

**THE ROMA: THIEVES AND BEGGARS?**  
PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ROMA IN FINLAND  
DISPLAYED IN FINNISH NEWSPAPER ARTICLES IN 2006-  
2011

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## ABSTRACT

Vilma Ahola, The Roma: thieves and beggars? Public attitudes towards the Roma in Finland displayed in Finnish newspaper articles in 2006-2011.

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The aim of the study was to analyse the written text related to the Roma in Finland, displayed in Finnish newspaper articles. Moreover, the interest was particularly in the public attitudes that could be found in such text. Both Finnish Roma citizens as well as European Roma migrants were included. Discourse analysis was used as a method of analysing the data so that hypothetical assumptions of people's attitudes and their nature could be created. Furthermore, social exclusion of the Roma as an ethnic minority was used as a perspective of analysing the attitudes. Consequently, the research questions were: What kind of public attitudes towards the Roma newspaper reports display in Finland? How do these attitudes reflect the Roma's social exclusion and whose attitudes are they actually?

The data was collected exclusively from Helsingin Sanomat, a Finnish newspaper with national distribution and a variety of reports in relation to the Roma. Most of the reports of this topic were published after 2006; therefore the articles used as data were limited to those published between 2006 and 2011. After collecting a variety of articles, the data was further restricted from fifty to fourteen articles of different topics, from different years and authors. The data was then analysed by using the discourse analysis in answering the research questions.

When analysing the text in relation to the Roma, displayed in the newspaper articles, strong discourses were found that reflected wider public attitudes. Discourses of ethnic discrimination were found as the Roma were labelled dishonest people who placed a risk to Finnish society. These negative attitudes were reflecting the extent of exclusion and marginalization Roma people face currently. However, discourses of sympathy and solidarity were also found and ideas for improvement presented. In conclusion, the attitudes that became evident in the analysis were uncompromised, strong beliefs of what the Roma are and what the effects of the European Roma's migration to Finland are. In this frame, future aspects and ideas could be suggested in relation to the responsibilities and possibilities of a professional social worker, dealing with the oppression of the Roma.

Keywords: the Finnish Roma, the Roma migrants, beggars, social exclusion, discourse analysis.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The topic and aim of this paper formed through many changes and a number of different preliminary ideas. It was clear that the topic of greatest interest was the Roma, but it was initially quite challenging to limit the topic into a study compact enough. Having recently worked with European Roma migrants, I had personal interest in the group. Moreover, the current political and informal discussion around the Roma's situation in Europe urged me to further study their status and circumstances in my own country. After deciding to look into the field of media, in relation to the Roma, the research questions and objectives of the study formed subsequently. In this thesis the main focus is on those attitudes of the public towards Roma people that can be detected by reading Finnish newspaper articles, specifically by reading the speech of different individuals featured in the articles. Furthermore, the aim is to find connections with these attitudes and the existing social exclusion of the Roma in Finland. The articles used as data are further specified as reports published between 2006 and 2011, in a national newspaper Helsingin Sanomat.

The research starts with theoretical background of Roma people, explaining the concept and differentiating those Roma people who are a Finnish minority – citizens of Finland – from those who have migrated from other European countries. Since the Roma are the largest minority in Europe and in a position of apparent oppression, the topic is a current and important one. Thus, the theory part continues with definitions of social exclusion and description of the exclusion Roma people face as a minority group. This narrative on the political, historical, economic and social situation of the Roma is to give an idea of why this minority is such a current topic of discussion in the media and why the attitudes towards them are an interesting objective.

Furthermore, these factors also explain the whys and wherefores of the migration of Roma people in Europe. Previous research has been conducted for instance in relation to the recent migration of the Roma to Finland. For example the economic situation in Eastern European countries, contributing to the poverty, social exclusion and discrimination of the local Roma communities; have been described as pushing factors for the Roma's migration. Additionally, pulling factors for the migration of the Roma to Finland were found to be existing family ties (family members already staying in Finland) and the opportunities to gain better ways for providing for oneself – through official labour or unofficial (Enache 2010, 21-23.) Also, discourse analysis has been used in studying the "hate speech" towards the Roma in Romania, and this has further demonstrated the strong negative attitudes expressed in public towards the entire Roma community (Peltonen 2010, 85).

The main research task is to find out what type of attitudes towards Roma people the Finnish newspaper articles display. Additionally, the sub-questions are how the displayed attitudes connect to the social exclusion of the Roma and whose attitudes are they. Therefore, the aim of this research is simply to analyse text and the meanings it entails, and to discuss it in the framework of political and socio-economic oppression of the Roma. Finally, the results will be connected to the existing Roma policies in place and this will be followed by discussion of future aspects of the Roma's position in our society and what a social worker's role is in improving the situation.

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter some main concepts of the study will be described. Theory on the two Roma groups will be given in terms of their history and current situation in Finland and Europe. I will also describe social exclusion and moreover, the social exclusion experienced by the Roma groups. Theoretical background of the case groups and their exclusion is essential knowledge since it explains much of the motivation I had for conducting this study and it also helps one understand why the attitudes towards the Roma are an important and interesting topic of research.

### 2.1 *The Roma*

#### 2.1.1 Definitions of the Roma

'The Roma' are an ethnic minority traditionally thought to have migrated from India to Europe. The name Roma – in Romani language meaning 'man or 'husband' – dates back to 1971 to the very first gathering of Romani World Congress (Smith 2011). Within the Roma group there are several ethnic sub-groups which clearly differ from one another. In official papers used by the European Union institutions, "Roma" includes a number of groups, for instance the Travellers and Sinti, who in fact are two separate ethnic groups although their cultures have comparable features (European Parliament 2010). In a social research article by Dimitrina Petrova, this has been further explained, '*Groups externally identified as Gypsies but not necessarily considering themselves as ethnic Roma include thejevgjit in Albania; the Ashkallija and Egyptians in Kosovo and Macedonia; the Travelers in Britain and Ireland; and the Rudari and Beyashi in Hungary, Romania, and other countries*' (Petrova 2003). Therefore, the Roma does not only include the Romanian Roma familiar to the mainstream, but also for instance

Irish travellers. In this thesis, however, the main focus is on the Eastern European Roma (commonly known as 'Gypsies') and the Finnish Roma.

Today, there are a number of Roma groups spread around different European countries with the majority situated in Eastern and Central Europe (Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czech Republic etc). Due to a number of reasons later discussed in this paper, many Roma still live outside official records and therefore the population estimates vary. According to a European Union press release, "*There are between 10 million and 12 million Roma in the EU, in candidate countries and potential candidate countries in the Western Balkans*" (Europa MEMO 10/383 2010). The same document discusses the underprivileged situation of the Roma who, despite from being entitled to equal rights to all other EU citizens, suffer from social and economic deprivation. "*They are disproportionately affected by discrimination, violence, unemployment, poverty, bad housing and poor health standards*" (Europa MEMO 10/383 2010.)

Since in this study there are two 'Roma groups' included, the groups ought to be distinguished. The term Finnish Roma covers those persons belonging to the ethnic minority of Roma but who are Finnish citizens. The European Roma in this text, on the other hand, describes mainly those Roma migrants who have arrived from different European countries. As acknowledged further on in the study, these people are commonly known as "the beggars", mostly migrating from countries such as Romania and Bulgaria in order to find income. However, for many people still the concept "Roma" seems foreign and they rather respond to the word "Gypsy", a concept currently seen as politically incorrect and not appropriate for official context. According to the Leeds Roma –community's publication, the word Gypsy comes from the time Roma immigrated to Europe in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. They were thought to have arrived from Egypt, and were called Egyptians, Gypsies (Gypsy Roma Traveller Leeds 2011).

### **2.1.2 The historical, political and economic factors**

In order to understand why so many Roma migrate from one European country to another, it is important to acknowledge especially the political and economic factors of different EU countries affecting the Roma. As mentioned, a majority of the migrant Roma in Finland have originally come from Romania and Bulgaria (also e.g. Hungary). The employment rate, income and social welfare in these countries are crucially poorer than in for instance Scandinavia. Poor living conditions and unemployment are issues that many people are facing in these countries, and the Roma community is suffering from it severely. Also, these factors all contribute to social exclusion and make Roma a very vulnerable group. A World Bank technical note on The Employment, Skills and Innovation Agenda demonstrates this. "*Employment rates in Hungary and Romania, which only slightly exceeded 60 percent, were one of the lowest in the EU-27*" (World Bank 2011, 5). The same publication lists the Roma as one of the most disadvantaged groups when discussing unemployment in the EU. The comparison between majority population shows that the Roma suffer from considerably higher unemployment rate and this is even more the case with women. The example case of Bulgaria reveals that while nearly two out of three men in the mainstream population are employed, only every third Romani male has work. The situation with Roma women is more drastic. In Romania 55% of women in the majority population work while the percentage of employed Roma women is 31% (World Bank 2011, 12.) To conclude, one major factor in encouraging Roma to migrate is assumedly the poor economic situation in their home countries. However, the employment of Roma is not a simple matter, much because of their traditional culture. This is further explained in the next chapter.

### **2.1.3 Culture and traditions of the Roma**

The first and foremost point one must keep in mind when talking of Roma communities is that these communities are strongly bound around old tradi-

tions. The role of a written language, for instance, is minor. The traditions, skills and knowledge have normally been shared from one generation to the other by speech. The core values of the culture concern family and community – the Roma are very family-orientated. These points consequently help to explain the tradition of not attending schools: the children are taught the “important skills” at home, by the elders. According to the World Bank technical note on the employment and skills in different European countries, the Roma are disadvantaged also in primary education. With up to 12 million Roma in Europe, the number of Roma children completing their primary education is statistically at the same level with children in Sub-Saharan Africa. (World Bank 2011, 17.) The culture of not attending public education is further explained in the website of Roma Foundation, ‘*Rroma never had a country - neither a kingdom nor a republic - that is never had an administration enforcing laws or edicts. For Rroma, the basic "unit" is constituted by the family and the lineage*’ (Roma Foundation). However, a differing view is offered by an anthropologist Judith Okely who argues that the educational culture in Western Countries forces the Roma children to fit into a mainstream model while overlooking the importance and value of the traditional way of life of the Roma communities (Gynther 2007, 228).

