maahanmuuttajien kanssa. Osallistujilla on halu sopeutua suomalaiseen kulttuuriin ja säilyttää samalla jotain asioita omasta kulttuuristaan kuten esimerkiksi uskonto.

Tutkimustuloksemme osoittavat että tutkimukseemme osallistuneet henkilöt osallistuvat ammatilliseen koulutukseen, ovat oppineet kieltä ja työllistyneet. Kotoutumisen sosiaalinen puoli voidaan kuitenkin kyseenalaistaa. Osallistujien mielestä suomalaisten varautunut käytös on merkittävä este lähempien sosiaalisten suhteiden syntymiselle.

Asiasanat: Kotouminen, integraatio, sosiaalinen integraatio, akkulturaatio, pakolaiset, turvapaikka, alaikäiset ilman huoltajaa.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Migration is not a new phenomenon. It has existed throughout the human history, although its significance has varied. People have been moving from one place to another or from one continent to another since the ancient times. It is linked with a changing climate, search for food, conquest and colonization, exploitation and suffering, freedom and liberation, banishment and exile. Migrants have been victims and heroes, tyrants or just ordinary people.

People have been immigrating into Finland for various reasons such as: work, education, relationship, for humanitarian reasons and so on. Since 2001, Finland has received 750 (see table 3) quota refugees yearly on humanitarian grounds. Many people come to Finland seeking asylum and later gain refugee status.

The main participants in our thesis are young Somali males who came to Finland as unaccompanied minors without a guardian or acquaintances and sought asylum on humanitarian grounds. After receiving the positive decisions from the authority, they received the refugee status and went through various integration processes. In this paper, we studied the social integration of young Somali male refugees into Finnish society. The research question of the study is: how well young Somali male refugees are socially integrated into Finnish society? What is their view on a future in Finland?

The tough initial phases of transition for the participants have been one of the reasons for us to include them in our research. Another reason for focusing on them is that they came independently to Finland without parents or guardians, as it makes the situation even tougher for young people to fit into a completely new environment. Another reason, which got our attention towards them, is their age when they entered Finland. Most of the participants were below 18 years of age when they sought asylum in

Finland. All of our interviewees have stayed in Finland for at least four years, which has given time for integration, if it has happened, to start to take place.

Since the start of the civil war in Somalia, the citizens of the Somalia have been the largest group of refugees coming to Europe and North America. The main reason for focusing only on Somali young male refugees is due to the fact that Finland has been receiving refugees and asylum seekers in great amount mainly from Somalia (Statistics Finland 2010). Among the new arrivals in Finland, Somali asylum seekers were a remarkable group in the sense that, for the first time, they formed an ample, single ethnic group applying asylums, whereas previous asylum seekers had been individual persons or small group of only few (Alitolppa-Niitamo & Ali 2001). So instead of focusing on different communities of refugees, we decided to focus only on Somali community and make our study precise and relevant to the present context, as they are the biggest single group of refugees in Finland. The topic of social integration got our attention because Finnish society is slowly becoming a multicultural society and it is important to know the factors that promotes and condemns integration process.

The Ministry of Labor, students and individual researchers have conducted research on the integration of the refugees often. The study that we took into consideration throughout our research process is 'The Integration of Refugees in the Finland During 1990s' by Kathleen Valtonen, conducted for the Ministry of Labor. The main aim of the study was to find out how person of a refugee background is encountering and coping with the challenges of settlement. Valtonen's study covered large refugee communities in Finland meanwhile our study in focused on the young male Somali refugees. Both Valtonen's and our research focuses on the integration of refugees in Finland.

We have mainly three aims of the study. The first aim of the study is to research about the social integration of young Somali male refugees into Finnish society. As well as social integration, we will look into their economic integration also in terms of employment and education. Generally, the voices and opinions of the people going through the integration process are not heard by the authorities making the policies (Valtonen 1999, p6). We wanted to get their perception on integrating into Finnish society and its culture and take a look at their social networks. Lastly, we aimed to

know whether presence or absence of family ties plays important role in the integration of young people.

The whole paper has been divided into different chapters to make it easier for the reader to understand the contents. The first chapter gives brief introduction to the study and gives idea to the reader about what and why the study has been conducted. The second chapter discusses about the broad background on migration, types of migration, legislation policies of Finland towards integration and provides statistical information on refugees, asylum seekers during various years and their municipality placements. The third chapter deals with the conceptual framework and previous study and discussion of its results, while the fourth chapter deals with the methodology of the research. The fifth chapter is about the findings of our research and the sixth chapter deals with the conclusion of our study.

2 BACKGROUND

In this chapter, various contexts of migration, statistics on immigrants and refugees in Finland, legislation and integration of immigrants and refugees have been discussed briefly.

2.1 Migration

Migration of people can be either voluntary or involuntary. In voluntary migration, people decide the place or country they are migrating to, time, date, purpose and consequences. But in involuntary migration, people are forced to move out from the home or country due to various circumstances such as war, natural disasters, and threat toward one's life and many other reasons that hinders the safety of a person. The war between Iraq and Iran, the Gulf uprising, the civil wars in Somalia and Afghanistan and the unresolved plight of Palestinians and Kurds are examples of conflict situations in more recent times that give rise to mass displacement and large number of refugees.

The human mobility has increased and diversified, at the same time it has become extensively globalized and politicized over the past 20 years. Contradicting the characteristics of past migration- transatlantic settler migration, or the post-war migration, the modern form of migration varies socially and demographically exhibiting similarity on the form of mobility and reasons for moving. After the end of Second World War, millions of people in Europe were stateless, since then, the official status for refugees were given hence forming the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951). The UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, Article 1 has defined Refugees as, 'The term refugee shall apply to any person who, owing to 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.'

Refugee problem has been a global issue in today's context, with the origin of destination being among the poorest nations. Since 1980's, the largest number of refugees has been from Afghanistan while Africa has been a highly affected continent. It has been believed by the industrialized world that refugee movement is from underdeveloped and developing nations towards Europe and North America but the reality is that, Pakistan and Iran have been receiving the highest number of refugees. (King, et. al 2010, 63.)

Refugee camps are the first solution for the displaced people but those camps provide only political rather than humanitarian solution to the displacement. The condition of the refugees living in those camps is vulnerable as their movement is limited and they have cramped living conditions. These camps are undertaken usually by international committees such as United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). UNHCR has three durable solutions for refugees i.e. return to their country of origin, integration in the country they are living and resettlement to a third country. The first option is difficult as there is no way of knowing when the war ends making second and third options more dependable and reliable solutions even if the war continues.

Talking about asylum seekers, the situation with them is a bit different. They are considered as individuals coming from different countries over different periods of time and are affected by conflict and human rights abuse. They face the fear of prosecution in the country of origin due to various factors such as ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality or belonging to certain religious or political group (King 2010, 68). Asylum seekers are people who start their asylum application process upon the arrival in their destination country. The European Union (EU) defines asylum seeker as a person who considers himself/herself to be a refugee and seek therefore asylum as well as reorganization of their refugee status in the territory of another state.

As defined in the Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), unaccompanied minors are children under the age of 18 years who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so. In 2010, 43 million people have been forced to leave their homes, out of which, 0-15% of them are unaccompanied minors seeking

asylum (Eurostat, 2011). In Finland there were 557 unaccompanied minors as asylum seekers in 2010 (Eurostat, 2011).

These unaccompanied minors or children are often highly vulnerable and traumatized with the past experiences. Common symptoms found in these children are: sleeping difficulties, mood disorders, fear and anxiety, difficulties in memorizing, concentrating and learning, violent and aggressive behaviors. These group of children face multiple difficulties and abuse in the country they are seeking asylum. Some of them have been trafficked facing various difficulties on the way; some of them remain anonymous to the government authorities and some face discrimination when in contact with the authorities or the person representing them. (Mustonen & Alanko 2011, 12-14.)

Refugees resettling in another country have to go through various challenges; as for them the option of going back is not open. In order to resettle and integrate in to the new country's systems, culture and traditions, refugees have to go through various challenges and adjustments. 'Integration can be greatly facilitated by well-informed, appropriate and importunately timed policy and program responses' (Valtonen 1999).

Migration to a country or a city changes the size and the composition of the country or society that receives the migrants. Furthermore, the newcomers have to adapt to the indigenous population (and their institutions), and vice versa.

