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**SCHOOL, A MINIATURE OF SOCIETY:  
Life Stories about Well-being, Education and  
Career Plan of Young Iranians in Finland**

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the role of the Finnish education system in education and career plan of young Iranians with refugee background in Finland. Since the influential factors that affect their education and education plans are similar to other young immigrants in Finland, it indirectly involves the future education and career of many thousand potential fresh labour forces in Finland.

The goal is to realise the influence of education system and school experiences on life, and education and career plan of the participants. The analysis of the data aims at answering: 1) How the participants evaluate their education in Finland through their life stories? And why do they so? 2) What is the place of the Finnish education system, including the schools, in the life stories of the participants? And why is it so? 3) How the participants justify their education and career choices in relation to Finnish schools? And why is it so? The new elements of this study are its uniqueness in Finland in terms of topic, target group, and researcher as an ethnic insider.

Multiple theories on education and career of ethnic minorities influence the study. The theoretical standpoints are acculturation, transnational migration, and narrative explanations. The data is composed of narratives about participants' lives with especial attention to their school experiences. It employs qualitative research methodology. Face to face interview by use of open-ended questionnaire and active interviewing, and participant observation are the main methods of collecting data. It applies narrative method for analysis and presenting the data.

The main results confirm significant failures in education and education plan of the participants. The shortcomings of the education system and school played important role in the failures, mainly by inability to provide a place to belong, lack of professionalism in dealing with immigrant students and motivating them. Thus, there are lack of interest in higher education and related jobs, and interest in emigrating from Finland. However, individual agency and supportive role model produce interest in higher education. To conclude, since the participants and their social capital of family, relatives, and friends do not hold a strong position in controlling participants' lives, the role of school is the most influential in producing interest in higher education and related career.

*Key words: education, career, plan, young, Iranian, refugee, narrative, story, well-being, Finland, acculturation, belonging, transnational migration.*

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## 1. Introduction

[Let us] think of the fact that Finnish society is aging, population growth is low, and there are great needs for labour force. They need to import immigrants, and for that, they need to educate them. I ask them that why you bring young immigrants to Finland when you cannot take care of them, when you cannot make them a part of this society. (Saeedeh, female, 24 years old)

This study concerns the well-being, education and career plan of young Iranian refugees, or with refugee background, in Finland with a particular attention to the role of the Finnish education system in those issues. Thus, the target group includes 1.5 and second-generation of Iranians who were or still are refugees in Finland. Second-generation in this paper means immigrants' children or youth who were born, and have grown up, in their parents' host country. 1.5 generation here means immigrants' children or youth who were born in their parents' country of origin and later moved to the host country. My aim is to exclude the other Iranians who are in Finland for other reasons, and whose lives are different from Iranians with refugee origin.

I continue with some useful definitions and explanations for key terms or concepts, in order to avoid misunderstandings. The rest will follow as soon as a concept emerges in the first place. It is difficult to define some terms or concepts. For instance, beside ordinary people, officials, and to some extent academics, have used the same terms with different meanings in Finland. Besides, the meanings have gone through changes during the passage of the time. Life story (life/personal history) that generally means biography or autobiography (Czarniawska, 2004) here does not indicate a detailed account of all the events of somebody's life (biographical account). Instead, it basically includes the major events that the ethnographer has recorded and plotted by use of extra information provided by interviewing of the individual whose life is concerned and their parents. By well-being, not only I mean what each participant independently considers as being a good condition of life (Joronen, 2005) but also emotional/physical good health, plus comfortable, prosperous and safe state. Thus, it is vital to consider it separately while reading each story and its analysis.

The study limits itself to formal education defined as the passing on and obtaining information by teaching and learning, particularly at an institution. It is the result of combining the next definitions; Education is 'the transmission of knowledge

from one generation to another by means of direct instruction.’ Giddens (2006: 1014) and ‘[...] implying the structured transmission of the knowledge within a formal institution [...].’ (ibid, 696) The major difference between education and learning is that the latter takes place in variety of settings (Giddens, 2006). In this paper by education plan, I mean the individual’s decision on how to continue formal education. In this paper career means ‘[a job,] an occupation or profession, especially one requiring special training, followed as one’s lifework’ (dictionary.com). ‘An occupation is work which is done in exchange for a regular wage.’ (Giddens, 2006: 787) Career plan here is the individual decision on the kind of long-term or lifelong job or occupation one would like to occupy oneself.