#### **2.1.4 The Finnish Roma**

In order to understand the argument of Finnish Roma being excluded and marginalized, it is essential to know about their history in Finland. Janette Grönfors, a Finnish Romani herself, has written an article on this issue for the European Roma Rights Centre. According to Grönfors, the Roma have been in Finland since the 16<sup>th</sup> century and have thus been a part of all the important Finnish historical events and milestones such as the wars. They have fully adapted the Finnish language as their own and they see themselves as Finnish. In Finland itself they are approximately 10 000 in number (in addition to those 3 500 living in Sweden) and are consequently the largest traditional ethnic minority in the country (Grönfors 2004.) However, according to the Finnish legislation it is not possible to register people by their

ethnic origin; therefore the estimated 10 000 might vary significantly. What comes to the position and conditions of the Roma population, Grönfors claimed that '*The status of Roma has traditionally been very different from that of the majority. Roma were persecuted in Finland, too, from 1600 to 1800*' (2004.) Additionally, it has been argued that within all the national minorities of Finland, such as the Swedish speakers and the Sámi; the Finnish Roma have been treated with less recognition and inclusion. This has been the case for instance with the Roma's social citizenship, which is an essential part of being included in society. (Nordberg 2007 46-47.)

The discriminative attitudes and actions taken towards the Roma, however, are not only far in history. The publication of the Negotiation Board of Roma Affairs from 2006 talks about the social exclusion of Roma people in the 1950's and how it has taken decades of hard work to get improvement and change about. According to an article in the publication, there was an incident in 1965 where a travelling Roma family with a seriously ill daughter did not get help until one police sergeant interfered and demanded the public health care providers to take action. This incident led to an intensive discussion in the press as well as on Yleisradio channels, about the social conditions of the Roma. In order to reduce the prejudice, an academic research about the conditions of the Roma was requested (from the government), also in order to provide citizens with accurate information (Ministry of Social and Health Care 2006, 10.)

### **2.1.5 The Roma migrants**

The European Roma migrants, generally regarded as "the beggars" are a common sight in the streets of many Finnish towns, not the least in the metropolitan area. Local newspapers and national news channels have almost daily updates dealing with the beggars and other Roma travellers who had built up a living area next to the refugee centre in a Helsinki harbour area called Kalasatama. Since gaining the European Union membership, the Bulgarian and Romanian Roma have had the right to move freely to and

within Finland. A publication from the Finnish Home Office described the consequences of this free movement phenomenon by claiming that it immediately showed in the rising number of beggars in the streets. In the last few years, especially since summer 2007, foreign beggars have appeared in the centres of our largest cities. The appearance of beggars in the streets scene is partly to do with the expansion of the European Union on 1.1.2007 and the related opportunity to free movement. Additionally, when countries such as Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU, it meant that their citizens were no longer able to seek asylum in Finland. Consequently, the Roma coming from those countries did no longer have the benefits of being an asylum seeker (temporary accommodation in a reception centre and an allowance by the state). Hence, the immediate way of getting income was selling of items in the streets and begging. At the same time in Finland other phenomena, which are assumed to be related to street begging, have increased. These kind of phenomena include inter alia “forceful selling” of bric-a-bracs, street selling of flowers and disturbing performing of music in the streets (Finnish Ministry of Interior 21/2008.) The Finnish media also started paying increasing attention to the issue and the attention seems to be growing. The battle between the public, the state and the third sector organizations fighting for and against the accommodation of Roma travellers has been one of the main topics discussed in the media, as will be demonstrated further on in this study.

### **2.1.6 The Roma in the European Union**

As stated before, Roma migrants are becoming a common sight not only in Finland but across Europe. With the educational, economic and social challenges they are facing, Roma people have also become an essential topic of research and development in the European Union, as well as amongst different organizations and communities. *“The Roma are Europe’s largest minority, with a population of an estimated 10-12 million. With concerns about integrating immigrants and the “failure” of multiculturalism making more recent news, the plight of the Roma, who are European Union (EU)*

*citizens, seems to be an on-going, but not acknowledged story.*" (Meyer 2010, 42.) Furthermore, the Roma are a unique group since they are a community spread into a number of sub-communities in several countries. Also in relation to the Roma's uniqueness, McGarry argued that the Roma cannot be related to other minorities around Europe due to the fact that they are the only group with no home country of their own and thus they are exceptional (McGarry 2008, 453). The Roma are spread around a number of states, yet many of them are lacking citizenship. This is reinforcing their position as a marginalized and excluded minority since for instance social security is connected to citizenship; and as argued by Nordberg (2007, 46-47) in the chapter on the Finnish Roma, social citizenship is an important feature of social inclusion.

It seems that in Europe, Roma people are the problem of everyone and no one. Consequently, one of the major questions in the European Union politics is that of who is to take action and, moreover, *how* to deal with the millions of Roma migrants moving through the borders of Union countries. The Roma being a nomadic community, they struggled when nation borders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century became increasingly secured and closed. Consequently, the confrontations with authorities resulted in evictions and this is still an ongoing issue with Roma people. (Smith 2011, 32.) Hence, in July 2010 France gained a large amount of publicity by starting to evict thousands of Roma people staying in the country without residence permits. According to the free movement legislation recognized by all European Union member states, '(1) *Citizenship of the Union confers on every citizen of the Union a primary and individual right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in the Treaty and to the measures adopted to give it effect*' (European Union 2004/38/EC). Yet, there are official and unofficial measures taken in a number of European Union countries to evict Roma groups or in other ways encourage them to flee. The sight of beggars in the streets and the rise in crime rates where Roma are located are again more reason for the public to promote discrimination and exclusion of the Roma. As further argued by Meyer, the "*Social exclusion, discriminatory attitudes, human rights viola-*

*tions and the continued economic crisis have put Roma in an increasingly disadvantaged position across Europe.(...) The EU, national and local governments and NGOs often struggle to get the assistance down to the local level where it is needed most” (Meyer 2010, 43.)* The situation of Roma people seems to be particularly difficult in the new EU member states where for instance poverty in the country is generally associated with the Roma community (Saari 2005, 162).

## **2.2 Social exclusion and the Roma**

### **2.2.1 Defining social exclusion**

The term social exclusion roots back to the discussion around poverty that was then widened up to analyse deeper and larger deprivation – deprivation of participation. Still today, in everyday discussion, poverty and social exclusion go firmly together and one is thought to enforce the other. Nevertheless, poverty has been distinguished as a material deprivation from the more abstract state of deprivation, social exclusion, by stating that it is about disadvantage and incapacity to involvement in society. It has been further argued that social exclusion is about both inequalities in physical things as well as in having influence. (Haralambos & Holborn 2004, 48). Furthermore, social exclusion is an active development of being an outsider in all dimensions of society (cultural as much as political etc) and therefore it becomes a barrier to people’s integration in society (Byrne 2005, 2). Hence, social exclusion has several dimensions and it is not only related to physical exclusion but it is also that of abstract relationships between people, and it affects the entire community and its cohesion.

Some of the major factors contributing to social exclusion are challenges in accessing education and employment. In the case of the European Roma in Finland this is especially crucial, since their lack of Finnish language often deprives them from participating especially in the labour market. Having

employment does not only benefit one financially but it gives people the opportunity to network, gain acquaintances and feel self-worth. According to a research conducted in Germany on the issue of youth unemployment and social exclusion, those who are not in employment for a longer period of time often end up suffering from significant psychosocial stress and this is especially due to the significance society gives to being a paid employee (Kieselbach, van Heeringen, La Rosa, Lemkow Zetterling, Sokou, Starrin 2006.) As concluded earlier, Roma people have a traditional culture and are often not working in paid employment as the majority of mainstream workers. Therefore it cannot be simply assumed that long-term employment as such will affect the wellbeing of a Roma individual, especially if the social meaning given to paid employment is not significant. However, the exclusion of the Roma from labor market does contribute to the social exclusion as well in terms of Roma being “different” from the mainstream. In Finland, for instance, long-term unemployment is commonly seen negative and as an undesirable situation.

### **2.2.2 The exclusion of the Roma**

All forms of discrimination due to race, culture and nation has been illegalised by the European Union legislation (Charles University 2005-2006). Hence, the European Union has acknowledged the negative effects that discrimination has socially and educationally, on a micro- as well as macro level in Europe. Some of these effects lead to groups of people falling out from the social circles and labour market, and to certain areas becoming increasingly underprivileged. A common example of a disadvantaged group like this is the minority of Roma, Gypsies and Travellers (Charles University.)

In this thesis it is argued that the Roma are in fact socially and economically excluded in individual level as much as on the societal. This might come across as a generalized statement but there are a number of studies and articles written in support of this argument. Moreover, the existing exclusion of

this ethnic minority group indeed is a current topic of general discussion in more than one country. As mentioned earlier, the roots of Roma people's exclusion are in the history and politics. Evidently, the Roma have been bystanders through history and their silence in for instance policy making (perhaps also due to low literacy rates) has further emphasised their excluded position (Pogany 1999, 152-153). The European Roma Rights Centre has studied emerge of discrimination and negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities in Eastern European countries. In relation to this, the Roma have been found to be a minority group especially affected in terms of maltreatment in education and employment, exclusion from services and unfair treatment on behalf of the media. Furthermore, the Roma began suffering from extensive abuse that was even largely accepted. (Tileagă 2005, 19.) According to the Ministry of Social and Health Care, the Finnish minority politics started changing in the 1970's through new legislation on anti-discrimination. This also included the promotion of social, cultural and economic conditions of the Roma population. However, the structural changes in Finland at the time also made it more difficult for the Roma to live by their traditional professions and this has been one essential factor for them not being able to get employment and thus becoming excluded (STM 2004, 3.)