2.2 Statistical background

There are various different reasons for people migrating from their respective countries to other countries. There are different types of immigrants who have moved into Finland. There are people who have been misplaced from their countries due to conflicts and due to lack of security in their countries hence they have no choice but to leave their country of origin. In some cases people have been threatened for their lives and have no security against their life but have to move away. There are others who migrate to secure education and also work as well. The main reasons to move to Finland are work

and family ties. The Ministry of Labor (MOL) gives information on the size and origin of cohorts received, as well as municipality placements. The following tables, graphs and pie charts give us information of the statistical background:

TABLE 1: Foreigners in Finland (Statistics Finland 2013)

Country of Citizenship	2011	%	2012	%
Estonia	34006	18,6	39763	20,3
Russia	29585	16,2	30183	15,4
Sweden	8481	4,6	8412	4,3
Somalia	7421	4,1	7468	3,8
China	6159	3,4	6622	3,4
Thailand	5545	3,0	6031	3,1
Iraq	5742	3,1	5919	3,0
Turkey	4159	2,3	4272	2,2
India	3793	2,1	4030	2,1
Germany	3806	2,1	3906	2,0
Others	74436	40,6	78905	40,4
Total	183133	100	195511	100

In table 1, the total number of foreigners residing in Finland and their country of origin along with their total numbers in the year 2011 and 2012 has been displayed. The total number of foreigners living in Finland is 183133 out of which 18,65 % are people of Estonian origin. In the second and third place are Russia and Sweden with 16,2 and 4,6 % respectively. The ‘others’ group comprises of the nationality of the people whose number is not significantly higher than the nationalities mentioned above or whose number is very small. Between the years of 2011 and 2012, the foreigners living in Finland has increased by 12378.

TABLE 2: Asylum Seekers in Finland (Statics Finland, 2013)

Year	No. of Asylum Seekers	Asylum Granted	Resident Permit Granted	No Asylum or Resident Permit
2000	3170	9	458	2121
2001	1651	4	809	1045
2002	3443	14	577	2312
2003	3221	7	487	2443
2004	3861	29	771	3418
2005	3574	12	585	2472
2006	2324	38	580	1481
2007	1505	68	792	961
2008	4035	89	696	1011
2009	5988	116	1257	2568
2010	4018	181	1603	3428
2011	3088	169	1102	1890
2012	3129	553	1048	1738

The table number 2 gives us information on the people who were seeking asylum in Finland throughout various years. The table also depicts the number of people who were granted asylum and resident permits through various periods. The table further gives us information about the asylum seekers who were not given any sort of asylum or resident permit to stay in Finland. There is fluctuation in the number of people seeking asylum in different years. The number of people who were granted asylum and resident permit is gradually increasing even though in some years there seem to be little decrement according to the table. The total number of resident permits granted include the permit that has been granted on the humanitarian basis and subsidiary protection.

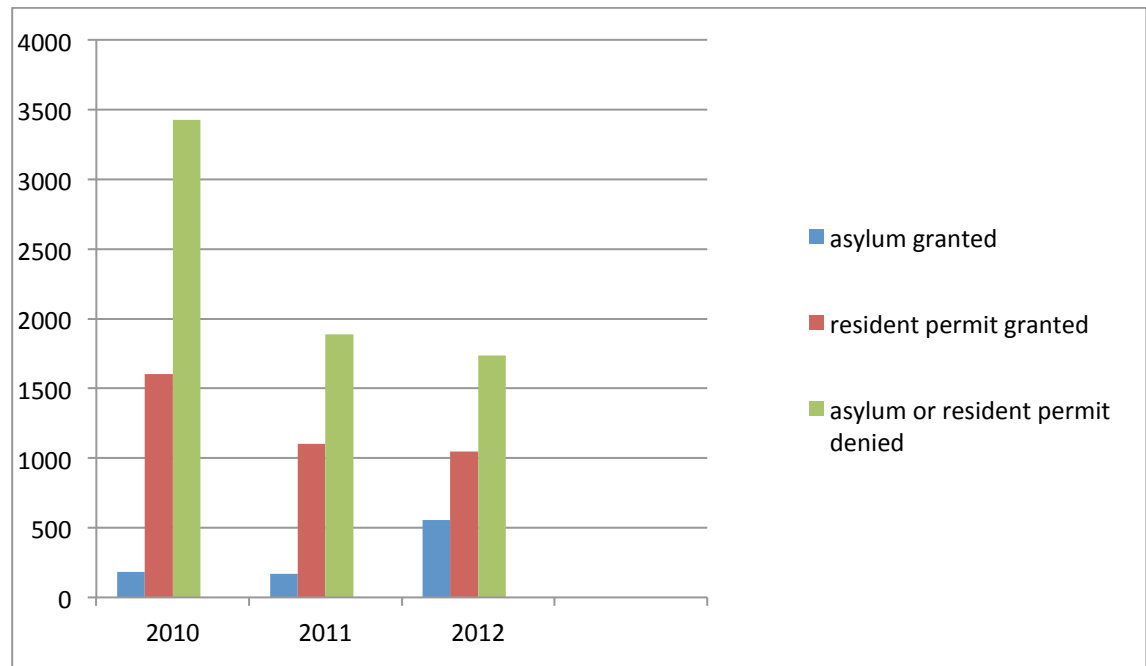


FIGURE 1: Decisions on Asylum and Residence Permit (Statistics Finland 2013)

The above figure number 1 shows us the clear picture of the decisions on asylum and resident permit during the years 2010, 2011 and 2012. In 2010, 3428 applications for asylum and resident permits were denied and only 181 people were granted asylum in Finland. 1603 people were granted residence permit during 2010. During the year 2011, 1890, 1102 and 169 applications were denied, residence permit accepted and asylum granted respectively. In 2012, 553 people were granted asylum while 1048 residence permits were issued to the applicants. The negative decisions on asylum or residence permits amounted to 1738. There has been a considerable fall in the number of asylum applications due to which the decisions on asylum or residence permits have also fallen down during the year 2011 and 2012 as compared to the year 2010.

TABLE 3: Refugees received in Finland (Ministry of Interior 2013)

Year	Quota	Received Refugees
2000	700	1212
2001	750	1857
2002	750	1558
2003	750	1202
2004	750	1662
2005	750	1501
2006	750	1142
2007	750	1793
2008	750	2219
2009	750	2611
2010	750	3207
2011	750	1742
2012	750	1431

Note: The refugees received in various years also include the total number of refugees by quota, asylum-seekers having received positive decision and people admitted under family reunification scheme.

Table 3 depicts the number of refugees received in various years ranging from 2000 to 2012. The quota is the number of people received by various developed countries on humanitarian grounds and who are defined as refugees by UNHCR. Finland has been receiving 750 refugees yearly since 2001 and the number has remained same until 2012. There is no homogeneity on the total number of refugees received by Finland throughout various years. The total number of refugees received includes the quota refugees, asylum seekers who have been granted the asylum and the people who are brought to the country through family reunification scheme. The total number of refugees received does not include the people who are waiting at the reception centers to be placed into municipalities.

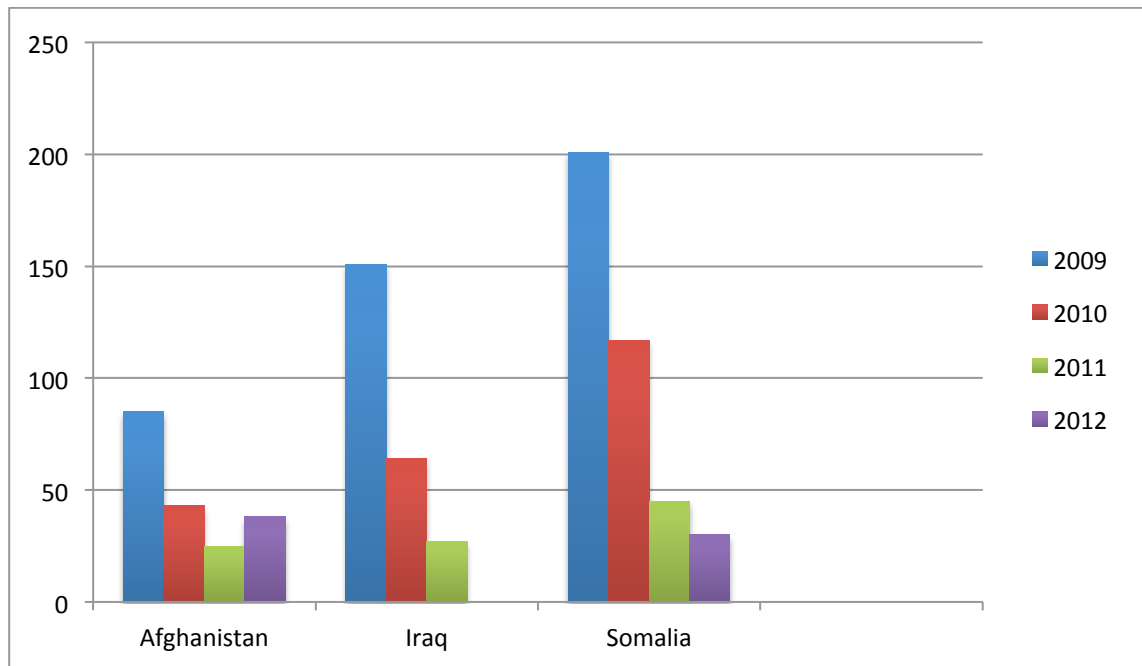


FIGURE 2. Asylum Applicants: Unaccompanied Minors (The Finnish Immigration Service 2013)

The figure 2 gives us information about the asylum applications by unaccompanied minors during the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. Throughout the year 2009, 2010 and 2012, Somalia stands out as the biggest country for minor unaccompanied applicants with the number being 201, 117 and 45 respectively. Iraq is the second biggest in terms of applicants during the year 2009, 2010 and 2011 as the number of applications being 85, 64 and 27 respectively. During the years 2009, 2010 and 2011, the number of applications for asylum was 85, 43 and 25 respectively for Afghanistan. There was a sudden change in the number of applicants during the year 2012. During 2012, there were more minor applicants from Afghanistan with the number of applications being 38 more than Iraq and Somalia. Iraq stands out to be second in position with 31 applicants. Somalia, which had been number one for three consecutive years, got the third position with the number of minor applicants to seek refuge being only 30. The figure also depicts the drastic decrease in the applications by unaccompanied minor applicants during recent years. The reason for this could be the changes in the regulations at bringing the families. The process has been made much longer and more difficult than it used to be.