Young limits the age to less than thirty. Defining Iranian is problematic<sup>1</sup>. Here it means individual who is born in Iran or born to Iranian parents. This study uses the United Nations’ definition of refugee. ‘*Any other person who is outside the country of his [or her] nationality or, if he [or she] has no nationality, the country of his [or her] former habitual residence, because he [or she] has or had well-founded fear of persecution by reason of his [or her] race, religion, nationality or political opinion and is unable or, because of such fear, is unwilling to avail him [or her]self of the protection of the government of the country of his [or her] nationality, or, if he [or she] has no nationality, to return to the country of his [or her] former habitual residence.*’ (UNHCR, 2005: 7-8) One should pay attention to the fact that the ‘ordinary immigrant’ and ‘refugee’ as concepts are ideal types and there exist some varieties of intermediate situations. As a result, an individual might shift from one to another category (Wahlbeck, 2002). Meaning of refugee identity, similar to Iranian national identity, could cause disagreements. Some even when they are not officially entitled as refugees (any more) may consider themselves refugees. Alternatively, some may do not conceive themselves refugees as an identity, but practically they need it, and officials consider them as such. When the earlier explanations contrast participants’ views, I will record and report them.

It is wiser to mention one moral consideration as a reading suggestion about when and under which condition it is better to read this paper. The reason is that ‘the very act of choosing research topic involves value choices.’ (Moore, 1999: 338) In this, I am more influenced by human justice, and as a result, the equality and fairness

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<sup>1</sup> Elements of holding Iranian nationality and national identity of each individual are two causes of that.

are important for me because they strengthen Iranian and immigrant community's well-being in Finland, and Finland as a whole. Under other circumstances and logics, one may find the ideas in this study as worthless or trivial. It would be useful if the reader examine it when they are under the influence of the human justice.

### **1.1. There is something Strange in this World - The Topic**

This is a follow up study. The same participants' education and career plans were the results of my Bachelor's thesis. They did not show interest in higher education<sup>2</sup> and related jobs. Additionally, finding the influential factors was significant to uncover the reasons. Complex combinations of the factors in each individual helps to comprehend the situation of each participant separately and the reasons for providing different answers to the same questions better. The research focuses more on the changeable factors in order to make progress. The objective is to pay especial attention to one of them, the Finnish education system which is capable of development more, and may have a strong role in the education and career plan of the participants.

The aim is to uncover the function and the role of the Finnish education system and its schools, as a supporter and detractor while providing knowledge, guidance and motivation for the participants' education and career plan. My plan is to develop experience-based narratives on how young Iranians in Finland faced education services and clarify their expectations from the education system. The study attempts to challenge the typically positioning of young immigrants as research objects who know less about themselves than outsiders do, and offer the possibility to this group to raise their voice. It provides a chance to bring up the issues that community member alone could not express to the mainstream. Studying that phenomenon could happen in levels of the ministry (laws), school (schoolmates and the staff) and classroom (teachers and classmates). This study focuses on the last two. There is no intention to generalise and claim that the participants are representatives of the target group, especially due to their small number.

There were several motivations for conducting this study, and choosing its topic and questions. The fieldwork data and my theoretical studies in the UK on refugees added a new dimension. The evaluation and the feelings of the participants about their lives, especially their (emotional) well-being, and the important things for

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<sup>2</sup> Higher education in that paper and my present Master's thesis means study in university level.

them in Finland pushed themselves into the research context once again. The well-being of the target group emerged as a sub-result as their education and career success relates directly to it. Certain level of well-being is a precondition for a good education and career (Castles & Davidson, 2000 & Ellonen, 2008). In response, satisfaction in education (Joronen, 2005 & Ellonen, 2008) and career could increase the potential for well-being. By better education, one can raise the possibilities to achieve higher chances for advance careers and more stable jobs. By a better career, it is possible to hold advanced and stable economical condition. They both provide advance personal fulfilment and development, and higher social class. A good education plan directs a student into a better education. A wise career plan raises the possibility to achieve a better career. In a societal level, an improved personal development causes better development for the Iranian community and Finland as a whole.

## **1.2. Research Questions**

The plan of this research is to make a record of the participants' experiences with Finnish education system and their consequences as thoughts, feeling, and actions, especially their education and career decisions. First, I approach their education and career plan in order to check if there is any plan change since the first interview. I am mainly interested in answering the *why* questions, through focusing on the role of the education system in the plan making and its ability to provide a suitable environment for encouragement, guidance, and learning. The importance of the research questions rest in their emphasis on an influential factor that we could control and it directly relates to education and career plan. The main questions of this study are:

1. How the participants evaluate their education in Finland through their life stories? And why do they so?
2. What is the place of the Finnish education system, including the schools, in the life stories of the participants? And why is it so?
3. How the participants justify their education and career choices in relation to Finnish schools? And why is it so?