### 3 METHODOLOGY

Methodology consists of the tools and approach the researcher has used in conducting the study. The character of this study is qualitative since it focuses on the descriptive way of analysing something as abstract as public attitudes. The role of an author of this research is to analyse and interpret; therefore the type of qualitative methodology used in this thesis is that of interpretive approach. This school of qualitative methodology focuses on understanding people's (social) behaviour, its whys and wherefores, as well as meaningfulness, through qualitative collection of data (Haralambos & Holborn 2004,197). The data used in this research on the attitudes towards the Roma consists of written articles. Furthermore, the method of processing the data, and thus answering the research questions, is discourse analysis. This chapter will introduce the research question as well as describe discourse analysis and the data used in the analysis.

#### **3.1 Research questions**

The aim of this research is to study public attitudes towards the Roma, in the frame of social exclusion. Consequently, the research questions are what kind of attitudes towards the two Roma groups do the newspaper reports display? Whose attitudes are these? And finally, how do these attitudes relate to the social exclusion of the Roma, if at all? Therefore, the main focus is on the categorising of attitudes; negative, positive, discriminative, empathetic etc. Also, in order to answer the research question *whose* attitudes, I will try to distinguish different speakers of different backgrounds. For instance, is the attitude displayed an attitude of a news reporter, of a Roma person, of an authority or perhaps someone working in the field of social work? These are the three main research questions I seek to answer.

### **3.2 Discourse Analysis**

The method discourse analysis was chosen because it seemed appropriate and accurate for the aim of the research. This method concentrates more on hypothetical analysis of data rather than producing absolute facts and results. Consequently, it leaves more space to be creative when searching for certain discourses and attitudes in the text. The researcher is not forced to disclose the truth but to speculate speech that could be a reflection of wider attitudes.

Discourse analysis is not as much of a research method but a tool to approach issues (such as the displayed attitudes towards the Roma) by analysing the use of language. Thus, the name comes from analysing 'discourses' i.e. certain regulated elements in language, or a manner of speech such as the discourse of racism. Discourses can also be seen as a part of larger social behaviour. (Holliday 2007, 114-115.) Discourse analysis seeks not to give straightforward, valid answers to questions but rather to "read between the lines", speculate the invisible meanings and agendas behind words. Hence, it can be simply about speculating and creating assumptions. In his article on discourse analysis, Fulcher argues that an essential part of using the discourse analysis is to reflect on the researcher's own bias and to acknowledge the fact that one's personality and environment influence the way of analysing speech (Fulcher 2005). He further explains that the research conducted starts from having a research question and then by decomposing the text analysed, the researcher searches for different structures and discourses. *'A discourse is a particular theme in the text, especially those that relate to identities, for example such as a statement that reiterates a view or claim that men find weddings dull, and so on'* (Fulcher 2005.)

Furthermore, Finnish professors from the University of Jyväskylä have written about the purpose of discourse analysis. According to their research, this method is first and foremost a loose theoretical and methodological frame. Discourse analysis can base on two different ways of looking at text: language can be regarded as reflecting the reality or creating the reality.

The speech must first be understood as transferring a meaning, but later the material ought to be classified as collective structures of meanings and as discourses that are revealing them. In the process of analysis, individual speech and their meanings are as if assimilated as part of larger discourses through which social reality tends to be created. (Aaltola & Valli 2001, 100.) The professors, also, point out the importance of context: when processing the text one must recognise the societal position of the author as well as the social field in which different ways of speaking have a different kind of value. Someone speaking in a professional, occupational setting assumedly talks with a more serious meaning than a group of friends in a local pub. (2001, 100-101.) This is a very essential point also in this study, when analysing the newspaper articles. When a reporter explains something that has happened, it ought to be expressed in a neutral and descriptive way where as a by-passing citizen being interviewed in relation to the happenings might explain things in a very personal and even provocative way. It is important to make a difference between these type of contexts and individuals when connecting the discourse structures in the speech to wider public attitudes.

When reading through the articles I had chosen as my material, I used discourse analysis to search for assumed attitudes, hidden in the text, in relation to social exclusion of the Roma. This happened practically by looking at the topics of articles, the essence of the text and the words different speakers have chosen to describe issues. Moreover, the aim was not merely to analyse the reporter's attitudes but also of those who are featured in the articles. These are both people from the Roma community as well as Finnish mainstream citizens; government workers and Romani organization members etc. I analysed the text, the discourses, by answering to the question '*whose* attitude is it?' Are the statements and meanings behind the speech those of general public, of the reporter, or of some other certain individual? Also, the analysis includes comparisons on possible similarities and differences in the articles. Are there certain discourses repeating in the texts, perhaps with different authors? Is it possible to find different attitudes towards different groups of Roma people? At the end, after analysing the attitudes shown and reflecting them in the frame of social exclusion, I conclud-

ed by answering the research questions: what exactly were the attitudes found in the data, from whose view point and how do they relate to social exclusion. Also, I will describe the process of discourse analysis in the conclusions. I will explain whether I found what I was looking for, whether the findings were unexpected and how well this method met the aims of the research.

*“As I write this article in March 2009, the Hungarian public sphere is flooded with articles, reports, and demonstrations discussing crimes committed by or against Roma. The former refers to Gypsy criminality and openly stigmatizes an entire ethnic group, whereas the latter draws our attention to the increasing pervasiveness of racist discourses and a series of crimes committed against Romani people since January 2008.” (Rövid 2011.)*

### **3.3 Data in use**

The data used to analyse the general attitudes towards the Roma consists of 14 newspaper articles published in Helsingin Sanomat. All the articles were gathered from the period of 2006 till spring 2011 and all of them are reports; there are no columns or editorials included. Helsingin Sanomat is a newspaper with a nationwide daily distribution and it includes articles about national and international news. I chose to include only this one newspaper for several reasons. First of all, Helsingin Sanomat has a great number of articles dealing with the topic in case, which also were published during a long period of time. Therefore, it seemed the most natural and most convenient place to look for material. Also, had I included a number of other newspapers, I would have been forced to analyse the different ways of writing and publishing stories in different locations and with different publishers. This would have taken a great amount of time and effort and what felt more essential for the research topic, was to place as much effort as possible on the analysis of the context of the articles.

### ***3.4 Collecting and filtering the data***

The collection of articles in use happened mainly through the internet archives of Helsingin Sanomat. Some of the latest articles were collected from paper copies of the newspaper. The collection of data began by typing keywords “roma (people)” and “romani” into the search field on Helsingin Sanomat website and in this way I got to a fairly long list of previous articles written about the Roma, all the way back in 2002. Consequently, I gathered all the articles that could be found of the topic (the Roma in Finland). This summed up to approximately 50 articles of which I further picked out 14, two to three reports per year. I only chose 14 because of the repetition most recent articles had; most of them were written on the same topic with the same perspectives and in my opinion not much new was brought up in these publications. Furthermore, I tried to look for articles dealing with both the Finnish Roma as well as the European Roma staying in Finland. However, finding articles about the Finnish Roma was a challenge considerably greater than finding those dealing with the migrants. An essential point here is that articles on the Roma written before 2007 (Romania and Bulgaria’s EU memberships), were almost without exception about the Finnish Roma whereas after 2007, one can barely find these in the Helsingin Sanomat archives - this naturally being a consequence of the increased migration of the European Roma. Additionally, the aim was to get a wide presentation of topics including the view point of individuals and institutions as well as the Roma themselves. It must also be taken into consideration the current nature of the topic – there is and will be a great number of articles written about the Roma this year (2011) and because the time limit of this thesis process, I am only able to include the articles up till summer 2011.

A great number of the articles were written about the same issues (with same type of tone and approach as with the example of the Kalasatama camp). Therefore, in order to analyse as much of the discourses as possible, it was essential to pick different type of topics. Including articles from as

many different writers as possible was crucial not only to exclude the bias of the author but also to get a wider reflection of general attitudes. Additionally, another challenge I faced was the fact that a great majority of articles found were of the European Roma and I struggled to find material on the Finnish Roma. As a consequence, much of the analysis in the Findings -chapter concentrates on the Roma migrants rather than the Roma with Finnish citizenship. The filtering process was not easy and I was concerned the results would not reflect reality very well due to inaccurate choices of articles for the analysis. Therefore, the impact of the filtering of articles ought to be included in the process of criticising the validity of this study.

### ***3.5. Validity of data***

When discussing the validity of material used, the first question is how well the articles analysed actually reflect the real public attitudes. How can one distinguish the author's personal opinions from the wider perspectives exposed in the text? Also critics should be given to the fact that the material is gathered from only one newspaper and thus the likelihood of the articles representing a view of a wider population is smaller. The possible bias of the publisher has to be taken into consideration as well as the fact that there are a small number of authors behind the chosen articles. Therefore, the attitudes showing in the text might not be a real reflection of reality.

This research can be considered qualitative although it does not include case studies, interviews or other interaction with individuals as such. Consequently, the process and results of this research cannot be controlled to not have bias and individual ideologies interfering with the reality. Hence, *'qualitative researchers accept the fact that research is ideologically driven. There is no value-free or bias-free design. The qualitative researcher early on identifies his or her biases and articulates the ideology or conceptual frame for the study'* (Holliday 2007, 47.)

## 4 FINDINGS

This section consists of the chosen newspaper articles together with the analysis of the text, in other words the findings of the study. I have translated the articles and quoted only parts of the entire reports, in order to focus only on the relevant parts of the text. Furthermore, the news articles are separated from the analysis part by indentation.

### ***4.1 The Finnish Roma and continuing discrimination***

#### **4.1.1 “Is your whole family going to come to work?”**

“*The Roma is still the most discriminated ethnic group in Europe*” a former specialist of European Council in Roma affairs, Miranda Vuolasranta claims in an article ‘The Roma experience discrimination in job seeking and training’ (Heinonen 2006). This article discusses the challenges Roma people face around Europe: their educational background is poor and many Roma children are still placed in a separated school away from the mainstream.