2.3 Legislation

Finland is receiving immigrants each year in the form of students and migrant workers and refugees from different countries. Under its refugee quota, Finland accepts those persons who are defined as refugees by the UNHCR and also those who are in need of international protection. According to the Finnish Aliens' Act (section 90, subsection 2) there are seven hundred and fifty refugees entering into Finland every year since the year 2001. So integrating immigrants into Finnish society and creating a multicultural society is what Finnish government does through various local authorities and municipalities. The term Integration can be defined in many ways and it's a sociological context, which refers, to stable and cooperative relations within a clearly defined social system. Integration can also be viewed as a process of strengthening relationships within a social system, and of introducing new actors and groups into the system and its institution. The integration of immigrants is primarily a process; if this process succeeds, the society is said to be integrated (Wolfgang & Heckmann, 2006).

The success and failure of integration process and their results are determined by the immigration and integration policy framework and by how it is implemented in practice. In Finland immigrants are encouraged to integrate in their new home country. This is enforced through individual integration plans and integration programs for resettling municipalities. The newcomers are accredited to an integration plan for the first three years, in special cases up to five years, during which they amass knowledge and abilities needed to function in Finnish society.

Legislation on the integration of immigrants and refugees provide guidelines to the government authorities and local municipalities to work on the welfare of the refugees and immigrants and to promote equality in the society. Existing legislation in the country on integration helps the newcomers to settle into the new home society and make them aware about their rights and responsibilities. Legislation helps to protect the immigrants and refugees from any kind of abuses and discriminations in day-to-day life and helps them to become the part of the new society through various measures.

Different government authorities monitor immigration issues in Finland. The most important partners in immigration issues are Ministry of Interior, Finnish Immigration Service (Migri), and Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Employment and Economy, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Interior has laid down the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers from chapters one to chapter eight. According to chapter one, which states the general provisions of the act,

“The purpose of this Act is to promote the integration, equality and freedom of choice of immigrants through measures which help them to acquire the essential knowledge and skills they need to function in society, and to ensure support and care for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of temporary protection in the context of a mass influx by arranging for their reception. The further purpose of this Act is to assist victims of trafficking in human beings”. (The Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seek 1999.)

The municipalities are responsible for working in collaboration with other authorities for the successful implementation of the integration policies. In chapter two of section 6 (d) under the duties of the municipalities, it is stated that

- (1) Municipalities have general and coordinative responsibility for developing, planning and monitoring the integration of immigrants. Municipalities organize measures and services promoting and supporting the integration of immigrants.

- (1) Municipalities ensure that the integration of immigrants is promoted and supported by means of the measures and services under section 7 if the immigrants receive social assistance and are entitled under section 11 to an integration plan, or if employment offices refer them to municipal measures and services under section 6c(2).

- (1) Municipalities cooperate with the respective employment offices in integration efforts and give immigrants information about services provided by employment offices and other service providers.

2.4 Integration plan

The Act on the Integration of Immigrants has been drawn to promote equal opportunities of immigrants. Each immigrant draws up an individual integration plan in collaboration with the authorities of the resettling municipality. Immigrants are encouraged and supported by various measures to integrate into the new home country. They have during the first three years the possibility to language studies, to complementing their professional skills and to acquiring the forms of knowledge and abilities needed in Finland. While the immigrant carries out the integration plan and does not obtain a salary, the subsistence is guaranteed by means of an integration allowance.

For adults, integration training includes Finnish language studies and skills required to further employment. There are special literacy courses for persons in need of literacy education.

Children of school age those who are between 7-16 years old, are provided with preparatory instruction in a group of their own. The aim is for children to first learn the language and school attendance according to the Finnish system, after which they can switch to ordinary classes corresponding to their level. The language training of the first year gives the refugees the language skills needed in everyday life.

The refugees are entitled to integration training, which includes language and civic skill studies, as well as vocational guidance, and employment training. The individual integration plan takes especially into account the education and vocational training that the refugee has acquired in his/her homeland and also the need of supplementary training in order to find work in Finland. Often refugees have to study in order to

acquire a new profession. The studying possibilities in Finland are very good, but studying requires good language skills and that is why the language studies at the initial stage are of great importance.

After the immigration training, the refugees have the opportunity to receive vocational training compatible to their personal abilities. There is a clear need for long-term vocational training organized especially for the immigrants.

3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & PREVIOUS RESEARCH

3.1 Conceptual frame work

This chapter explains different concepts that are related to our study such as: integration, social integration, economic integration, assimilation and acculturation.

3.1.1 Integration

The concept of integration is derived from the Latin word '*Integer*' which means untouched or whole (Maagero & Simonsen 2005, 147).

According to Spenser (2003, 6), 'Integration is not simply about access to the labor market and services, or about changing attitudes or civic engagements; it is a two-way process of adaption by migrants and the host society at all of those levels.'

Across the EU, there have been differences in view on whether the focus of integration should be foreigners or ethnic minorities, whether the preference should be towards securing accessibility towards the labor market or cultural adaption of the new society, whether the discrete cultures of the migrant are barricade to be swamped or a contribution to be greeted, and whether gauging ethnic differences fortifies the very barrier that we are trying to overcome or is an important apparatus in remitting equality. (Spenser 2003, 7.)

The most important step in integration is to make sure that both of the parties that are involved agree on sharing things that they have in common. This is how people join in diversity to form a new society. The most common aspect is to put together all the cultural, social and economic heterogeneities in order to make a common legacy. Integration is in a way very cryptic concept because it can ascribe both to the absorption

of new members and to the forces of internal adherence with the wider social unit. (Baubock et. Al. 1996, 10.)

Valtonen (2012) has defined integration as a goal oriented dimension of settlement which points out that migrants are looking for full participation in the economic, social, cultural and political life within a society, a process which goes hand in hand with the concept of retention of culture of origin, identity and important aspects of immigrant's culture. So, integration is the involvement of the migrants in the political, economical and social life of majority or the mainstream society of a host country. From the societal perspective, it is important that the institutions are accessible or available for all members of the society and the process of admittance of the newest member of the society should be flexible.

According to Valtonen (1999, 9), 'Integration in Finland requires that the resettling persons and groups become established within the network of formal and informal societal institutions and networks in order to work towards full membership, or full 'citizenship', in the national collectivity'.

Parson (1978) has divided integration of immigrants in the new societies as economic, social, cultural and political arenas. Our study blue prints the socio-economic aspect of social integration.

3.1.2 Economic integration & social integration

In Kaladjahi's (1997, 18) opinion, two broad approaches can be distinguished in the studies of economic integration of immigrants in the new societies. The first approach evaluates the economic integration of immigrants by reference to the general correspondence between their last occupations in the country of origin and their present occupations in the new country. According to this approach immigrants are economically integrated if their present occupations in the new country correspond to their last occupations in the original country. According to this second approach, an immigrant is economically integrated if he/she enjoys the same socio-economic status and economic standard of living that is generally enjoyed by the population of the host

country. (Kaladjahi 1997, 19.)

Integration in terms of employment is technically defined to be achieved when the employment levels of third country nationals including refugees are similar to those of nationals (ECRE 2005, 9). This definition meets the criteria of quality in terms of rights and opportunities. The individual efforts of the people extricate them in the society where individuals are not favored. The economic integration helps to maintain equality between the immigrants and the people of the host society. If a person doesn't get access to the labor market during the initial phase of the arrival, the integration process in the long term is seriously hindered.

French Sociologist Emile Durkheim was the first person to use the term 'social integration' in his work while he was researching why the suicidal rates were higher in some social classes than others. Durkheim finds two general types of integration, which are compatible with two general types of social system: traditional and modern. The first, called *mechanical solidarity* in Durkheim's terminology, is related by common values and beliefs (collective consciousness), while the second, called *organic solidarity*, are realized by interdependence and reciprocal functions (Durkheim quoted in Kaladjahi; 1997, 116).

According to the United Nations of Economic & Social Affairs, ' Social Integration can be seen as a dynamic and principled process where all members participates in dialogue to achieve and maintain peaceful social relations.'

According to Rainer Strobl as quoted in Ritzer (2007, 4429), social integration refers to elements in a social system. The term social system is used in a broad sense here. It describes a social unit with a relatively stable order that establishes a border between itself and its environment. In this sense groups, organizations or even whole nation-states are examples of social system. The term social integration connotes the relationship between people in a society. It refers to social harmony, how people live and organize themselves in a community.