My hypothesis assumes that most probably the failure of the education system in teaching knowledge, motivating and guiding the participants towards higher education mainly caused the underachievement and lack of interest in higher education plus

related jobs. The role of the Finnish schools in education and career plan of Iranian immigrant youth is so strong that if it will perform more properly, there would be a high rise in the number of Iranian youth who attend higher education and aim for related jobs. This study benefits from acculturation and narrative theory. Other theoretical backgrounds on education<sup>3</sup>, labour, ethnicity, education and labour of ethnic minorities, especially immigrants and refugees, are borrowed indirectly from Moore et al (1999) and Anthony Giddens (2004 & 2006). Additionally, I use transnationalism and cultural competence perspective plus research results on those topics. The study applies qualitative research methodology. However, other studies' findings in forms of quantitative materials and statistics are supplementary.

The significance of this thesis includes its topic and research question(s). The education and career of the participants as individual human beings is important. Secondly, as Iranian parents in Finland often inform, the well-being of their offspring is a great concern for them and they care about the life and the future (education and career) of their children even more than their own. Additionally, this topic is relevant and vital for Iranian and the immigrant communities in Finland, and Finnish nation as a whole because it deals with the change in the social divisions within Finland. This topic is important because it studies education, career, and possible remigration of a fresh, valuable, and long lasting labour source for Finland. Using them is a benefit.

Since the target group share many features with whole immigrant youth in Finland, the second group is indirectly the target group too. The similarities include their high number as the percentage of the whole group they belong, low education and career level, fewer job opportunities, exclusion etc. Young immigrants make one third (Anna Rastas, 2007 & OECD SOPEMI Finland, 2007) of the whole immigrant population in Finland, approximately forty seven thousand people. This is a considerable number compared to the whole population of Finland. This fact provides another reason to pay extra attention to and consider them more seriously. Loosing them is a waste. Furthermore, Finland has invested long time, money, and energy in order to prepare them for the labour market. It is an extra waste to loose them.

Additionally, they will remain in tighter contact with Finnish society; will have more and higher responsibilities, expectation, and demands towards Finland compared to the first generation that will eventually disappear from the picture, and

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<sup>3</sup> Different approaches of sociological theories to *educational sociology* (Moore et al. 1999) were used.



compared to labour immigrants. The extra demand will exist because the Iranian youth 'does not live in a host country as an immigrant or foreigner, but in the *fatherland* as a Finn!' (Haghsersht, 2005: 149) Consequently, it is essential for the Finnish nation as the host at present and future to have concern about the socio-economical and psychological prospects of young Iranians and their well-being. For similar reasons, Finland has enough justification to be aware of all young immigrants' needs and respond to them carefully and respectfully.

Finland is changing its focus from already immigrated group towards new labour immigrants whose Finnish is poor, know little about Finnish culture, is less rooted in Finland, and ready to emigrate to another country for better job offers and climate, larger ethnic community etc. There are many certain jobs, especially in service sector, that only Finns or persons who grow up in Finland, speak Finnish well, and have ties to Finland could perform. One group, which belongs to this category, is the 1.5 and second-generation of immigrants who are Finns in many ways. However, one could ask, do they aim to stay in Finland. The same participants showed interest or planned to leave Finland in my previous study. Additionally, there are signs that it might be the decision of many immigrant youth in Finland<sup>4</sup>.

By paying attention to the situation of immigrant children and youth in past and present, we can prepare ourselves better for the challenges of present and prevention of future, when their number is higher; they are involved with Finnish society more than their parents do, and later when they completely replace their parents' generation. The immigrant youth might not be useful in its maximum capacity, could be completely disadvantageous by leaving Finland, or even risky, by showing negative reactions as the result of dissatisfaction. Losing them is a failure for Finland. The last possibility and its consequences might be harmful to Finland, as they have already happened in France causing damages and introducing the term *French phenomenon*. We even have witnessed how the peaceful and secure Finland faced horrible violence by abandoned *ethnically completely insider* members of its society in recent school shooting incidents. When abandoned Finns can turn violent, immigrants could do too, or even worse. Consequently, the development of Finland's well-being is the intension of this study and evaluating its qualities, including the manner it hosts young immigrants is a tool for achieving that. More precisely, the

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<sup>4</sup> ETNO's concern and a news report support this idea. For more information refer to chapter two.

assessment of the basic education is only one of the means to evaluate the well-being. Thus, I asked, *how the participants evaluate their education in Finland, and why.*

This paper is the first attempt to study this topic in connection to this particular community in Finland, and by a community member. Similar to Clarke's (2005) comment, my paper has the potential for clarifying the hidden areas of the education service for Iranian and other immigrant youth in Finland. Therefore, I asked, *what the place of the Finnish education system is in the life and education/career plan of the participants, and why.* It may offer some new insights to the unsuccessful<sup>5</sup> education and career of some other ethnic minorities in Finland who share many common characteristics with Iranian community. This may result in their extra benefit for themselves and Finland. Additionally, this study is even more future-oriented than the other related researches. It also expands equality in traditionally relatively exclusive expertise, and by that, it may empower that young group. In the lack of migrant, ethnic minority, and culturally diverse voices, narratives and perspectives (Clarke, 2006), this study broadens the established borders of adequate scientific knowledge. Additionally, It is possible that what I have done until now have produced a pioneer historical record of Iranian community in Finland made by and insider member of the group, which would be useful for future researches.