*There are several reasons for the low employment rate. One of them is the fact that many Roma are lacking education. For example in the Eastern European countries 70% of the children have gone to a separated school. Often it has been a school for disabled children. “Children have not had the opportunity to develop themselves or gain education that would get them employment”, Vuolasranta says. Still in the mid 90’s 40% of Roma children went to a special school. (Heinonen 2006.)*

Still. By saying *still* in the mid 90’s, the writer gives readers the impression that the action (separate schooling) is something that should have been giv-

en up a long ago. It is not acceptable for the modern, developed decade of 1990's. Moreover, the article is painting a fairly reasonable picture of why the Roma are often lacking employment – it is due to educational lacks; and at the end it all comes down to historical aspects. This minority group has always been the runner up. Children who have no special intellectual needs, yet are placed in a disabled children's school, are bound to be slower in their development. Furthermore, the low educational accomplishments of the Roma children have been explained by lack of consideration for their lingual needs as well as isolating them into schools that are lacking funding (Gynther 2007, 227). Similar separation and discrimination also expands to the labour market as demonstrated in the quotation below.

*Many Roma people have to listen to discriminative comments already in the job interview. "Employers may have presented the applicant with thoughts such as is your whole family going to come to work" a secretary of the South Finland Advisory Board on Romani Affairs Malla Laiti tells. (Heinonen 2006.)*

In this statement from secretary Laiti, it is claimed that the Roma job seekers come across discrimination "*already in the job interview*". In other words, she is claiming that they are not given the benefit of doubt, not the opportunity that mainstream job seekers perhaps would. And regarding her occupational position as a professional in Romani Affairs, this claim can be taken as something that has truth in it. The article continues with an example of the mentioned interview question "*is your whole family going to come to work*". This way of speaking could be seen as a discourse of discrimination. The job interviewer's speech clearly has prejudice and stereotypes of the Roma and their family/working culture. However, according to the data collected for this research, this particular discourse is not uncommon in the midst of many mainstream Finns. The Roma, as earlier explained, are very family-orientated and they tend to move in groups, sometimes large groups, and sometimes in loud large groups. Generally in the Finnish culture this can be seen as disturbing and irritating, and assumedly this is one reason for the negative stereotypes of the Roma displayed in that quote "*is your whole family going to come to work*"

#### 4.1.2 “I was told I won’t get in because I am a Roma”

An article published in summer 2006 talks about a Romani test group who went to gather evidence of restaurants not serving the Roma customers in the town of Pori in Western Finland. According to the author, the Roma citizens of Pori were tired of the constant discrimination they were facing. Subsequently, a group of four Roma persons and two witnesses visited 16 different restaurants in all of which the Roma customers were not let in or served. (Hyvärinen 2006.)

*“We did a formal claim to the police because this is a case of general discrimination”, a member of Roma Affairs group Dimitri Hagert tells.” Included were restaurants I had never been to. I was simply told I won’t get in because I am Roma. Restaurants are so conciliated that a restaurant on the walking street wouldn’t even sell a bottle of lemonade to my 4-year-old son last summer”.* (Hyvärinen 2006.)

These testimonies display discrimination against Roma, discrimination that is assumedly deep rooted. To walk into a restaurant and be dismissed due to an ethnic background is excluding one from the basic services the mainstream is using and even taking for granted. The EU Directive on Race equality clearly states that regardless of race and ethnicity, everyone has an equal right to have access to goods and services (European Union/Article 13). Therefore, the restaurant staffs who tell a person to leave because they are Roma are practicing discrimination. This is another example of racist discourses. Thus, according to the article, due to the evidence gathered the issue may now be referred to the discrimination board (Hyvärinen 2006.)

### 4.1.3 There are now immigrants who get their share of being different

*A social instructor and a Roma, Unelma Bollström says that a shopping trip a couple of years back was cut off as early as at the front door when the shop keeper started yelling and accusing her of earlier thefts. "It was insulting and humiliating when people gathered around to listen to it. I asked for evidence, which did not exist. Now the issue is being dealt with in the civil court", Bollström explains. (Hakkarainen & Kantola 2006.)*

A Romani lady tells about a shopping trip she did to a cloth store where she was discriminatively accused of something due to her ethnic appearance. This is an example of a discriminative situation the Finnish Roma have come across inter alia in Helsinki, explained in an article 'Laws have not managed to bring discrimination to an end' (2006). The authors then sharply state that *"The prohibition of ethnic discrimination in the service field has been clearly documented in both the criminal law and the equality law"* (2006). Thus, without actually saying it, they state that preventing this Roma lady from entering the clothing store, assumedly based on her looks, was indeed ethnic discrimination. In addition, the article refers to the test group results in Pori (article in the previous chapter) and tells about a similar test executed in Helsinki restaurants a few years prior. Altogether 11 police reports were processed as a result. This gives the reader an impression that ethnic discrimination of the Roma truly does exist and it appears in direct form not least in the service field.

According to an Amnesty project leader Salonen, interviewed for this article, the bans to restaurants and shops reflect a larger discrimination towards the Roma. This statement establishes that exclusive discourses such as "you are not welcome here because you are a Roma person" do indeed reflect general social behaviour. However, a positive aspect is included in the text. Some of the Roma interviewed for the article say Helsinki is an easier place to live compared to other areas in Finland. They also claim to come across less and less discrimination on the streets, and say there are

now more immigrants to share the part of being different (2006.) So, is being different really a burden a person carries around? Is it not supposed to be richness in society?

## **4.2 Good cop, bad cop - the Roma and the Finnish police**

### **4.2.1 “Romani is a good classification of a thief”**

*I rang the police on Saturday. I wanted to write about a topic that STT had just recently written with a headline ‘Roma-league attacked at the cash machines in Helsinki’. An inspector Tom Packalén was on the phone. He told me two Romanian Roma persons were caught. Three were still on the run.*

*This surprised me a great deal. Not that it was two Romanian Roma persons that were caught but the fact that the police told me this. Usually they have tended to give just the nationality, since giving the ethnic background is labeling. Packalén said that this time the suspected were identified Roma because it is a good classification. I told him I know both, those belonging to the Romanian mainstream as well as Romanian Roma and I am not able to tell them apart.*

*I also asked Packalén to describe, how a Roma looks like. After all, the STT publication only spoke about two people dressed in hip hop-clothing and one with a dark clothing...*

*“We here will not start describing how some Roma looks like. I will on my part ask you how a Somali looks like?” Packalén snapped. (Oksanen 2010.)*

This quotation is from an article published in 2010 on the politics page in Helsingin Sanomat. The reporter Kimmo Oksanen talks about a phone call with the police and the attitude of the inspector he spoke with in a sceptical manner: almost as if defending the Roma. By asking for details and challenging the knowledge of the inspector (“*By the way how do you know they are Roma?*”), he tries to question the inspector and his definitions of a thief. Possibly the author’s aim is to bring the inspector into a critical or even ridiculous light. The reporter further describes the political background of inspector Packalén, a runner for parliament, a member of the True Finns – party, known for their nationalist ideology. Consequently, by bringing up this

political aspect the author gives the impression that the inspector is an immigration critic.

*Ok. So apparently police is able to tell who is a gypsy --- by the face.*

*Inspector Tom Packalén is a True Finn MP-runner up. He has written the following: "The deportation of criminal immigrants must be made easier and increased. For Finland I suggest the so called Baseball-law. Three and out."*

*I wanted to ask Packalén if he stands behind this as a policeman also. And are the roles of a policeman and a politician kept separate? I called Packalén again to his work place on Sunday. Apologetically he stated that he is unable to answer my questions, since the guidelines of Helsinki police department forbid practicing politics during work hours. (Oksanen 2010).*

What comes to inspector Packalén and his speech, it can be concluded that he has labelled the suspected and is not ready to compromise or admit that he might be mistaken. More importantly, he displays discriminative attitude and practices ethnic profiling by publishing a definition of an ethnic background presumably without confirmed information. These discourses of associating the Roma with crime shows that in the eyes of the inspector, the Roma are thieves.

#### **4.2.2 Avoid harassing the police!**

Another article from Oksanen published a year before also deals with the relationship between the police and the Roma; in this case those beggars camping in the area of Verkkosaari in Helsinki. A provocative headline states "The Roma in Verkkosaari collect bottles, beg and avoid harassing policemen". The reader gets a certain impression already from the headline. The first words "collect bottles and beg" lets the reader know that this is the normal life Roma people live; this is how they provide for themselves. Now the continuation "avoid harassing police" makes one feel that this everyday action of collecting bottles and begging irritates or disturbs the police. The

police are an angry, agitated actor and it is best to avoid them in order to keep out of trouble.

*40-year old Miclescu complained that the income of Roma people staying in Helsinki has reduced lately. She put the blame on the police who drive away the Roma from their flower sales spots. Allegedly the police also visit the camp “two, three times a day”.*

*Lately the Roma and Romanians have been presented in the headlines when they have been suspected and detained from shoplifting and thefts. The Helsinki police raided the Roma who were begging on the streets based on their disturbing and aggressive behaviour. That kind of behaviour in Finland is forbidden by the law. “We have done nothing wrong. The police have accused us for no reason. Some have been kept in jails for three days and then let out as innocent.” (Oksanen 2009.)*

Here the author brings out both perspectives: the beggars’ point of view as well as the approach of the police under the Finnish legislation. In a fairly neutral manner, Oksanen explains that the Roma have been suspected of aggressive and disturbing behaviour and because it is forbidden by the law, the police have interfered. However, the Roma interviewee’s words “some have been kept in jails for three days and then let out innocent” makes one question the reliance and capabilities of the police because of the assumed fact that they have detained innocent people. One could also question the tone and attitude of the author, reading the part where he uses words such as ‘allegedly’ (the police might not have visited the camp frequently to “harass” the Roma, it is a subjective allegation) and the way he describes the shoplifters being detained. It is not only the police that are bad, but the Roma are also thieves and shoplifters, begging in an aggressive manner.

#### **4.2.3 Stop harassing the Roma**

In the sector “Your Town” in Helsingin Sanomat, an unknown author has written an article about the Finnish Left Party youth and their appeal to the police to stop discriminating the Roma. The article was published with a

hard-hitting headline “Left Party youth: The police must stop harassing the Roma”. It talks about the alleged ethnic profiling and discrimination of the Roma beggars – discrimination practiced by the Finnish police. A party member Dan Koivulaakso claims that the “intensified surveillance” of the Roma beggars in Helsinki has a racist nature.