Angell (1968) argues that in mainstream sociology “social integration” has been defined as “the *fitting together of the parts to constitute the whole society*” (Quoted by Kaladjahi 1997, 116). This definition is clear enough. “Fitting together,” suggests that all members and groups of a community are closely related in sympathy in order to form one unity of interests. The purpose here is to promote equality at all levels of the society. Unlike social integration, social exclusion or disintegration refers to a situation where a person or a group of people does not fit in the mainstream of the society. In other words, social disintegration or exclusion of a group of persons from the mainstream of society is just the opposite of social integration. Clearly, both mainstream and minority interests need to be accommodated and require a delicate balance (Baubock et. al 1996, 275).

For some, the goal of social integration is to create “a more stable, safe and just society for all”, in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. Such an inclusive society must be based on the principles of embracing – not coercing or forcing diversity and using participatory processes that involve all stakeholders in the decision-making that affects their lives (United Nations E-dialogue 2007).

By trying to depict different angles of social integration and their relationships with each other, Landecker has distinguished four types of social integration:

- a. Cultural integration: the degree to which cultural standards are mutually consistent.
- b. Normative integration: the degree to which the conduct of individuals conforms to the cultural standards of the group,
- c. Communicative integration: as the degree to which the members of the groups are linked to one another by exchange of meanings,

- d. Functional integration: as the degree to which they are linked to one another by exchange of services (Landecker 1951 quoted in Kaladjahi 1997, 116).

Social integration is not successful if migrants are working but leading parallel lives, with little social contact or civic engagement in the vast community (Spencer 2003, 7). Social integration is a whole; it involves all the aspects of the social life. Migrants and the minority must feel they really accord to the community.

Socially integrated societies create values and ethics that accommodate diversity, and enhance values of freedom, security and democracy. In these societies, violence is less likely to develop when disagreements arise. While recognizing that complete social integration of diverse groups is unlikely to happen, social integration is an essential ongoing task. (United Nations 2007.)

3.1.3 Assimilation and acculturation

The Latin word assimilation means to make it similar. Socially and politically, this strategy implies that there is a dominant norm for people to follow in order to be accepted as member of a given society, and this strategy therefore signals that some people have to change so as to be like the main group (Maagerø & Simonsen 2005, 146). Integration differs from assimilation by stating that society consists of different, equal groups who are supposed to live together in mutual respect. In an integrated society, diversity and multiculturalism are viewed as positive and stimulating (Maagerø & Simonsen 2005, 147).

People from different cultures can be very different. Customs, traditions, political views, religious beliefs, perceptions about right and wrong and even whole view of the world can be different in different cultures. The reason for these differences is that

groups of people have lived for centuries, even thousands of years apart from each other. Even within the same society there can be cultural differences with different classes of the society living apart from each other. (Liebkind 1994, 21.)

Acculturation is good to see as a two way process, where different ethnic minority groups and its members preserve their traditional culture while adapting to the host society. At the same time it is required that the society adapts as well and transforms more multicultural. Seeing acculturation as a two - way process represents the multicultural view of acculturation. (Liebkind 2000, 14.)

Acculturation is a changing process of the culture that develops in an individual when cultures meet (Berry 1992, 271-280). So it is a process indicating change in cultural template when people with different cultures come into a long term, first hand contact with another group. Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004) has defined acculturation as a metaphor for the path that immigrants, as individuals, families and ethnic groups follow after resettling. She further explains that the orientation and pace of movement on the acculturation path are affected by human and social capital of immigrants, by the idiosyncrasy of the society that receives them and by human agency.

3.2 Previous research

There have been many studies regarding the integration of immigrants and refugees in Finland. The topic has been a major concern for many researchers as the number of immigrants and refugees started growing in Finland and multiculturalism being a popular topic in Finland among politicians, political parties, organizations, NGOs and so on. Research has been conducted in many aspects of integration and among various areas of concern. However, the research conducted by Kathleen Valtonen for the Ministry of Labor (MOL) during the period 1997-1998 on the topic, 'Integration of Refugees in Finland in 1990's' and a very recent research by Outi Lepola on the topic 'Ei omainen eikä viranomainen: Selvitys ilman huoltajaa Suomeen tulleiden lasten

edustajajärjestelmästä' seemed to be very much close to the study we were conducting and provided base for our research.

Outi Lepola conducted a research in 2012 about the representative system for immigrant children that came to Finland without a guardian. Research was conducted to gather information on how representative system works and how it could be developed further. A representative is appointed for immigrants who enter the country as minors. Their job is to look after the rights of the kids and help them with official matters such as getting a residence permit and home municipality. Some flaws were found in the representative system according to this research. One of the major findings of Lepola's research was that no education or training related to work that required from the representatives before they start working. The work itself requires, however, knowledge and skills that no training or working background can provide entirely. This research shows that proficient training is needed for representatives. They should be able to operate independently and impartially without depending on the authorities that are responsible for the child's daily care and asylum process. At the moment, the autarky of the representative is compromised due to the way they are recruited and because of the party that pays them.

Valtonen's (1999) study was conducted at national level with the number of interviews being 181. The study has covered many areas of integration focusing on various refugee communities living in Finland. The major findings of Valtonen's study were: two thirds of the interviewed were unemployed and the subjects were seeking jobs in the immediate social circles, most of the resettling people had formed close circle of relationship among the people of their own country, the social relation of the participants with the people of host society was very loose and the close interaction was mainly with the countrymen. The data from Valtonen's study shows that a large number of subjects had experiences of negative attitudes and typecasting by the people of host society.

Ismo Lindroos conducted a research for thesis in 2006 about the integration of immigrants in Finland. He introduced history and culture of Somalia and background for the situation with immigrants. He interviewed 6 Somalis living in Finland using

content analysis as the research method. For the content analysis, he used theory and literature about acculturation, integration and diaspora as the base for research. Themes emerging from his study were employment of Somalis, integration of Somali families, diaspora community and acculturation of Somalis.

The findings of his research showed that kids and youth integrate easier than adults into Finnish society and that Somali adults hold on to their own culture in a way that hinders their integration and that of the younger. He also found out that Somalis have experienced discrimination regarding finding work and that Somalis tend to isolate themselves to the company of their own ethnic group. According to his findings employment of Somalis in Finland is not at a high level but is progressing and that Somalis are educating themselves actively.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research method

The study has been conducted by using qualitative approach as this approach aims at understanding people's experiences and interpretation (Mathie & Carnozzi 2005, 25; Dan & Kalof 2008, 79-80). As the whole research surrounds on the experiences and the situation of young refugee males in the Finnish society, qualitative method seemed to be the perfect method for conducting our research. There is no right or wrong methods. There are only methods that are appropriate to your research topic and the model with which you are working. (Silverman 2005, 112.)

As Holliday (2002, 10) puts it, in many ways qualitative research is what we all do in everyday life. We have to continuously solve the problems about how we should behave with others in a variety of settings. To do this, we need to research not only how others behave but also how we should behave with them.

In qualitative method, a researcher participates in the social world of the people, comes closer to the meanings of the subjects of the study and ascertains to make his/her own analysis in how the informants of the study interpret the world (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004, 71). As mentioned in the introduction chapter, we had two research questions: how well young Somali male refugees are socially integrated into Finnish society? What is their view on a future in Finland? These questions would have been answered better by only using qualitative research method because this method focuses on context rather than specific variables.

For the purpose of data collection, we chose to use direct personal interviews. Though such method has been criticized for being expensive and time consuming for example Dan and Kalof (2008, 126), it did not turn out to be a big problem as we had very small

number of interviewees and most of the interviews were conducted within a short span of time. Haralambos and Holborn (2004, 905) mentioned that the lack of presence of other interviewees ensures that the respondent will not be disturbed or influenced by them. So, conducting direct personal interviews by using semi-structured questionnaire gave us the information that we needed to answer our research questions.

4.2 Data collection

Primary data was collected through direct personal interviews. The total number of interviewees was five. Answers and information from the interviews reached a point of saturation that was satisfactory to us so no further interviews were needed. Mostly semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used during the interviews. Interviews included a selection of close - ended questions as well to acquire some basic information such as age and time spent in Finland. The interviewees were met individually for the interviews according to their availability at the place of their desire. To create a more relaxed atmosphere, only one of us who knew some of the interviewees beforehand conducted the interviews. We felt that it could create a sense of awkwardness if two persons are making notes simultaneously. Mostly two locations were used that were familiar to the interviewees. By going to a place of their selection, we avoided using a location that might give them some sort of anxiety. One of the places was a café and another was a restaurant in the same city which was convenient as most of the interviewees lived within the city. These places gave us enough of privacy but due to background noise; we decided not to use tape recorder. Interviews were recorded by writing only. This did not prove to be much of a problem as the ones interviewed were patient in giving time to write the answers when asked to. Before starting the interview, agreement on the anonymity of the persons interviewed was made. The interviews were conducted in Finnish as it suited the interviewees. All of the interviews took between one and two hours. Instead of only answering our composed questions, we were hoping to ignite more conversation related to the open ended questions. With some of the interviews this happened but not with all.