### **1.3. Organisation of the Paper**

The next chapter provides general information on the Iranian refugee community in Finland including its young members, starting with an orientation to immigration in Finland. Chapter three, the theory, offers information about the previous studies on education, higher education, the role of ethnicity in inequality of education, education of immigrants and refugees in general and in Finland with particular attention to the young members of those groups. It argues that not only the education openly or in hidden assimilates but at the same time marginalises the ethnic minorities in their future labour participation. Since there have not been the same or similar research on this topic and its target group in Finland by others, I will provide a background on my previous related studies. The other sub-chapters deal with similar issues from the career point of view, and connect the matter of belonging and acculturation to education and transnational plans. Last part urged based on the data from interviews.

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<sup>5</sup> There is more information about it in the chapter on Iranians in Finland.

In chapter four, methodology and methods used for collection, analysing, and presenting the data, plus the research process are presented. It explains methods used for finding and selection of the participants, making the questionnaire, the interviews, the transcriptions, the narratives and analysing them, plus other materials I used. There are discussions on the ethical issues where I provide some information about me and explain how my personality, identity, and historical background may have shaped the results. For ease of the reader, I provide information on my reflexivity in different chapters based on my different activities. Chapter five offers the findings and answers to the research questions by individual life stories made of the quotes from interview comments and participant observation data, with their analysis and brief explanation on how and why parents' experiences and understanding of the topic differed from their children. In discussion by use of main influential factors, respondents' acculturation choices, their transnational activities, and narrative analysis, I attempt to reason my answers to the research questions. Chapter six, the conclusion, provides a summary of the paper, evaluation of the study, and some concluding final points. Appendix one introduces the interviewees by use of a table; appendix two includes the questionnaire, and appendix three contains a list of some events, conferences, and seminars I attended and collected some useful materials.

## **2. Iranians and Iranian refugees in Finland**

In this chapter I provide background information about immigration, immigrants, refugees, Iranian community and its young members in Finland. It helps the readers to know and understand the Finnish context, participants, and the results better.

### **2.1. Immigration and Immigrants in Finland**

For most of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Finland was not a major immigration country, due to its history and geo-political location (Clarke, 2006) and it has a short history of immigration<sup>6</sup> policy. It was rather an emigration country. In 1968 it accepted the UN refugee agreement. During 1970-1980 Finnish new refugee policy truly started by the reception of Chilean and later Vietnamese, when it was unprepared and the official structures for the receptions were missing. The old passive policy continued to the end of 1980s. By mid 1980s, hot refugee debates started. In 1986, by foreign pressure Finland committed itself to receive annually 100 quota refugees. A radical change and increase in the number of its immigrants started since 1990. The number of foreigners in Finland in 1990 was 26300 (Finnish Immigration Service, 2008), approximately 0.5 % of the whole population, which was 5 millions (Statistics Finland, 2008). There were 167954 non-Finnish residents in Finland by the end of 2010, which made only a small portion, 3% of the whole population that was 5375276 (Statistics Finland, 2011). The 1990s change included the resettlement of huge quantity of ‘returnees’ from the former Soviet Union (Clarke, 2006). The reasons for the rise in the number in early 2000s were the immigration of Ingrians, Russian, and Estonians (Halmeranta, 2006) and the foreign pressures such as the UN. Recent statistics show increase in net immigration to Finland (Monitori, 2/2007). Immigrants in Finland are extremely diverse. Clarke (2006) used mother tongue to divide the immigrants into 150 language groups with Russians as the largest single language group making 28.5% in 2003.

The changes overlapped with high economical depression in early 1990s and a milder in late 2000s that added to cuts in services, inadequate resources, rejection and restrictions on immigration, and their unemployment. Finnish Gallup informs that the negative attitudes of Finnish people towards (present immigrants and) extra immigrants to Finland in future has increased 20% since last three years into 60%

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<sup>6</sup> I use Hannele Halmeranta’s (2006) summary of studies on Finnish immigration until year 1990.

(Helsingin Sanomat, 15.3.2010). The Finnish official policy on immigrants is integration. The external pressures such as the UN and EU, caused developmental modifications in the immigration policies. Mid 1990s coincided with radical activation of immigration policy definitions and change of the laws concerning the immigrants, affected by the ratification of European human rights treaties in 1990 (Halmeranta, 2006). A self-demand immigration policy is a new phenomenon in Finland (ibid.). The program may have caused the creation of the *Integration Act (Act on Integration)* in 1999 defining *integration* as ‘the independent developmental aim of immigrant to participate in the work life and society’s operation, as preserving own language and culture’ and *integrating* as ‘the operations and resources organised by the authorities to promote the integration’ (ibid. 20). The Act has minimally lowered the social isolation of immigrants through provision of study and labour opportunities (Haghsresht, 2003). The practical part of the Integration Act is the *Integration Plan*.