*Left Party youth demand the police to stop the intensified surveillance of the Roma beggars in Helsinki. The Left Party youth believe the surveillance campaign is all about racist harassment and ethnic profiling. Helsinki police started the intense campaign at the end of last week. According to the assistant police commissioner Jari Liuku, the motive (for the campaign) was the fast increase in pick pocketing and disturbance in Helsinki. “Already the fact that not all potential EU-tourists go through a similar campaign, makes it obvious that this is a case of ethnic discrimination”, Koivulaakso says. Roma people are EU citizens who, according to the alien legislation, are allowed to stay in Finland for three months without registering with the authorities. The Left Party youth do not know of any cases where the Roma would have been fined for disturbing begging. (Unknown author 2009.)*

The argument in this article involves around the nature and motive of the police’s effective surveillance; and what makes the case more sensitive is that the group involved is an ethnic minority. Furthermore, this minority group is, as assumed by the police, contributing to the increase of thefts and disturbing behaviour in Helsinki. From the view point of the Left Party Youth, the assumption that crimes and disturbance in the area is dealt with by focusing on one ethnic minority group, implies that the police has decided to “blame it” on the Roma. As argued by the party youth, it is only the Roma that go through this treatment. This particular article is interesting in the sense that it displays different attitudes of different actors. Allegedly, the behaviour of the Finnish police are reflecting discriminative attitude towards the Roma as a group. In addition, the article displays the attitude of the political party towards the Roma; attitude of solidarity. Therefore, according to this data it can be concluded that within the Finnish mainstream citizens, there are indeed divided attitudes expressed. However, both of the types of attitudes displayed in this text show that the Roma are in an excluded or

discriminated position. The difference between the two attitudes towards Roma people was simply that the police are (assumedly) acting according to the discriminative attitude whereas the political youth are acting to *change* these attitudes.

### ***4.3 Beggars, a problem.***

#### **4.3.1 A problem in Helsinki that has no good solutions**

*Through the free movement allowed by the European Union, Roma people begging on their knees also appeared in the street corners of Helsinki. It was a sight that had not been witnessed in welfare-Finland in decade or even before: a human being on his knees asking for a penny. In the mind of a Fin it is against all human dignity. The begging Roma cause anguish. First of all, a Fin finds it hard to understand begging. It is against human dignity and the Lutheran perception. In the old days, when one had to collect their income as pennies, begging was still staged as work, for instance as sharpening knives. Especially badly people take to someone begging on their knees. (Blafield 2011.)*

Blafield discusses the feelings raised in the midst of Finns, by the sight of a begging Roma. The word anguish summarizes the feelings of distress, shame, even inhumanity, concerning such a non-Finnish sight as a person begging on their knees. From the article it becomes quite evident that in the eyes of a Fin, it is somehow wrong to beg. Or moreover, it is wrong to be in a situation where one is forced to beg. "Welfare-Finland" does not know such dimensions of poverty and undignified lifestyle. However, begging has a long history also in Finland, and begging was actually seen as a natural profession, even as a positive thing, still in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Mäkinen & Pessi 2009, 71). Furthermore, being poor was regarded as a problem of the whole community: if the congregation could not fill its due duty to provide for the disadvantaged then it was the responsibility of the local community to support the poor by supporting their act of begging (2009, 73). Neverthe-

less, the discourses related to begging in this article are condemning and associating the act with negative side effects.

*Secondly, sometimes begging forms into forced selling which comes close to harassment. Thirdly, with this phenomenon there is criminality involved: abuse of people within the Roma group and otherwise things such as thefts. (Blafield 2011.)*

The points made in the text above bring a differing perspective: begging is an immediate disadvantage to other people. According to the author, this phenomenon of beggars spreading around e.g. Helsinki results in crimes and aggressive behavior. Beggars are a risk to the community.

*It has been suggested that the problem of beggars is solved by forbidding begging. The law would inevitably become something that depends on a person's interpretation. What would count as begging and what would not? First in the law initiatives the talk was about professional begging, then aggressive begging. Besides, the core problem is not actually even the begging, but rather that of whose responsibility these people are, in Helsinki and in general. (Blafield 2011.)*

As expressed by the writer, the Roma beggars are seen as a problem. Beggars being in Finland are a problem. These statements are made with generalization, giving the impression that they are the majority's opinions. A majority of the articles in this study regard the phenomenon of begging as a problem that is solved by getting rid of the beggars. However, in this article the writer brings in a different prospect. Someone ought to be responsible of these people and their situation.

#### **4.3.2 Our public image would suffer from beggars freezing to death**

As earlier concluded, the common approach to the issue of beggars in Finland is that begging is a problem and it needs to be solved. Begging as such is not legally forbidden in Finland, but if it becomes aggressive, loud or is

otherwise disturbing others then the activity can be banned according to the Public Order Act (2003/612). An article published in late 2010 tells about a temporary solution the city of Helsinki created to make the beggars vanish.

*The city of Helsinki came up with a temporary solution to the problem of begging: they will buy approximately 40 Romanians out of the city and the entire country with a little less than 4000 euros. (...) The decision is based on not wanting the Romanians to freeze to death and Helsinki does not have the ability or the will to offer them accommodation. (...) By the one way ticket –decision Helsinki manages to move this problem outside its territory, at least for now. A large stain would appear in the public image of the city and the entire country if beggars froze to death or died for example in a fire at the camping area. It can happen, but not in Helsinki. (Unknown author 2010.)*

This article “One way ticket will not solve the problems of the Roma” criticizes the solution in case, because it does not appear to be a long-term one. Also, the author does not only see it as a failed solution for the city of Helsinki but, as stated in the headline, the writer argues that it will not solve the problems of the beggars themselves. Furthermore, the author takes a critical approach to the motives behind the solution: the city does not have the will to help the beggars; they are only doing this to save the public image of the country. The sharp words and expressions used by the writer make the decision makers in Helsinki sound cold-hearted and self-interested. “It can happen but not in Helsinki” implies that the city is only interested in getting rid of the problem and it does not matter what happens to the beggars, so long as it does not happen at the expense of Finland (staining the public image). The reporter further criticizes the Finnish as well as the European Union authorities and finally suggests a solution.

*Surely Helsinki would have been able to accommodate the Roma camping in Kalasatama, had they wanted to. However, they were not willing to do so, because it would have sent out a message that the Roma travelling around Europe may come in large groups to enjoy the hospitality of Helsinki. Finland has signed several international contracts according to which it must care for also the citizens of other countries – especially those from EU-countries.*

*(...) The eviction and one way ticket-decisions of individual countries will not solve the Roma-problem. The solution for this problem ought to be discovered on EU-level and one must reserve enough finances for it. However, simply dealing money will not help the Roma, unless one makes sure the money really is used in the wellbeing of the Roma in their home countries. So far EU has not taken enough interest in this. Problems are supposed to be dealt with where they have started. It is dishonorable for the entire EU that in its grounds there is a crowd searching for a place where they would have the opportunity to a normal human life. (Unknown 2010.)*

### **4.3.3 In Finland a child may not be kept outside overnight**

*The social office is planning to place the Eastern Europeans begging in Helsinki under closer monitoring. One of those having to go through the monitoring is a Romanian family that has been taking their two-year-old child with them while begging in the streets. For example Helsingin Sanomat told about a begging Moldavian family on Sunday. The family's grandmother herself told, with the help of a translator, that the two-year-old had spent the last few days and nights outside. According to the family service director at the Social Office, Raili Metsälä, this cannot be tolerated. 'If a child is out with their parents on a warm weather, we approach the issue the exact same way as when it is a Finnish child; that is, we are not authorized to intervene. But now we are going towards the winter and if a child is outside through the nights, we are going to intervene', Metsälä said on Monday. (...) Public has, in quite a harsh tone, criticized begging accompanied by a child, for instance on the intense discussion created on the website of Helsingin Sanomat. (Oksanen 2007.)*

This article discusses not only the mentioned child welfare issues of the Roma but also the whole phenomenon of European beggars and the criminality in relation to it. According to the report, the Finnish child welfare actors (in Helsinki) are investigating the Eastern European beggars. This naturally implies that the Social Office knows for a fact that the Eastern European families are possibly violating the Finnish child welfare regulations – and the Moldavian grandmother's story of a two-year-old being kept outside on a winter night further proves this suspicion right. However, what is relevant to

this study are the vague and at the same time generalizing concepts used in the speech of the Social Office. “Eastern Europeans begging in Helsinki” is a very wide term for a group of people. Yet it is the Office’s assumption that those children possibly in risk of a welfare violation are the ones from the Eastern European beggar families. Perhaps in order to avoid being accused of ethnic discrimination, the interviewee from Social Office mentions that these issues (families) are being treated equally to the Finnish ones. The generalizing attitudes of the mainstream are further explained by the author.

*The beggars in Helsinki mainly come from the new EU-countries in Eastern Europe. They are a familiar sight also in other bigger cities in Finland and especially in the Central and Southern Europe. Begging manners are alike which in the eyes of many refers to organized exploitation and even criminality. In the minds of many, also the beggars in Helsinki are associated with those forcefully selling bric-a-bracs or roses. (Oksanen 2008.)*

In the text above the author talks about the general associations that people have with beggars, known Europe wide. Because people see a number of Eastern European looking beggars on the streets, aggressively selling flowers for instance, they easily associate all the European travelers and Roma with these issues. The Romanian criminal leagues have been a topic of discussion after several cases of human trafficking and abuse of Romanian children and women have been revealed around Europe. It is very easy to connect one phenomenon to the other, especially when the Roma and other travelers are a vague group of people in the minds of many mainstream citizens. To conclude, many regard Roma beggars as part of a crime wave.

A different aspect is given by a sergeant in the Helsinki centre police, reminding of the fact that one can always suspect but there actually is no evidence (Oksanen 2008). Oksanen also writes about this in a way that implies it is unnecessary to start making too many assumptions of the beggars having any great criminal connections. Furthermore, an interview with another police sergeant implies that it is not awfully common to have cases with Roma committing serious crimes. The very last comments from Oksanen in

this article leave the reader wondering whether it was his intention to show how the Roma might go around the legislative ambushes.