4.3 Participants

The sampling goal in qualitative research is one of attaining ‘completeness’, i.e. the researcher sets about to choose people who are knowledgeable about the subject and talk with them until what is heard provides an overall sense of the meaning of a concept, theme or process (Robin & Rubin 1995, 71-76). One of us had the opportunity of getting to know two of the interviewees during a study placement in an organization where they were participating in a special education program for immigrants as part of their integration process a couple of years ago. One of us had the advantage of knowing two of the boys beforehand so the challenge was to find them. There were no personal contacts remaining with two of the interviewees and we only knew their names. With the help of social media, ‘Facebook’, we searched for two of the interviewees extensively with their full names and finally we found one of them. After conducting the initial interview, we got hold of more subjects through the first interviewee until we had enough participants. Though one of us had the opportunity of knowing two of the participants, there were no personal contacts maintained beforehand. Other three interviewees were complete strangers to us. So, we had no influence on what the interviewees were answering.

We managed to find five interviewees possessing the following common factors to give our research unity; same age group, same sex, same nationality, similar amount of time spent in Finland and none of them having any family members in Finland prior to arrival. Nearly all of our subjects filled the aforementioned criteria for the most part with a few minor exceptions. All of the interviewed were between the ages of 19 and 21. Four out of the five had lived in Finland between four and a half years and five years with the one exception of one living in the country for 10 years. With nearly the same time spent in the country, we have a sample pool of people who are in more or less similar stages of their integration process in Finland. Same sex, nationality and age mean also similar starting points for these young men. All of them came to Finland as teenagers alone without any family or friends living here prior to their arrival, which means none of them had the advantage of a pre – existing support network.

According to Frankfort- Nachmias and Nachmias, “The obligation to protect anonymity of research participants and to keep research data confidential is all-inclusive. It should

be fulfilled at all costs unless arrangements to the contrary are made with the participants in advance''(quoted in Cohen et. al 2000, 61). So as to protect the identity of the interviewees and maintain confidentiality of the interviews, we categorized the interviewees as A, B, C, D and E.

Case	Age	Length of residence
A	20 years	4.5 years
B	21 years	4.5 years
C	19 years	5 years
D	19 years	10 years
E	21 years	4.5 years

4.4 Data analysis

We decided to use thematic analysis because we thought it is the only best way to analyze our study as it analyzes informants' talk about their experiences (Mahrer 1998, Spradely 1979, Taylor & Bogdan 1984).

According to Braun and Clarke, 'thematic analysis is identifying, analyzing patterns (themes) within data.' This process organizes and describes our data in a very systematic way and in rich detail. It also further interprets various aspects of the research topic. A theme refers to a specific pattern found in the data in which one is interested. (Braun & Clarke 2006, 79.)

As Boyatzis (1998, 4) puts forward the meaning of thematic analysis, 'a process for encoding qualitative information. The encoding requires an explicit code. This may be list of themes; a complex model with themes; indicators and qualifications that are casually related or something in between two forms.' We started reading and re-reading our interviews until we found recurring themes among the experiences of the informants and pieced them together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective

experience. Themes are identified by bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone (Leininger 1985, 60).

Another step in thematic analysis is to combine and catalogue into sub-themes. Sub-themes can be derived from patterns such as conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings or folk saying and proverbs with the main themes, (Taylor & Bogdan 1989,13). We subdivided our main themes into various sub-themes, which we thought would give broader meaning to the finding and make the interpretation clearer.

The main reason for choosing thematic analysis is to interpret data is that this process enables students or researchers to use a wide variety of types of information in a systematic manner which increases their accuracy or sensitivity in understanding and interpreting observations about people, events, situations and organization (Boyatzis, 1998, 5).

Throughout the data analysis process, we carefully followed the Blare and Clarke's (2006) guide to the six phases of conducting thematic analysis i.e. becoming familiar with the data which we did by re-reading the interviews multiple times to become immersed and familiarize us with its content. Instead of searching for pre-defined themes, we read the data carefully to allow the themes to emerge. We then generated initial codes that identify the important features of the data that might help in answering our research question. We coded the entire data and collated all the codes for the analysis at the later stages. After that we searched for themes by examining the initial codes we created and collated data for boarder patterns of meaning. We created a provisional name and flexible definition for each emerging themes and made them candidate themes. We then reviewed each candidate themes against our data so as to determine whether they answer our research questions or not. Then we split the theme into subthemes wherever it was necessary, combined some themes together and discarded some themes that we though were not necessary to analyze. Selecting final theme was a vital stage for us as human perception is selective and the relevance of data can be easily overlooked. After the final selection of the themes, we decided on an informative name for each theme. Once we were ready with the themes and their titles,

we weaved together the analytic narrative and data extracts. While writing, we contextualized the analysis in relation to the existing literature and previous studies. We had few direct quotations from the original text to help communicate the meaning of the analysis to the reader.

4.5 Ethical consideration

It is very important to take ethics into consideration while conducting the research from the very beginning. Silverman (2011, 94) states that, ‘when we report our observations or interviews, it is common sense to protect the identities of the people we have researched and to ensure that they understand and consent to our research.’

We informed our participants about the nature of the study and gave full information about the publication of the study. We ensured that the participation of the interviewees was voluntary and that they are not agreeing to the interview under any pressure. We ensured the mutual trust between us. We had the full consent of the participants during the research process.

According to Ryen (2004, 231), ‘informed consent means that research subjects have the right to know that they are being researched, the right to be informed about the nature of the research and the right to withdraw at anytime. In general, deception is only acceptable if discomfort is believed to vanish by itself or removes by a debriefing process after the study.’

We informed the participants that their name or identity would not be mentioned anywhere and any personal information that will put them in danger would not be revealed. We also informed the participants before hand that if they feel any question being too personal then they are free to say no.

4.6 Limitations

Location of the interviews was in a public place where using a tape recorder to record the interviews was not possible due to the back round noise. So, the interviewer had to

make due with writing as much as was possible. Sample group was rather homogeneous in many aspects so there was not a lot of variation in results.

The whole interview was organized in Finnish language. Even though, the interviewees were able to communicate in Finnish fluently and seemed to understand the questions being asked, it is also to be taken into consideration that Finnish is not their mother tongue and gaining proficiency in foreign language within short span of time is not possible. It would have been better if the interviews would have been conducted in their mother tongue and later translated. Lack of resources to find interpreter came as a barrier and was time consuming.

Another limitation of our study would be awareness of the concept of integration and assimilation. The concepts on integration and assimilation are very wide and complex. We tried to simplify our questionnaire to make it understandable to the participants, but it is difficult to ponder if they understood the terms and answered accordingly.

4.7 Division of labor

As the research was conducted in a pair, initially it was very important to have a concrete division of labor. At the very beginning of the research process, we had divided workload and areas which we would be focusing on so that there will be equal workload. Once the research area, research topic, research question, working methods and aims were finalized with mutual discussion, we agreed that one of us will take the responsibility of finding previous researches, dealing with the theoretical matters and prepare questionnaire for the research. Both of us ended up dealing with previous research as some of the books were in Finnish and some in English. Once the questionnaire was ready in English, we examined, made modifications and translated into Finnish. Only one of us conducted the interviews while the other had equal role in locating and finding the interviewees through Facebook. Once the interviews were done, one of us transcribed the interviews while other began the writing process. The analysis of the interviews was done mutually and themes were identified with discussions. There was equal participation in writing process at the later phases. We

went thoroughly in each other's writing parts so as to know what has been written and if there is any need for correction. We kept each other informed about the changes and modifications every time it occurred. The division of labor went very smoothly and none of us felt that one is doing too much than the other. Mutual agreement and trust is very important while conducting anything in a pair or a group.

5 FINDINGS

In this chapter, main findings of the study have been discussed under various themes that emerged while analyzing the findings.

5.1 Difficult experience of transition

Regardless of different underlying personal, political or societal impetus for refugees, flight has been a common denominator for their survival. This has constantly resulted in departure for a comparatively unknown destination and under conditions of travel and entry that frequently offer little if any security to those migrating. (Cox & Pawar 2006.)

We asked the interviewees to tell us about their experiences on the transition to Finland. Subject seemed to be a delicate one but all of the interviewed ones decided to tell about their journeys to Finland although it evoked some bad memories. Unaccompanied children face various problems with travelling as they don't always have id papers and the means of transportation is usually illegal (smuggling). Children at this stage are very vulnerable and there is no guarantee that they will get to a safe country. (Mustonen & Alanko 2011, 14.) The common themes arising from this topic in the interviews were being scared, missing family and feeling lonely and confused. On the experience interviewee B had the following to say:

“Transition was hard for me. I missed my family so much. I had to spend some time in the refugee camp and also a couple of months in Ethiopia without really any real friends. Also it was really lonely in Finland too when I didn't have friends yet and the weather was rough.”

In case D, experience of the transition was along the same lines:

“Transition was difficult. I was very young at the time and very scared. We were taken to Zambia with my brother. From there we went to Sweden and then I came to Finland. It was all very confusing and very difficult to be further away from my relatives. I understood that what we were doing, would ultimately improve the quality of our lives so I tried to be brave. Difficult part wasn’t only the transition to Finland, but also finding a place to stay here. I have been in many children’s homes in Finland and that has not always been a pleasant experience.”