Inviting representatives from some ethnic groups by ETNO<sup>7</sup> (The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations) to discuss how to implement Finnish multiculturalism, even without authority, is a positive step. However, they are excluded from decision making and active involvement in the implementation of the improvements. The ministry of labour provided guidelines for using an EU funded project (2007-2013) for developing the integration of immigrants from Third World countries. Its important ideological development is recognition of and respect for integration as a *two-sided dynamic process* involving efforts from both minority and majority. Less emphasis on assimilation/mobilisation and the display of ethnic and racial identities as a part of accepted Finnish politics (policies) is a positive but very slow change.

In 2007 Astrid Thors was chosen the first Minister of Migration and European Affairs<sup>8</sup>. The EU has had a positive effect on the development of immigrants and foreigners’ welfare in Finland. However, generally it is not very eager to enforce multiculturalism in favour of non-Europeans (Castles & Davidson 2000). The vague definition of multiculturalism in Finland is visible in the social discussion, media (Halmeranta, 2006), and research literature. Instead of a *legal policy*, it often means a *culturally plural society*. The concept only came in use broadly since 1990 and its influence on the Finnish political environment began when multiculturalism extended

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<sup>7</sup> In those events, some representatives of decision makers, service providers, researchers, different ethnic minorities and immigrant communities were among the participants.

<sup>8</sup> Before, the responsibility for immigration issues has been shifting from one ministry to the other.

its meaning by including immigrants and foreigners' issues (Halmeranta, 2006). The immigrants have the right for voting in local elections. The citizens with immigrant background, additionally, can vote for the parliament, presidential, and European elections. However, one could rarely see them holding any political position. Few individual immigrants are involved in immigrant related projects and research.

Number of Finnish born children of immigrant is growing very fast<sup>9</sup>. In 2003, ETMU (The Finnish Society for the Study of Ethnic Relations and International Migration) was founded. In 2008, it organised an international conference on ethnicity, immigration, and family ties in cooperation with The Finnish Youth Research Society. One of its topics was '*immigrant children and youth: the second-generation growing up*'. Despite these efforts, the actual changes involve more time. One of the recent positive changes is the open discussion about the well-being, education, and career of immigrant, refugee, and asylum seeker youth. ETNO (The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations) and the Central Union for Child Welfare (Lastensuojelun Keskusliitto, 2008) emphasise the need for a quick action to support those groups.

Refugees make only 5% of immigrants in Finland (Statistics Finland & UNHCR, 2011). Contrary to previous political refugees, some others who came during 1990-2000 became refugees<sup>10</sup> as the result of ethnic, national and religious conflicts (Halmeranta, 2006). 'Studies of the attitudes of the Finnish population toward immigrants reveal that these attitudes, especially toward refugees and those groups that arrived in Finland recently, have generally deteriorated during the past 15 years [...] Thus, there is a clear danger of refugees and their children becoming marginalized.' (Liebkind et al. 2004: 640) Asylum seekers from Southern/Eastern countries with darker skin suffer the most. Many (stereotyping) attitudes exist behind using the term refugee and its different combinations, including *living standard refugee* (elintasopakolainen), while concept of *integration* somewhat states a change of language regarding the refugees accordingly (Halmeranta, 2006). In another study, almost half of the participants supported hindering the entry of refugees, asylum seekers, and asylum seekers' family reunification (Helsingin Sanomat, 31.3.2010).

Refugee policies in Finland are considered none existing until 1990s and only a part of foreign policy (Halmerant, 2006). 'Finland is bound by some international

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<sup>9</sup> 'Fast Growing Number of Foreign Language School Children' (Aamulehti, 09.08.2008).

<sup>10</sup> 'Both those who are granted asylum or quota refugees, including children, siblings who are under age and spouses who are granted asylum are defined refugees in Finnish Alien Act' (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 1993: 4).

agreements [containing] the UN Convention on Refugees in 1951 and its 1967 agreement, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination' (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 1993: 7). The economic situation and foreign policy in the beginning of 1990s affected refugee policy and the reception of refugees in negative manner. Since 1997 for the first time the highest political level has made definition of policies regarding immigration politics, thereby the parliament decided on the immigration and refugee policy program, with focus on refugee reception, not labour immigration (Halmeranta, 2006). Labour migration and active immigration policy were central topics in the government's immigration policy programme of year 2005 (Halmeranta, 2006). Change of its name from *Immigration and refugee policy programme* in 1997, into *Immigration policy programme* shows a shift of focus, which is economically unavoidable (ibid.).