*Helsinki police has given some fines for aggressive and disturbing begging. But that is the greatest form of criminality that the beggars have proved to have connections to. EU citizens have a complete right to stay in another EU country for three months without obligations, the director of foreign affairs –police, sergeant Hannu Pietilä prompted on Monday. (...) ‘After staying for three months they ought to register. But it is very difficult to prove how many months they have stayed especially when there is no registration at the border --- in order for them to be evicted from this country one should be able to prove they have sustenance problems or they have to have committed serious crimes’, Pietilä said. (...) Besides if an EU citizen says they are looking for employment, ‘reasonable time for looking for work’ stretches without any tricks even into six months. The Moldavian family, for example, told Helsingin Sanomat that they wish to be employed in Finland. (Oksanen 2008.)*

#### **4.3.4 Life of the Roma – not all roses**

*A rusty Toyota Previa from 1990 lies on the parking lot of Aurora hospital. Around it there are clothes, a disposable grill filled by rainwater, children’s buggies and different colour roses in beautiful cluster. The car is a home for this family who has come from Romania. In July the police have warned about Romanian Roma trading by force and in large groups around Finland. Kaldararo family’s head Laurentiu Kaldararo, also selling flowers, feels sad over the accusations. ‘The flowers do not sell anymore because it has been said on the radio that we try to rob people. If I stole, and did not get caught immediately, then I am sure by the fourth time latest I would get caught and had to go to prison. I would not do such’. In addition to the man, a three-year old daughter Mona-Lisa, wife Adela and man’s mother Aguirita Kaldararo live in the car. (Aaltonen 2008.)*

Aaltonen’s article “The life of a flower selling Roma family is not all roses” starts with the author painting a very descriptive picture of the surroundings of this Roma family. This family lives in a car, four people in one car. The names of all family members are listed and this makes them seem more viv-

idly like “real people” – people with names, ages, with a family. Reader is bound to feel sympathy for these struggling people. What comes to the attitudes of the mainstream towards this type of disadvantaged flower selling Roma family, it seems that the Roma are generally regarded to be “robbing people”. Furthermore, as shown in the above articles on, the culture of begging is regarded to be a highly negative phenomenon and there is not much appreciation or solidarity shown towards the Roma earning their living by begging. In Blafield’s article “A problem in Helsinki that has no good solutions”, the displeasure felt by Finns towards begging was explained by the good life people are used to in a welfare state. The foundation of such welfare state is in paid employment that generates tax income for the social security system, and therefore a source of income such as begging or untaxed selling of flowers is a threat to such system. This might also be a contributing factor in the irritation expressed towards the Roma beggars.

*Despite its poor state, the car was almost stolen when Kaldararos were selling flowers in Joensuu. Wires were ripped; a mobile phone and radio were taken. ‘The police came to take fingerprints off the door and the red paste used in the process still shows in the glass’, Laurentiu Kaldararo tells. He hopes the thieves would be caught. The conversation is in English. Laurentiu Kaldararo is proud of his language skills and says it is not something learned in school. He counts the years he has been in school to be altogether seven. Writing his own name goes well in capital letters but lowercase are difficult. He has not gotten school certificate. ‘You should have a diploma to get work, only my wife Adela has gotten a cleaning job in Sweden’. According to Adela Kaldararo’s estimate her years in school are altogether five. (Aaltonen 2008.)*

The description of the Kaldararo family’s challenges continues with getting robbed and the police treating the family’s property carelessly during the investigations. Also, the way Aaltonen tells about the man being proud of his ability to speak English, while not being able to write in lowercase, emphasizes the fact that this is a family with a low key existence. Neither one of the parents has a strong educational background nor do they have much access to the labour market. The most the wife can do jobwise is cleaning which is assumedly low paid. Without employment and income, getting

away from the life of selling flowers and living in a car, does not seem very simple. As stated in chapter 2 (Social exclusion and the Roma), unemployment and not accessing education are strongly linked to social exclusion.

#### **4.4. Attitudes**

##### **4.4.1 The point of view of the Finnish Roma**

*Finland's Romani community knew to expect that sooner or later the Eastern European Roma beggars will arrive in Finland. "This is not a surprise", the head secretary Sarita Friman-Korpela from the Advisory Board on Roma Affairs says --- "in Romania and Bulgaria the Roma live in absolute poverty. Years ago we said if one does not interfere in it (the living conditions of Roma people) along the open borders of EU this will happen. And it happened." (Oksanen 2008.)*

This article "Finland's Roma people and the Home Office knew to expect the beggars" shortly deals with the attitudes of not the mainstream Finns but rather the Finnish Roma community. In the interview of head secretary Friman-Korpela, the fact that the Eastern European Roma people live in absolute poverty and face poor living standards is stated in a way that is almost compassionate. She also says that the situation should have been interfered with. Interfered by whom, she does not clarify, but the impression is that "we" were the ones who were supposed to have dealt with the situation. Whether she says this because she feels it is our responsibility to help *them* (empower the Roma in Eastern Europe) or to do it to help *us* (to avoid the beggars arriving), it is uncertain. However, the article does continue with some different type or perspectives.

*The same questions have been in mind (with the Finnish Roma) as with other citizens and authorities. "The main concern is the children. When the beggars are within the Finnish borders, they have to treat their children the exact same way as everyone else", Friman-Korpela says. According to Friman-Korpela,*

*some of the (Finnish) Roma take to beggars with solidarity. Some are afraid they (beggars) will strengthen the prejudice and stereotypes the Finnish mainstream already have for the Roma even more. "Finland's Roma people and the beggars are completely separate. There isn't even a common language", Friman-Korpela says. (Oksanen 2008.)*

As summarised by the Roma representative Friman-Korpela, some of the Finnish Roma are concerned over the already existing negative attitudes of Finnish mainstream towards their community. Consequently it can be assumed that they see the beggars as a risk or even reliability. This also shows how deep the attitudes of social exclusion of Roma are within Finnish society: having more Roma people in the country is just one more risk factor in making the prejudice *even worse*. Possibly there is also some reflection of history: it used to be the Finnish Roma who were famous of providing for themselves by begging. Now that they are not in such position anymore, the European Roma have come and reintroduced the culture of begging (Mäkinen & Pessi 2009, 91.) Perhaps this, in the point of view of the Finnish Roma, reflects the hard times they went through. This could also be in connection to an interesting prospect that is then given by Friman-Korpela at the end of the article. Something that was rarely displayed in the articles interviewing Finnish mainstream citizens: a thought of what if the Roma are not a threat and a nuisance but could actually be included as part of the community. Not to just organize temporary accommodation for them but to integrate.

*One should first look into their agendas. If they really want to come to this country, find a job and housing, it would be beneficial to be in contact with the Roma organizations straight away, for instance in order to get language education (Oksanen 2008.)*

#### 4.4.2 “If people wanted to help, we would get housing and pension”

Published in 2009, an article about begging and the attitudes of Helsinki inhabitants towards it claims that people’s attitudes in the city have toughened up since the increasing number of beggars has appeared. Beggars who, accusingly, are also more aggressive than before.

*People in Helsinki think that begging has become more aggressive and disturbing than before, says the project leader of Rom po dom – the Roma on the road – project at the Social office. (...) According to the project leader at Deaconess Institute, Tuomo Leinonen, they (beggars) move around where people move a lot: shopping centres and by the railways. Street musicians are a separate group. Earlier begging was quite passive, but now the style has changed to more aggressive than before. ‘At the same time also the reactions of some of the residents have toughened up, maybe accumulated a little. People yell and comment increasingly’, Leinonen notes. ‘Most of the beggars do not understand the Finnish own personal space –area and therefore might push too close’, Leinonen says. (Kopteff & Pajari 2009.)*

In text above, the project leader Leinonen talks about the accumulated negative attitudes Finnish people hold towards the beggars and their behaviour. Furthermore, the changes in attitudes are explained by the increasingly aggressive begging culture, and the beggars are also accused of invading the personal space Finnish people have, which “beggars do not understand”. In this way of speaking the increasingly toughened attitudes; and yelling and commenting by the Finnish citizens, become justifiable. The beggars are talked about as an outside threat and their behaviour is unjustifiable. The negativity and repellent behaviour of the mainstream, and the effects it has on beggars, is described in a fine, indirect way by the two writers. They explain the encounter they had with two beggars in the following quotation.

*The Moldavian man’s urge to chat comes to a sudden end when another man arrives. He is ‘just one friend’. ‘What do you want from us? Go away! If people wanted to help, we would get housing and pension’, the friend says harshly. After this neither one of the men talks. (Kopteff & Pajari 2009.)*

#### 4.4.3 Safety level under the bridges

*We demand for Helsinki city to give the permission for Roma to be accommodated in Rajasaari, and for the police to stop their harassment. (Pukki 2008.)*

The above is a quotation from a Free Movement (Vapaa Liikkuvuus) -activist interviewed for an article "People at Esplanaadi were protesting against the deportation of the Roma" (2008). Due to fire safety reasons, the police had been asked to evict the Roma from Helsinki Rajasaari –area's storage building where the Free Movement –organization had been accommodating the Roma for a short period of time. The article describes this situation and then further describes the protest and its motives.

*To draw attention, black banderol and a megaphone were used in this small protest; and amongst others, Jehki Härkönen from the Green youth and students –association was using the megaphone to spill out his opinions on the treatment of Roma. 'Dear city authorities. Do go and get acquainted with the safety level under Helsinki bridges', he suggested. (Pukki 2008.)*

The author of this article explains the situation in a neutral tone: the police have seen to the eviction as requested and now the Roma are sleeping in tents outside. The writer makes sure she is simply explaining the situation and not putting the blame on anyone for mistreating the Roma as claimed by the protesters: the young activist Härkönen is expressing *his* opinions. Furthermore, one Romani man camping in the area, interviewed by the reporter, adds something that makes the eviction sound less dramatic.