For these teenaged boys, in addition to the whole transition being a scary experience, also the smugglers involved brought them feelings of anxiety. Interviewee C went on to mention that the smugglers did not let him talk the whole time. Interviewee E also mentions the smugglers:

“The journey started with a car ride from Somalia to Ethiopia. The van was full of people and it was a very unpleasant experience. The smugglers were scary and I missed my parents”.

According to participant A on his experiences of transition:

“Transition experience was frightening. I was a young boy who had never been outside the country. Suddenly I was experiencing these new places and I was not sure where I would end up. I was worried that the customs people can’t recognize me from the passport because the picture was not good. I was also afraid that I might be taken to prison.”

The difficult experiences faced by our participants at very young age on their journey points out to the lack of faith in future in Somalia. This lack of faith in future has forced many parents continually send their children unaccompanied to western countries, including Finland (IRIN 2003). It is also to be noted that the traumatic experiences faced by these group of children have long-term effect on their later stages of lives. Representatives appointed for these unaccompanied minors should be aware of their situations and work accordingly.

5.2 Finnish language skill

As language plays an important part in integration, we enquired our interviewees about their Finnish language studies and how well they manage with Finnish. We also asked them to evaluate their own language skills and whether it affects their social life in Finland. Four out of five have participated in an initial language course upon their arrival. Subject D, who arrived as a nine year old, was placed in an immigrant class where Finnish was studied intensively. He then went on study in primary school where he really learned the language properly. Subject C arrived in Finland as a fourteen year old and also studied in primary school after initial language courses. After initial language courses participants A, B and E continued their language studies in the Mako program, which is an educational program that prepares immigrants for vocational studies.

The interviews were conducted in Finnish and there were no real linguistic problems with that. We asked the interviewees to assess their own Finnish language skills and even though the answers varied a bit, all five of them felt that they manage through their daily lives with Finnish language. Especially talking was not seen as a problem but writing was an issue with participant A:

“My talking is quite fluent but writing is not as good and needs a lot of further training”.

We also asked them if they consider their Finnish language skill as an obstacle in interacting with people in Finnish and none of them saw it as a major hindrance.

Despite their general confidence in Finnish language skills, one of the interviewees did note that he has problems in understanding some Finnish dialects. With participant B, problem was that he felt he could not yet express himself fully in Finnish:

“I am doing fine but I would like to learn more so that I can have proper discussions in Finnish”.

Common themes found from the interviews regarding their relation to Finnish language were that all of them were able to start studying the language very quickly upon arrival, generally all of them manage fine with Finnish language and none of them saw it as something to prevent them from socializing with Finnish speaking people.

5.3 Finding work through social networks

The social network has been the major component in successful integration in to labor market. The members in the network exchange information, advices, and experiences of finding jobs, which helps others who are in search of job to pull jobs on their sides. According to Burt (1992), people with extensive networks are better able to gather information and exert influence at work; this enhances their task performance and career prospects in many settings (Burt 1992 quoted in Korczynski, 286). Annika Forsander (2001, 42) and Seppo Paananen (2005, 45) consider employment as the most important factor in integration of immigrants. Ismo Lindroos (2006, 78) noted that working immigrants integrate faster than unemployed into Finnish society.

Finding a job through social networks and taking advices from friends on job search have been a common experience among our participants. Participant D expressed his experience when asked about how he found a job:

‘Mostly through personal contacts, more difficult to find via Internet.’

Participant A had a different experience and view on finding jobs in Finland. His experience and view in job search seem to contradict with rest of the cases. According to him:

‘‘The work I have found so far in Finland is through mol.fi. Then going to job interviews and so on. I feel that mostly getting work opportunities is up to you and being a foreigner does not restrict me from getting work.’

Some similar results were found in Kathleen Valtonen’s (1999) study. She also found out that subjects have been looking for work through social circles. Our participants’ channels for looking for work are not as broad as in Valtonen’s (1999) study. Our interviewees did not mention unemployment office or personal visits as means of finding work. This could be due to the fact that most of them are still studying and are in need of only part-time work in which their current channels for finding work suffice.

Two of the interviewees also had the experienced getting short-term work opportunities through their work practice placements. Despite four out of the five currently working, interviewees also pointed out some difficulties in finding work in Finland. Interviewee D and B felt that finding work through Internet and getting to interviews is difficult for a foreigner. Respondent C does not consider finding a nice place to work in difficult but believes that actually getting that job is tough without proper education.

5.4 Limited interaction with the Finns

Generally the participants to our study found Finnish people friendly and honest, but there were several opinions on the lack of social skills of Finns. Finnish culture and especially customs initially raised feelings of amusement in some of our participants. Interviewee A put it this way:

‘‘ Some customs, like sauna for example, are funny.’’

One of our participants, participant C spoke more warmly of Finnish culture:

‘‘ Some cultural things I have enjoyed a lot, like Finnish food and ice hockey. The sauna thing I don’t really get but that’s okay. I am fine with the way people live here ‘‘

The data from the interviews suggests that most of the participants have been able to make friendship with the Finns through work, school, parties, friends of friend and hobbies. Our findings indicate that their interaction with the Finns is very limited. Participant D expressed his opinion on friendship with the Finns as:

“Yes I have Finnish friends. But most of my Finnish friends are just Facebook friends.”

Most of our participants have pointed towards the shyness and introvert behavior of the Finns being the main problem in making close friendship or relationships. According to C:

“In general, people in Finland are shy and not very social. Finns are difficult to get to know.”

Interviewee B also pointed to the similar experience when asked why it is difficult to make Finnish friends as:

“ Finnish people are somehow introvert and not so social.”

Our research data about the limited interaction between Somalis and Finns correlates with the research of Valtonen (1999). On social relation with the Finnish host society she found that majority of the participants also had Finnish friends but the interactions were limited.

When discussing Finnish people and culture respondent E mentioned a point which came up in the other interviews as well about how young people are more welcoming towards immigrants than elders:

“I have not had any major problems in adapting to Finnish culture. Of the Fins I think that young people are more welcoming towards foreigners but many older people don't seem to support multiculturalism in Finland. Especially outside of Helsinki people feel more negative towards immigrants.”

It should be noted that having limited interactions with the host society could result into having insufficient knowledge of host society's norms. As pointed out by Valtonen (1999, 52), many resettling people do not encounter a wide cross-section of the majority society nor can they have a long range vision of the cultural process as they work themselves out in the receiving society.

Jaakkola (2003) interpreted in her study that Finnish people have a prejudiced attitude towards immigrants. Valtonen (1999) pointed out immigrants and refugees have been victims of generalizations and typecasting. She further explained that lack of knowledge and delusion about the immigrants and refugees, their context and culture gives birth of stereotyping and discrimination. These could be the reason for our participants for not having closer social relationship with the Finnish people.

The lack of closer friendship could have been bought by the cultural differences. In Finland, people are generally silent in nature. Lewis (2004, 67-68) argues that silence in Finland does not mean person's inability to communicate. Instead, it is considered as a necessary part of social integration. In many cultures, remaining silent can be taken as being introvert or person unwillingness to communicate. This could be the major reason for our participants to start a conversation with a Finnish people and begin a friendship. As a result, our participants have pointed Finns social behavior as introvert as Lewis (2004, 76-68) has pointed out that Finnish communication style is described as introvert.

5.5 Easier to bond with other immigrants

Common theme explicit with every interview was how our interviewees find it much easier to interact with other immigrants. Their close friends are almost exclusively other immigrants. When asked about if he has Finnish friends, interviewee A said:

“Yes I have Finnish friends. I have met them through other friends and parties. It helps a lot that I can speak Finnish. At first when I had arrived to Finland, it was difficult to connect with Finnish people. Most of my friends are foreigners. Not necessarily only other Somalis but other foreigners as well. Interacting with other foreigners is more natural for some reason.”

Five out of five interviewees expressed that they mostly associate with other foreigners and have other foreigners as closer friends. Results on Valtonen's (1999) study are similar but have one distinctive difference. She noted that Somalis participants' close social circles and ties were with mainly with other countrymen but our participants closer social circles consisted of other immigrants also and not only countrymen.

Our research results also support the findings of another previous study conducted by Riihelä (2005, 135-139) where he notes that Somalis keep in contact with their countrymen more than other immigrant groups and points out that 45% of Somalis do not have a single Finnish friend and mostly associate with fellow Somalis. Our data shows that though the young Somalis do not exclusively spend time with only other Somalis but with other immigrants as well. Lack of interaction with Finnish people follows along the same lines than this previous study.

While our interviewees interact with foreigners of various origins, other Somalis, their countrymen are the main group people they spend time with. Valtonen (1999) reveals in her study that a major reason for this is because being around people of the same background and experiences alleviates acculturation stress and helps to comfort the feeling of separation from one's family. In spite of the wide heterogeneity among the immigrants, it is important to consider that what unites the foreigners is the experience of change in their socio-cultural setting (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 38). This statement supports the reason for our participants having close interaction with the other immigrants.

5.6 Discrimination and racism

Racism and discrimination is obstacle to social integration. Racism is the violent behavior towards another race, the belief that certain races are better than the others. When discrimination emerges in a society, social integration becomes difficult.