## **2.2. A Social-historical Background on Iranian Community in Finland**

History of Iranians in Finland started mainly from 1990 when they came in small groups of UN quota refugees as a result of political and social changes after the Iranian revolution. Earlier, only few individuals entered as students, diplomats, and spouses of Finns etc. Majority of Iranians in Finland arrived as quota refugees, asylum seekers, and Iranian wives for refugee family reunification and newly married. The comparatively short history of the community is only one explanation for my difficulty to find information on it. There is not enough, precise, complete, and fixed statistical information on the number of Iranians, Iranian refugees, those who emigrated, Finnish citizens with Iranian origin in Finland, in all the years.

2572 Iranians lived in Finland by January 2011 (Maahanmuuttovirasto, 2011). There are no statistics on the population of Iranians in early 1990's. They were 1114 in 1.1.1995, approximately 2% of all 61786 foreigners (Monitori, 1995). According to official statistics, the number of Iranians *living* in Finland by estimation was 2611 in 2007 (Statistics Finland, 2008). Ministry of the Interior (2007) shows they were around 2700, from which the number of men was a couple of hundred more than women. These figures do not differentiate Iranians who do not officially hold refugee status any more after certain years of residence in Finland<sup>11</sup>, or holding Finnish citizenship, from the rest. Few may have gained Finnish citizenship before 1996 because

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<sup>11</sup> In 2003, from 2555 Iranians, 122 were not considered as refugees any more (Haghseresht, 2005b).

they needed to wait until 1995 in order to apply, and by that time, normally the process took no less than one year. They amounted to 2076 from 1996 to 2009 (OECD SOPEMI, 2006 & 2007 & Statistics Finland, 2010). These figures show that, until 2007<sup>12</sup> approximately 38% of this medium sized community entitled to Finnish citizenship. The other example by Finnish Immigration Service (2008) shows no Iranian origin has received Finnish citizenship from 2003 to mid 2008 while it provides two different figures for 2007.

This raises the number of Iranian origins to approximately 4150 in 2007. I used the statistics on mother tongue to check my estimation. The number of *Parsi*<sup>13</sup> speakers was almost 1000, approximately the same as the total amount of Iranians in 1997 (Statistics Finland, 2010). There were about 4000 Parsi speakers living in Finland in year 2007 (ibid. 2010). Additionally, the number of all the Iranians who *have come* to Finland until present, as a new figure to focus, includes 116 individuals who emigrated from Finland between 1996 and 2006 (ibid. 2006 & 2007). The average is 10 to 15 individual per year and by estimation, altogether approximately a little more than 200 have left from 1990 to 2007. There is no information on the number of those who have died. Accordingly, the total number of Iranians who immigrated to Finland till 2007 is nearly 4350. The statistics show part of it, which is from 1997 to 2006 that amounts to 2414 (ibid, 2007).

Iranian refugees have made approximately 90% of all Iranians in Finland before loosing that status for different reasons such as acquiring Finnish citizenship (Haghseresht, 2005b). By 31.12.1994, from all Iranians resident in Finland 800 (72%) were refugees (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 1994). They made approximately 7 % of all refugees in Finland that was 11900 (Monitori, 1994). There is no statistics on the number of Iranian refugees in Finland in each year and their total. However, since majority of Iranians have been refugees, their number in 2007 could be approximately 2400. From 1992 to 2007, Finland received 2774 Iranian refugees, and since 2003, the number has dropped each year (Ministry of Interior, 2007 & Monitori, 2/2007). Nevertheless, it should not be far from 3000. The number of received Iranian *quota refugees* has dropped from 137 persons in 2003 to 1 person in 2009 (Finish Immigration Service, 2011). Iranian asylum applicants has increased

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<sup>12</sup> During 2006-2010 a number of 1077 obtained Finnish citizenship (ibid. 2006, 2007, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Parsi, or mostly called *Farsi* by Iranians, which means Persian language, is the official language in Iran and the native language of Pars, or Fars, as the majority ethnic group.



from approximately 50 persons per year from 1998-2004, to average 90 from 2004-2008, and approximately 150 since 2008 (Finnish Immigration Service, 2011). I did not find any statistics on total number of them. 594 Iranian asylum seekers left their applications during 1998-2007, from which 200 persons received positive decision or residence permit during 2000-2006 (OECD SOPEMI, 2007). Finnish Immigration Service (2008) provided different figures, which were not always trustable.

Age demography shows approximately 25% of the population are less than fifteen, 73% are fifteen to sixty four, and the remaining 2% are sixty-five and older (OECD SOPEMI, 2007). Thus, similar to other immigrants, by estimation, minimum one third of the population could be under age. The community comprises different ethnic and linguistic groups, education, career, and religious backgrounds, gendered experiences, and political orientations. The major ethnic groups of Iran, including Pars (Fars), Azerbaijani, and Kurd, also make the community's main ethnicities in Finland. Kurds seem to have a larger portion in Finland.