*Among others moving from the storage building to a tent, Oprea Ionel did not complain about his current way of living either. 'Well it is harder, for example last night was windy, but this is the situation now. We use more blankets and wear more clothes', he said. Ionel said he is leaving Helsinki at the end of August. 'I just wish we would get some permanent place to sleep till then. I am happy and grateful for the two weeks we were allowed to live in the storage building'. On*

*Wednesday the police announced that for the time being they are not going to intervene in the Roma's camping. (Pukki 2008.)*

#### **4.4.4 We do not exercise discrimination**

*A tram driver was paying attention to a dark featured woman and came to ask her for a ticket in the middle of the drive on a Tuesday morning in Helsinki. The woman did not understand the driver's question. According to a co-passenger, the driver informed that "here Romanian Roma do not travel around on the tram if there is no ticket" and removed the woman from the tram. The co-passenger went to ask the driver whether he could check the tickets of others too, but the tram continued its way. (Karhunen 2008.)*

This article, also published in 2008, deals with a situation that occurred during a tram drive in Helsinki. A driver had been witnessed selecting a Roma-looking lady to check her ticket while other passengers were left without a check. The story gives the impression that the tram driver deliberately checked only the "Romanian Roma" woman's ticket and left the other (assumedly non-Roma passengers) to be in order to emphasize the act. Therefore, the event would reflect ethnic profiling; direct discrimination due to person's nationality and ethnic background. Furthermore, if the co-passenger is to be believed, the tram driver was not willing to try to explain his question so that the Roma passenger would understand it. Rather he was hurrying to remove this woman from the tram, as if the entire encounter was to simply "get rid of" the assumed Romanian Roma passenger. The writer of this article then spoke to a director of the capital area tram transportation, discussing the possible racist nature of the incident.

*Are tram tickets often checked according to the way a person looks like, HKL's tram transportation's director Pekka Snirviö? 'Well what do you think? For sure these are not our instructions. If such has happened, the driver has worked against our guidelines. We do not exercise discrimination. All these type of cases are investigated: the driver is being interviewed and after that possible penalties are given according to normal procedures. I am sorry if such has hap-*

*pened'. (...) Should the driver have checked tickets from other passengers also? 'Drivers are allowed to check tickets from individuals. Naturally it may not be based on anything racist or discriminative. We are going to place this issue under investigations.' Later Pekka Snirviö calls back. 'We investigated the incident and the driver has proceeded completely righteously. Unfortunately the person in case is a known person who always travels without a ticket. The driver in case is good and has a very good reputation.'* (Karhunen 2008.)

In this part of the article, the blame shifts from the driver to the passenger. According to the interviewed director, the tram driver involved was in his rights to separately choose this person for a ticket check and remove her without further explanations because the woman was known to be a badly-behaved customer. The incident is further justified, and the driver defended, by the director's description of a "good driver with a very good reputation". This reinforces the idea of the Roma woman being the bad party and the driver, most apparently a non-Roma, the good and righteous one.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

In the previous chapter, discourses and attitudes were analyzed and now the conclusions of those findings will be presented. I will categorize the types of discourses and also distinguish the two Roma groups. In this chapter the aim is to summarize the results in order to finally answer the research questions. This chapter also includes analysis of the methodology used, about its relevance and successfulness.

### *5.1 The Finnish Roma*

The articles dealing with Finnish Roma are few in this paper; nevertheless, they have some common features. The three articles from 2006 analysed in the beginning of the findings -chapter were all dealing with the direct discrimination Finnish Roma people have experienced and are still experiencing in looking for housing, employment, or simply a restaurant to dine in. On the other hand, one article mentioning the Finnish Roma was published in 2008 (The point of view of the Finnish Roma) and was rather focusing on the attitudes of the Finnish Roma towards the European Roma; the beggars and their situation in Europe. However, discrimination and negative attitudes were repeatedly displayed in articles talking about the Finnish Roma who, despite everything, are Finnish citizens. In these articles the majority of data used for the discourse analysis consisted of interviews the authors had conducted. Consequently, they were the subjective opinions and experiences of the Roma themselves as well as different professionals, Roma or non-Roma. Thus, the attitudes were displayed as ways in which other people had spoken to members of the Roma minority and ways in which the Roma had been treated in different occasions. Discourses of discrimination were found in all of the articles. Interestingly, the Finnish Roma have long been a marginalized minority, which has led to for instance their traditional Romani language to evaporate while the Roma have been trying to assimilate to the

mainstream. This separates the Finnish Roma from other Roma people around the globe (Weyrauch 2001, 149.) It is as if they are more Finnish than Romani, yet the majority population seems to disagree.

In order to conclude the attitudes found in the analysed speech, it is good to compare the similarities and difference in each story. The first three articles dealing with the discrimination of the Finnish Roma included events such as a person stopping another one of Roma background entering a shop or restaurant, people accusing the Roma of stealing and asking them somewhat politically incorrect questions based on stereotypes (“is your whole family going to come to work”), to mention a few essential ones. These quotes are from people the Roma have encountered in Finland and of whom they have told the reporters. To compare these discourses of discrimination to those that are the author’s speech, the tone was essentially different. As mentioned earlier, a reporter writing for a national newspaper has to have a fairly neutral and moreover a politically correct way of bringing up a variety of issues. An article might be dealing with an issue of sensitive and subjective nature, for instance the discrimination experienced by the Roma, but the way in which a reporter writes about it must most often be “fair” to each party. Therefore, it tends not to be easy to find extremely drastic discourses in text produced by a newspaper reporter. Nevertheless, there are always discourses that can be analysed and assumed to have meant something particular. For instance the article “Laws have not managed to bring discrimination to an end” (2006) discussed cases of discrimination against the Finnish Roma in a neutral tone. However, the author did display a certain attitude by outlining that “*The prohibition of ethnic discrimination in the service field has been clearly documented in both the criminal law and the equality law*” (Heinonen 2006). This discourse expresses condemning of discrimination. Whether it actually is an attitude the author herself holds, or something the publisher would want to have printed, one cannot say for sure, but it is a discourse of a kind regardless.

## ***5.2 The Roma beggars***

### **5.2.1 Risk to the community**

The articles dealing with the Roma beggars were altogether eleven in number. It is fair to say that most of them were very critical about the Roma beggars and about allowing them to stay in Finland. A majority of the articles discussed negative side effects of the arrival of the Roma migrants and issues that were associated with their appearance. Discourses of fear and alarm were found. Additionally, it was the *unsafeness* that many citizens and authorities claimed to have increased since the number of beggars started multiplying. Beggars were claimed to be aggressive and having a harassing and disturbing manner of begging or selling goods. Hence, the police started a campaign to keep a closer eye on the Roma in Helsinki because the crime rate and amount of disturbing behaviour had increased upon their appearance. After analysing these discourses, the conclusion would be that according to a number of articles the beggars are generally seen as a problem, a disturbance and a risk to the peaceful and orderly Finnish community. This phenomenon in public attitudes was perhaps best demonstrated and accumulated in the article in which a Finnish police inspector stated that “Romani is a good classification of a thief” (Oksanen 2010). Roma people are thieves.

### **5.2.2 Problem that needs to be solved**

As well as regarding the Roma a nuisance in the streets of Finland, many articles were outlining the fact that having the Roma beggars in the country is a *problem*. Whereas one article was explaining how Finnish people see begging as something alien, something against human dignity (Blafield 2011); another article was describing the distress it has on the public image of Helsinki to have beggars freezing to death on the streets (Unknown author 2010.) Solutions to this problem were also being suggested: the city of

Helsinki was paying one way tickets for the beggars to leave the country, while the police was shadowing the Roma. On the other hand some activist organizations were trying to organize accommodation and maintenance to the homeless Roma. Therefore, inclusive and exclusive were discourses presented. Nonetheless, some factors were common in all articles discussing the beggars: first of all begging was associated strictly with the European Roma migrants, and secondly it was everyone's joined opinion that begging was unacceptable. Even those activists and Roma affairs actors who were actively trying to provide the beggars with help were not in the favour of supporting begging. The difference was that the most critical speakers against the Roma were seeking to evict them rather than maintain them.

If the existence of beggars is seen as a problem that needs to be solved, then what really ought to be done is to tackle the poverty that leads people to begging for their livelihood. In the data used, individuals discussing begging perhaps acknowledged the poverty of the Roma migrants but little attention was given to the whys and wherefores, and to how the larger problem of poverty could be tackled. Perhaps it has something to do with the way the majority population explains the situation of the Roma: several discourses in the analysis showed that the Roma are seen as dishonest people that earn their livelihood in a wrong way. However, according to a European Value Study, the most popular explanation given to poverty in Western capitalist societies is in fact the social reason by which society's inequity is a reason for the oppression and poverty of individuals (Mäkinen & Pessi 2009, 239). Perhaps this ideology is one reason for the passiveness of individuals: it is society's duty to take care of this problem, not mine.

### **5.2.3 Sympathy**

Not all the articles and discourses found in them were displaying entirely negative attitudes towards the Roma. Citizens and organization members were interviewed in articles which were presenting sympathetic and accepting discourses in regards to Roma migrants staying in Finland. The Left Par-

ty Youth were demonstrating for the Roma, against the harassment exercised by the Finnish police (Unknown author 2009). The same appeal appeared in an article opposing the eviction of Roma people from Finland (Pukki 2008). A Roma family was interviewed for an article that described the hardship that a migrating family, affected by unemployment and discrimination, go through (Aaltonen 2008). To summarise, the discourses in these articles were demonstrating solidarity towards the Roma. Sympathy was expressed, reflecting attitudes of the more accepting majority population.

### ***5.3 Attitudes - Social exclusion?***

The main objective in this study was to find out how different attitudes are displayed in the newspaper articles and, moreover, how social exclusion of the Roma possibly shows in them. As earlier stated, the attitudes that were on display were those of the newspaper reporters themselves, of Roma people, of different Finnish mainstream citizens; authorities and members of e.g. organizations dealing with Romani affairs. Consequently, the attitudes were many and rather diverse. There were discourses showing prejudice and negative stereotypes – for example the Roma being thieves – and this occurred in relation to both the Finnish Roma as well as the Roma migrants. There were people who were placing the responsibility and the blame on the Finnish authorities, for instance the Left Party Youth in their demonstration. This kind of discourse was acknowledging the social exclusion of the Roma but was approaching it from an external point of view: it is us, the other people, who are discriminating and excluding the Roma from our community. Also, there were speakers who acknowledged the exclusion but saw it as a consequence of internal factors: Roma people live a life of thefts and socially insupportable work practice (begging and “forceful” selling of items); thus the exclusion. According to the data, these discourses of “the Roma being thieves” and aggressive traders were playing a major role in the entire analysis – the discriminative discourses were various.