‘The term racial discrimination shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent or national ethnic origin, which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise on equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life’ (Banton 1994, quoted in Wrench et. al. 1999, 8).

Increasing experience of racism and xenophobia can be very destructive to the quality of life of resettling persons and regular confrontation is a hazard on the overall well being especially for young people in their formative years of life (Valtonen 1999, 45).

In two separate researches about the living conditions of immigrants in 2005 by Joronen and Paananen they found out that over forty per cent of Somalis had experienced violence during the past year as opposed to only nine per cent by the Finnish people. Vast majority of the Somalis who experienced violence felt that it was violence fueled by racism. Our data shows that none of our respondents have experienced any physical form of violence. The experiences of racism have only been verbal and especially by drunken people, mostly middle - aged. When asked about the experiences of racism or discrimination in Finland, A expressed:

“A few times yes. Mostly it has been racist shouting from drunken people in late night trains. A couple of times somebody has gone to sit on a different compartment in train after I have sat next to them. This kind of discrimination is unfortunate but I haven’t thought too much of it. In most of these cases, people doing this have been middle – aged people. Physical violence I have never experienced here. I feel that most of the people don’t have racist thoughts about me and these were just some individual idiots.”

Participant B expressed his view on experience of racism encountered as:

“I haven’t really encountered any direct acts of racism or discrimination. Sometimes you can feel some people looking at you badly but I don’t let it affect me.”

In the case of interviewee B, he ignored the situation and didn't let it affect him. For resettling people, the main confronting option from racist act or behavior is to avoid and ignore the situation and move ahead with discretion (Valtonen 1999, 44).

Participant C feels that the racism he has encountered is from bitter and jealous people and points out how for some people, immigrant can do nothing right:

“I have faced racism in Finland. I have heard plenty of nasty words over the years. Once in train, someone was wondering out loud how can I have a nice watch and a nice phone? It seems that if you are working as a foreigner, people complain that why do you take our jobs, when you are not working, people complain that why are you using our tax money.”

Interviewee D, who has lived in Finland the longest of our subjects, thinks that there is a clear difference on discrimination depending on where you are in Finland and has this to say when asked about experiences of racism or discrimination:

“Not in recent years. Previously when I have experienced racism, it has almost always been in some smaller towns and not near the capital. I have lived in children's homes all over Finland so I have seen what the situation is around Finland. Attitudes in general towards foreigners are more negative outside of Helsinki. With me, the racism has never manifested physically, only shouting and bad looks.”

Discrimination not always occurs in street corner or public places. Immigrants and refugees face discrimination in the places where they earn their living. Discrimination not always has to be physical or verbal, sometime people feel discriminated through certain behaviors of the people and their unwillingness to interact. Interviewee E has experienced such kind of discrimination at a work place and explained:

“Sometimes there has been some shouting in the streets but not any other kind of direct racism. In one work placement I did feel discriminated as my colleagues did not really talk to me or never smiled at me.”

In the study conducted by the Jaakkola in 2004 pointed out that in the metropolitan area of Finland (Helsinki, Vantaa and Espoo), people's attitude towards immigrants was more positive than averagely in the whole country. Similar experiences of discrimination of our participants indicate that there are regional differences in attitude towards immigrants in general in Finland.

5.7 Desire for assimilation and retaining culture of origin

The data from the interviews shows that most of the participants express the desire to assimilate into the Finnish society, as it will make their life easier. This, however, does not mean abandoning everything from their original culture. Four out of five participants wanted to keep their religion. When asked about if he would like to assimilate into the Finnish society, participant B answered:

‘‘I am willing to adapt because I know it will make my life easier.’’

In a previous study by Joronen (2005, 154-155) he also found out that nearly every Somalis considers religion important to them. Even though our interviewees do not have the example of a previous generation to look up to, the connection to religion is still strong.

Valtonen (1999) mentions that the holding on to religion, culture or politically based moves can be seen as the individuals pursuit of a suitable paradigm for their life situation.

Two of the participants C & D mentioned that they have already assimilated quite well into the Finnish society and culture. Religion is the only aspect of their culture that they would like to keep alive. According to C:

“Religion is the only thing I have properly kept from my own culture. I would say that I have already assimilated here quite well.”

Participant D also had the similar view when asked if he would like to assimilate into the Finnish society:

“Aside from religion, I think I have assimilated to the Finnish culture.”

Participant A had a different view on assimilation. He didn't focus on totally assimilating into Finnish society or keeping his culture of origin. The analysis of his answer proves that he is neutral towards both of the culture and is not focusing only on one. According to him:

“I am fine with both cultures. I am sure that I can cope with the Finnish way of life. I am not very religious either.”

According to E:

“I would like to assimilate for the most part but I don't want to lose everything from my own culture. Some things should remain in my life. I don't want to forget my language and religion and some customs.”

In another study Joronen (2005, 154-155) remarks that identifying themselves to their own ethnic group is more common among Somalis than any other immigrant group in Finland. 80% of Somalis identify themselves solely as Somalis, 11% as both Somalis and Finns and 4% as Finns. After only a few years of residing in Finland the Somalis in our study do not show similarly strong identification to their ethnic group. Three of the interviewed ones mentioned thinking about getting a Finnish citizenship in the near future. When discussing citizenship, interviewee E was asked whether he would mind being called a Finn to which he replied: “not at all”. The fact that our participants

came to Finland alone and do not have an older generation of Somalis in their lives who might enforce their Somali identities might actually make assimilation easier. This point is backed up by the findings of a thesis study by Lindroos (2006, 80). He wrote how adult Somali's integration to Finnish society has been disrupted by them holding on to their own culture. Strict stance on preserving own culture by Somali adults has also led to altercations between them and younger generations of the family. Lindroos (2006) noted that some older Somali's do not even want their children to become Finns. Tiilikainen (2003, 178-184) realized that life styles of Somali youth had come to resemble more that of the Finnish youth. Despite our interviewees holding their language and religion in high regard, they have open minds for integration and are not held back by a strict stance of older generations.

5.8 Future in Finland

Many of our interviewees have mentioned the prospect of a bright future in Finland. One of the more prevalent themes was discussing their future plans in Finland. As the participants have started to settle well into Finnish society and they are acquainted with the language and culture, they see their future good in Finland. Four sub-themes emerged from the discussion about our participant's future. These four key themes were studying, working, and starting a family and getting the citizenship.

Almost all of our participants expressed the desire for further studies in professional field or for higher education. Participant D responded when asked about his future plans:

“I want to complete the degree of logistics and in the future would like to study to be a bachelor of social services. I would really like to work with children also”.

Another participant also expressed the desire for becoming a nurse or studying bachelors of social service.

We did not specifically ask about plans involving citizenship but it came up in a couple of the interviews. Three of the interviewees with whom we discussed about it with felt that getting Finnish citizenship was something they desired and might get in the near future.

Four out of five interviewees said they would like to start a family in Finland at some point

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Results of the study

Research material shows that there is willingness among young Somalis to assimilate into Finnish society and after few years of residing in the country, are already integrating. In terms of language, education and employment the data suggests that they have taken major strides in the integration process. Social aspect of the integration can be questioned, however.

Our research strongly indicates how this group of young Somalis finds it difficult to interact with Finns on a personal level and bond much more seamlessly with other Somalis and other immigrants. This part of our study supports the findings from previous studies conducted by Valtonen (1999) and Lindroos (2006). Our data suggests the major reason for this to be Finnish people being harder to approach and get to know to. According to our interviewees, Finnish people are socially so much different from immigrants in the sense that they are shy and socially introvert. Through school and work there is contact with Finns and friendships of more superficial nature but the closest friends with whom they interact more regularly are not Finns. In order to fully integrate into a society, one would think that having real relationships with local people would be helpful. Other immigrants offer friendships from people who have faced similar challenges when entering the country and might have been through a difficult phase of transition before arriving as well. Social interaction moderates acculturation stress and helps to comfort the stress of separation from the families and other member living in the home county (Valtonen 1999).

Valtonen (1999) notes that the immediate family has been observed to be a crucial integration resource for the individual. Persons who settle alone face more often the risk of isolation. With a close network of other immigrants as friends, our study shows that integration can be possible without the help of immediate family. Participants in our

study could relate themselves to being Finnish with some of them soon applying citizenship also and not only being Somali's unlike found in the previous studies which might have to do with not having pre-existing support networks or family in Finland. Our study shows that despite having family in the host country makes transition easier it is not a necessity for integration to happen. With older generations of Somalis clinging to their own culture in a way that prohibits the younger to integrate, coming alone to Finland can be seen in some cases as beneficiary for the refugee in terms of integrating. Alitolppa – Niitamo (2003, 22-23) found out that Somali youth are beginning to define their ethnicity based on the expectations and structures of the new host society and not according to the previous generations that grew up in Somalia. On the basis of our research we can state that despite not having family or older generations as role models, young immigrants cherish their language and religion and want to keep them as part of their lives here.

Our research shows that social networks are important to an immigrant when looking for work. Finding work is important in creating contacts with local people of the host society.