They are mostly from middle class<sup>14</sup> because members of the lower class did not enjoy the capital and means of travelling to Finland. The upper class either stayed or mostly chose other countries where Iranian community was larger and more established, it was easier to study, invest economically, find suitable jobs that correspond properly to their education, visit Iran, and enjoy better climate and more multicultural environment. The slow shift from lower class towards middle class business owners is owing to several years of hard work and saving. It is mostly due to financial development and much less for the advancement in education, labour status, and political position. Important social transformations in Finland such as economical depression of 1990s and joining the EU brought changes. The depression caused unemployment and cuts in social benefits, but also activated some to find a long lasting solution independent of the government. Starting own small business was practical. There is a rise in home ownership especially among the families, which may lead to an increasing chance of participation in Finnish social life.

Parents are less interested in education owing to their (economical) duties to their family and work. Often they own pizzeria-kebab restaurant or similar occupations. Unemployment of the community is high. Dariush, an Iranian refugee (Laura Huttunen, 2002) talks about lack of job opportunities for immigrants in

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<sup>14</sup> In this paper, social class consist of material wealth and *economic power, status* (the amount of esteem and prestige) and *power*, plus the level of *education* and *labour*.

Finland and how important the role of working is for healing his emotional wounds from his past. Chapter three discusses community member's education and career further. Initially, Iranian refugees were located in several cities all over Finland. Now, their regional distribution shows a shift towards the warmer southern and central cities that are larger and offer better (labour) opportunities. They include Helsinki, Vantaa, Espoo, Turku, Jyväskylä, Tampere, Vaasa etc. The first three offered residence to approximately 44% of foreigners in Finland by year 2007 (Monitori, 2007).

The families<sup>15</sup> are often nuclear consisting of mother, father, and about two children. This pattern is changing by increase of single parents. Statistics show during 1990-1995 numbers of males was at least two times larger than the women (Haghseresht, 1995). They were mostly single men who mainly married to Iranian women that largely came from Iran. This raised the number of females. The portion of males was approximately 57% in 2007 (OECD SOPEMI. 2007). It may change since some divorced men who originally came with their Iranian wives, have remarried with new Iranian women who migrated to Finland. The significant cultural differences prevented intercultural marriages between Finns and Iranians. The only statistic shows no Iranian married to a Finn in year 2006 (ibid. 2007). It raises the possibility of easier and faster emigration, which involves no higher education. Extra and new kinds of freedom for children, particularly for girls, and women (mothers), decreasing power of the husbands, and rising divorce rates show those Iranian families face new sorts of burdens and opportunities (Haghseresht, 2005a). Korhonen's participants (2004) talked about the high number of divorce. Advanced freedom, rights, and financial supports in Finland encourage Iranian women to divorce.

Korhonen's (2004) participants' cultural changes included extra importance of self, individuality, independence, privacy, and freedom. During the conduction of the Final Paper for my former education, the level of socialisation was not changed much. Now they socialise less because of a more busy life and less need of each other. Role of the original religion and respect for elders have become less significant in Finland (Haghseresht, 1995). That is partly explained by influence of the new culture and religion. There is no statistics about it. They are mostly from Muslim background, partly because Iranian religious minorities often prefer other countries. Islam provides a background cultural identity for almost all Iranians. Nationalistic identity is less

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<sup>15</sup> The definition of family in this paper is a biological or non-biological father or mother, or both, with a child or children living together or separately.

emphasised by Iranians in Finland compared to Finns (Korhonen, 2004). Refugee identity is not central and functional for second generation and Finnish citizens with respect to their immediate goals. Role of the initial political views/divisions becomes weaker and blurred for many Iranians in Finland (Korhonen, 2004), owing to distance from politics of Iran and Finland. There is no statistic on their voting rates. Only few were candidates. Practically no Iranian holds any political position.

Bogusia Temple and Rosland Edwards (in Temple et al. 2006) found several sources confirming a connection between the deprivation and social exclusion, and disadvantage in host society's language. There is no statistics on the Finnish language skill of the community. The language skill reflexes other issues. Alike other countries (ibid.), besides gender and age difference, due to variable socioeconomic background and education, Finnish language competence is not equally distributed. Owing to the nature of their jobs or unemployment, majority of the men do not develop their Finnish as much as the working women do. The young Iranians speak Finnish, English, sometimes Swedish and the language of the first country of refuge before.