The attitudes towards the Roma were many, but it was a considerably small proportion of testimonies that did not include accusations or implications of “the Roma being thieves”. Although such thinking could be regarded as discriminative and exclusive, several dimensions of actual social exclusion were not exactly evident in the discussion analysed. For instance, the fact that lack of political power and participation in policy making is an essential feature in being socially included (Byrne 2005, 172), was a point not exactly spoken about. Most of the discourses that related to the situation of the Roma stayed in a superficial level in which main focus was on the behaviour of the Roma and their migration’s effects to the Finnish community. Therefore, the true length of the Roma community’s exclusion could not be reflected through the analysis of the chosen discourses. However, the objective was to find out how they reflect the exclusion. As a summarised answer to this question it may be said that the most apparent dimension of social exclusion, that is the discrimination of the Roma in daily lives, did in fact manifest itself in numerous occasions. Whether it was the restaurant keeper who refused to serve a Roma customer, or the difficulties in finding employment due to one’s ethnicity, prejudiced discourses were evident.

#### ***5.4 Use of discourse analysis***

Using discourse analysis to interpret text was highly interesting since it was my first time of using the method. Perhaps the actual analysis was left superficial due to my lack of knowledge of this method. However, throughout the process, discourse analysis seemed like the most appropriate way of conducting such research because the core idea was in revealing greater meanings in speech. Additionally, due to the creative nature of this analysis method I felt free to generate ideas and assumptions and, consequently, to be more creative in answering the research questions. Through the analysis of words and statements I did indeed find reflections of values and attitudes – as was the intention. Nevertheless, the bias of the author was most evidently there. In my own experience, the general attitudes to the Roma are

more of a negative nature and at time this seemed to affect the analysis. It is possible that the attitudes detected were attitudes I wished to find. Therefore, it may be argued that the results in this study are perhaps slightly prejudiced. The discourses found were not necessarily surprising but they were more diverse than anticipated. Hence, the discourse analysis seemed to meet the objectives of the study accurately and was the most relevant method for this particular research.

## 6 FUTURE ASPECTS

This chapter concludes the study with some thoughts concerning the situation of the Roma and the responsibilities of different institutions and individuals. Thus, in this chapter I discuss the policies that are in place to tackle the social exclusion of the Roma. I will also analyse the role of the media and social workers in supporting and empowering the Roma, reflecting these ideas with the findings of this research.

### *6.1 The Roma policies*

As noted earlier during the introduction and analysis, there are several articles, technical notes, research and policy papers conducted in the institutional level, in relation to the Roma. The World Bank has recognized the Roma as one of the most vulnerable groups and is seeking to tackle e.g. the unemployment and educational challenges the Roma communities are facing. The European Union is also playing a major role in dealing with “the Roma issue”. Yet, different countries within the Union are avoiding the problem by evicting Roma people and placing new laws to stop the beggars from coming. But how is all this going to reduce the social exclusion of the Roma, to improve their living standards and support their integration in society?

In a very recent article of *Romani Studies*, it was argued that the European Roma policies have ethical dilemmas such as whether the international inclusion policies will sufficiently help the Roma or whether this group needs tailored strategies to support their rights as an individual and unique minority group. Also the author pondered whether the Roma ought to be acknowledged as a minority group of a certain nation or as not having a terrain of their own (Rövid 2011.) Furthermore, policies are often addressed on the macro level while there is less effort made within local communities, where the issues of discrimination really lie (O’Nions 2007, 3). But what actually is

the role of institutions such as the municipality or the Social Office, in relation to individual citizens, when dealing with this gap in welfare? Are the policies not supposed to reach not only the global dimension but also the micro level, the people themselves? The equal position of Roma people in our society will only be achieved when the Roma themselves get a stand in politics and policy making, so that they can contribute to the decisions made in relation to their situation as an ethnic group (McGarry 2010, 33).

The government of Finland has not yet established one agreed policy on how to deal with the European Roma migrants staying in the country. However, Finland together with Holland restrained Bulgaria and Romania from joining the Schengen area when the decision was taken in the European Union conference. The Schengen area consists of European nations that have agreed to ease the movement within Schengen countries by not requiring a visa for crossing the borders. The government decision-makers explained their motives for not allowing the two countries to join Schengen by the low level of trust in border security and lawful institutions in Romania and Bulgaria (Helsingin Sanomat 24.9.2011, A6). It also seems that there are no clear policies in place to address the issue of the Roma living in physical and psychological deprivation.

## ***6.2 The way we see the world***

However, critique must also be given to the attitude in which the Roma are seen merely as an oppressed minority. After all, social workers ought not to regard minorities in a patronizing top-to-bottom manner but rather as a group that is valuable in many levels and also has great knowledge of their own situation. Surely there are marginalised individuals who might not even realise their unfortunate situation, being so accustomed with it, but the idea of the Roma being marginalized should also not be reinforced. In her book *The Gypsies, Poor but Happy*, Pasqualino explains the other side of the story. Challenging the general, broadcasted stereotypes of Roma people being

poor and miserable, many of them rather embrace the state of modest living conditions. The custom is not to keep and save money but to share it among the community since the lack of richness is an essential part of being a Romani. (Pasqualino 2008, 338.) This kind of positive value given to poverty seems to contradict with the Finnish mainstream way of thinking. For many in Finland, the priorities lay in respected employment, good housing and financial savings, and poverty is associated with failure of a welfare state. As argued in one of the articles (Blafield 2011), having poor people begging for money is not in accordance with the Finnish welfare lifestyle. Perhaps this clash in values and world view is one factor making it challenging for the Finnish and the Roma community to meet in individual as well as the societal level.

### **6.3 The role of the media**

The media has a strong impact in society and the fact that a great number of news concerns minorities committing a crime that affects the majority, does not reduce discrimination (Cahn 2002, 57). In the case of the Roma minority, the media is – intentionally or unintentionally – generating a definition of the group by publishing reports of the Roma committing crime or harassing people on the streets by aggressive begging. Unless this is well-adjusted by also publishing positive stories of the Roma, stories that display them as individuals equal to all others, the media is contributing to the discrimination of this minority. (Nordberg 2007, 66.) And unfortunately, it is often the *non-Roma* media with more influence and impact on the general opinions (Stauber & Vago 2007, 174). To conclude, the media has a moral obligation to examine the type of issues that are published. Journalists are under pressure to focus on issues that are of interest among the audience they target (Bee & Bozzini 2010, 122) but this should not be of higher importance than the wellbeing of people. Moreover, reporters and publishers ought to examine the impact their stories have on the public. Public discussion on the Roma issue is essential to make sure their deprivation as a minority is recognised, yet this should not happen by broadcasting the Roma

in a negative light. Although, it has been said that even worse than being talked about is *not* being talked about.

#### ***6.4 The role of a social worker***

As for the situation of the Roma community in our society, where does a social worker then stand? What am I personally able to do, and what are my obligations as a professional? The oppression of the Roma minority is a multi-dimensional issue of poverty, social exclusion, large marginalization and an issue of discriminative individual attitudes. Hence, the work to be done is work in the macro level as much as in the micro level. For instance, poverty is a challenge for social policy and politicians to ensure that in the globalizing world, poverty will not start increasing but rather decreasing (Saari 2005, 187, 188). However, having a protocol without the grass root workers to ensure the implementation is of no use. Therefore, the role of a social worker is not only essential in supporting individuals but also in supporting the system.

What comes to the daily work with Romani service users, some of the results of this study can be acknowledged. There are for instance those children, discussed earlier in the analysis, who are exposed to the activity of late night begging and are thus treated by the child welfare professionals. In a situation like such, a professional social worker will not only be in contact with a Romani service user but with the attitudes one holds. According to my personal experience in working with the Roma service users, the most work had to be done in relation the attitudes of the public. It seemed nearly impossible to help the Roma community when others were strongly against that work. Also as the data showed, prejudiced attitudes can become a problem in many levels. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge the attitudes and values we hold and moreover to *speak* about them. Much has been said about “hate speech” in the media lately, and the public discussion has extended to the idea of positive public speech, expression of love rather

than hate. For instance, the Roma could be not merely addressed as thieves and beggars. They could be seen as a valuable minority group, an important part of our society.

From community work's perspective, a lot needs to be done concerning the situation of Roma communities in Finland. As a community development worker, a bachelor of social services is likely to confront the prejudice and dismissal Roma people face in their neighbourhoods. Therefore, an essential part of building socially inclusive and equal communities is to improve the atmosphere of such negative stereotypes and attitudes. Also, understanding the culture and ways of the Roma communities is important in the process of integration and inclusion. The solution is not to change people or their beliefs but to find a level of cohesion where majorities and minorities can collaborate and all members of the community can feel valuable.

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## APPENDIX 1: List of the newspaper articles

Aaltonen, Saska. The life of a flower selling Roma family is not all roses. Helsingin Sanomat, 22.7.2007.

Blafield, Antti. Europe on its knees in Helsinki. Helsingin Sanomat, 31.3.2011.

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Karhunen, Panu. A driver checked the ticket according to one's appearance. Helsingin Sanomat, 27.8.2008

Kopteff, Anna & Pajari, Katariina. People in Helsinki think that begging has become more aggressive. Helsingin Sanomat, 16.5.2009.

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Oksanen, Kimmo. Finland's Roma people and the Home Office knew to expect the beggars. Helsingin Sanomat, 9.1.2008.

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Oksanen, Kimmo. According to an inspector 'a Romani' is a good classification of a thief. Helsingin Sanomat, 16.11.2010.

Pukki, Kati. People at Esplanaadi were protesting against the deportation of the Roma. Helsingin Sanomat, 10.7.2008.

Unknown author. Left Party Youth: The police must stop harassing the Roma. Helsingin Sanomat. 8.7.2009.

Unknown author. A one way ticket will not solve the problems of the Roma. Helsingin Sanomat, 28.11.2010.

Translations from Finnish to English by Vilma Ahola.