Despite most of the young Somali's interviewed having experienced the verbal form of discrimination or racism, it has not hindered their integration greatly. None of them has experienced physical violence but occasional racist slurs from mostly middle-aged drunken. It has not affected them to the point of hampering their daily lives. In these rare encounters with racist people, these young Somalis have shown the presence of mind to ignore such people. Our study shows that from the perspective of our subjects, discrimination or racism comes from older people and is more prevalent outside of the capital.

Most of our participants see a future for them in Finland. With language no longer a hurdle, they are educating themselves and getting ready for working life. Almost all of the participants are planning to settle here permanently and are hoping to start a family here someday.

Transition to Finland has been a difficult experience for all of our participants and even traumatic to some. It is important that authorities and professionals working with young

immigrants acknowledge the severity of conditions that immigrants might be coming from and what they have experienced to get to a new country. The traumatic experience of the unaccompanied minors should be well recognized by the authorities and the appointed representatives. As Lepola (2012) has pointed out on her findings how there is lack of sufficient knowledge and training among the representatives working with unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, our study could be useful in providing information on the traumatic experiences these children go through.

It would be important to find better ways maybe through research to create more interaction between Somalis, a major group of immigrants, and Finnish people. For this to happen, it would have to be a two-way effort. Our research could prove to benefit some instances if taken note of. There could improvement on how the media portray Somalis. Tiilikainen (2005, 52) stated that discriminating attitudes towards Somalis have been enforced by the news coverage focusing on negative aspects such as unemployment ratings, crime and youth gangs.

It is also important to realize that how the integration policies and legislation regarding integration of immigrants have helped on our young participants' lives. The language training during the early stages of their life in Finland has helped them to interact with the host society and build up social networks. Gaining proficiency in local language has build up confidence in our young participants in searching jobs on their own and have a view that being an immigrant doesn't stop one from getting proper job. Being able to speak the common or local language has made them able to interact with other immigrant groups as well and form multicultural relationships. The language training has helped them not only to integrate into the host society but also to interact with the larger immigrant communities. Authorities could focus even more on the language training for immigrants as it clearly benefits the integration to host society. The integration policies have provided them with an opportunity for higher education and training. Our young participants are already studying or are in verge of joining higher education to become professionals. The policies have open up a path towards optimistic future for our participants.

The policies have made them feel as the component of the society and have positive mindset towards the host society. In spite of going through many losses i.e. family, friends, their own things, familiar places, their own identity (Mustonen & Alanko 2011,14), our participants are have started a new life.

6.2 Further studies

As mentioned earlier, this study is very small in scale. The number of interviews taken was only five and it only focused on young male Somali's. However this particular group of people is not easy to reach. It would be very interesting if somebody expands this research and takes it to another level. Not much is known about the immigrants who leave their countries alone and are underage. Therefore it would be interesting topic to conduct research on.

In our opinion, the results would be striking if our study would be amplified by including different refugee communities living in diverse parts of Finland. It would also help in providing the information on whether the integration policies and process are helping the refugees to integrate into Finnish societies. It is also very important to know that is it up to the best integration policies or up to the person's willingness to integrate into the new society that determines the success and failure of integration. Another interesting suggestion for further research would be contrasting the level of social integration with those young refugee males who shifted to Finland along with their parents and families. It couldn't be denied that the there would humongous difference in the level of integration among the youths whose families are in Finland and who are living independently. Social integration of youths with immigrant background would also serve as an interesting issue to investigate based on this research.

Another interesting topic to research on would be the traumatic experiences of these young immigrants have faced and how authorities should handle them while making decisions on them. Facing traumatic experiences at young age and dealing with the difficult phases of transition might have long term effect on these young immigrants'

mental health. Conducting research on this very topic would not only help authorities who are making decision but also on improving the lives of this particular group of immigrants.

In our opinion, another topic that could be derived and studied from this research would be friendship and interaction between young Finns and young refugee males. The barriers that come in between them or the factors that promotes interaction between two groups would be interesting to study which would give researcher some idea on how the relationship could be improved and create a multicultural society where there is close interaction between various groups rather than living parallel lives with differences.

There would many more interesting topics to retrieve from this research and conduct further studies. The concept of integration is itself in very immense and students and researchers would never run out to topics to conduct research on various aspects of integration.

6.3 Professional development

During the whole research process, we learned some new things and developed a few new ones as well that will hopefully prove to be useful in our future professional work. Conducting interviews and using the methods that we used through out the interview process familiarized us with the things we have learned at school. Both of us have had experience with qualitative research methods such as the semi-structured interview and this research gave us the chance to deepen our understanding on them. Using thematic-narrative analysis was a rather new experience and in order to use it effectively, we had to study it duly. The interview process made us more aware about ethical considerations that we needed to follow and will need in future while conducting interviews. Being aware of ethical considerations is important in the social field due to the nature of the work.

Another important area of work that we improved was division of labor. We grasped the skill of working as a pair and how to allocate responsibilities evenly. We understood that the negligence of one could affect the hard of work of the other and that was the

reason why we kept committed to each other and working hard on our part of work that had been allotted.

During the research process, we got acquainted with legislation that government has implemented and executed towards the integration of immigrants and refugees in Finland. Through various researches and studies we went through during our research process, helped diffusing our knowledge about refugee situation in other parts of the world as well as in Finland and the problems they have been facing.

The most important facet about professionalism that we developed during the research period is critical analysis. We learnt to critically analyze others work as well as our own. We frequently asked questions to ourselves such as: why things are like this and why not that? Would it be better if things remain same or changes should be made? Why to focus only one aspect and why not cover wide range? We also learnt that how it is important not to influence the findings of the research with our own ideologies that we believe on. We never let our views, beliefs, religious ideologies, cultural values, general stereotypes and generalization come in between. We kept ourselves distant from these things and tried to become professional while conducting the interviews and scrutinizing the information.

The whole research process had been very spawning to us in terms of professional development. We have gained dexterity that will help us in rest of our life as both of us have strong desire to work and study in the field of integration, ethnic relations, multiculturalism and resettlement of refugees. We have widened our expertise about migration, refugees, integration, asylum, assimilation, acculturation and so on. Moreover, we developed a better competence in English language, which had been main approach of consulting, decoding and short handing the research

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE IN ENGLISH

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What is your country of origin?

2. How long have you been living in Finland?

3. How old are you?

4. Did you come directly from your home country? Or from another country? Or from refugee camp?

5. Tell me about you experience of transition.

6. Do you have any family members in Finland or relatives?

RESETTLEMENT IN FINLAND

7. Did you participate in language training and educational participation programs? Tell me more about them.

8. Are you able to speak Finnish language? What is your self-assessment in your language skill?

Do you consider your Finnish language skill as an obstacle from interacting with people in Finnish?

9. Are you employed or unemployed at the moment?
10. If employed, how did you find the job? Tell me more about your challenges and strategies in finding job?
11. Have you been able to make Finnish friends? Who with you usually interact? Tell me more about it. How have you met friends in Finland?
12. What kind of hobbies do you have? How do you spend your spare time?
13. Did you face any discrimination/racism during your resettlement process? Are you still facing any sorts of racism/discrimination? Tell me about your experiences.
14. What is your perception about the Finnish culture and people? Have you accepted the way of living in Finland or are you still struggling?
15. Would you like to assimilate into Finnish culture or retain your culture of origin?
16. Do you intend to stay in Finland permanently?
17. What kind of plans for the future you have?

APPENDIX 2: HAASTATTELUKYSYMYKSET SUOMEKSI

TAUSTATIETOA

1. Mistä maasta olet kotoisin?
2. Kuinka kauan olet asunut suomessa?
3. Kuinka vanha olet?
4. tulitko suoraan suomeen kotimaastasi vai toisesta maasta vai tulitko pakolaisleiriltä?
5. Kerro siirtymäprosessistasi/kokemuksistasi suomeen tulemisessa.
6. Onko sinulla perheenjäseniä tai sukulaisia suomessa?

SUOMEEN ASETTAUTUMINEN

7. Oletko osallistunut kieliopetukseen, käynyt koulua tai osallistunut muihin koulutusohjelmiin. Kerro niistä lisää.
8. Puhutko suomea? Miten arvioisit suomen kielen taitosi?
9. Onko suomenkielentaitosi mielestäsi esteenä kanssakäynnille suomenkielisten ihmisten kanssa?
10. Käytkö töissä vai oletko työtön?

11. Jos olet töissä, miten löysit työn? Kerro haasteistasi työnhakuun liittyen. Miten etsit työtä?
12. Onko sinulla suomalaisia kavereita? Kenen kanssa olet yleensä tekemisissä? kerro lisää sosiaalisesta elämästäsi.
13. Mitä harrastuksia sinulla on? Kuinka vietät vapaa – aikaasi?
14. Oletko kohdannut syrjintää tai rasismia? Jos olet, kerro kokemuksistasi.
15. Mikä on mielikuvasi suomalaisesta kulttuurista? Oletko hyväksynyt suomalaisen elämäntavan vai onko sinulla vaikeuksia sopeutua?
16. Haluaisitko sopeutua suomalaiseen kulttuuriin vai säilyttää oman kulttuurisi elämäntavan?
17. Aiotko jäädä suomeen pysyvästi?
18. Mitä tulevaisuuden suunnitelmia sinulla on?