The weak position of the community has few explanations. Finland's lack of a well-built practice of civil mobilisation for demanding rights, relatively broad cultural diversity of immigrants, their newness and small numbers have caused the community organising a challenge (Clarke, 2006). Weakness, as the result of Finland's top-down bureaucratic welfare services, prevents the engagements of minority groups in processes of decision-making, she continues. Finnish (migration) history and culture are the reasons. Additionally, small size and a relatively weak in-group network have weakened the community. Since they would like to be similar to the majority, and only in comparison with some immigrants who enjoy fewer privileges in educational, cultural, economical and labour opportunities, Iranians have fewer reasons to urge for a strong sense of community identity and less motivation to create a strong community to support each other. *Reactive ethnicity*, a group facing discrimination and having close relation with other minorities (Levitt et al. 2002), is the ethnic position of the community. This is in contrast to the situation of Iranians in the USA where the newcomers arrive into a strong ethnic network and access to capital with fewer ties to the other minorities. They often assimilate to the already existing community. In Finland, as they settle down, they distance themselves from the other immigrants and the fellow Iranians. Sirpa Korhonen's (2004) Iranian participants have noticed positive changes in the way Finns accept and allow them in social life.

Since the members act very independently compared to some other nationals, commenting on the collective acculturation of the community is hard. However, comparatively the total preference is not the extreme alternatives as integration or alienation (marginalisation). The selection depends on the aspect of life. Alienation is valid in choice of religion, labour (partly by force), and political activities. As integration, while they keep some features of Iranian culture strongly, they have adopted many aspects from Finnish culture. It is hard to practice Iranian culture mostly due to limitations and less for direct resistance of Finns. Assimilation corresponds to basic education of minors and accommodations' locations. Choice of marriage partner is example of separation. The long absence from Iran has produced a negotiation for membership of Iranian culture because of its disadvantages, beside some rewards (Korhonen, 2004). One important benefit of distancing from the collective ties is the more liberal independent decision making chances (ibid.).

Iranians started by *expanded transnationalism* (Levitt et al. 2002) and occasional practices, with migration as a response to unexpected changes in Iran. It has shifted into *core transnationalism* (ibid.) carried out in a regular basis, habitual, patterned, and predictable. Initially, transnational life as memories played an important role, while currently it includes continuous and progressing actual relations and activities. Common intimate actions include visits to Iran or other countries, making telephone calls, letter/parcel/e-mail exchanges, and internet chat. Because the first generation's reason for immigration, as refugees, has limited their visit to Iran, the behaviour among their offspring is limited too. However, this is under ongoing change and more people visit Iran due to ease in *travelling, visiting* Iran compared to 1990s, and limitations to practice their culture in Finland. The youth are influenced by this change less than the adults, except children who accompany their parents. The less intimate activities are use of Iranian internet news, satellite TV channels, newspapers and radio. War or political disability in the origin country can trigger hidden transnational identities (Levitt et al. 2002). It corresponded to the situation of Iranian youth in Sweden (Mina Asadi, 1990) who showed strong connection to Iran during the Iran-Iraq war. In association to the new unrest in Iran, similar attention and concerns has started among young Iranians in Finland by use of internet.

Wahlbeck's (2002) definition of diaspora<sup>16</sup> and my description of Iranian community in Finland match. Some of its characteristics include compulsory dislocation, shared memory of Iran, experience of discrimination and alienation<sup>17</sup>, wish to return to Iran, collective obligation to renovation of Iran, though facing limitation, and their transnational social networks as diasporic relations. Statistics on their original refugee/asylum status confirms their compulsory dislocation. Majority did not suffer from extreme poverty or war. Their age when they left Iran supports the possibility of shared memory of Iran. Statistics on their limited education, labour, social, cultural, and political activities explain the discrimination and alienation they face. Elders show interest in return by regular visit to Iran and expressing it openly. Events before and after Iran's presidential elections in 2009-2010 have maximised their interest in renovation of Iran. Their transnational networks cover Finland, Iran, and other countries because of several family members, relatives, and friends there.

As Alejandro Portes (1995) generally claims about immigrants, all of Iranian diasporic communities are under the influence of the consumption patterns and aspirations of their host societies. There are two major explanations for different life, achievements, and well-being of the community in diverse contexts. One is the role of national context. It includes host countries' unique general historical background, diverse immigration traditions, their multicultural<sup>18</sup> nature, the opportunities they provide etc. These qualities in Finland play important roles in level of upholding Iranian culture and educational-occupational achievements of the community and participation in mainstream society. The other explanation is specific characteristics of the community in different countries. They include its socio-economic and educational-professional background, size, reason for migration and migration to that particular country (Haghseresht, 2005a), and diversity. Majority of the well-educated or wealthy Iranians did not choose Finland.

When there is a certain distance from two cultures, there is more chance for creation of a third (hybrid) one. That would be valid for the community in Finland because, comparatively there are fewer possibilities and extra limitations for it to practice, and preserve its culture and cultural identity. Thus, even there are many fundamental differences between the two cultures; Iranians in Finland are more

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<sup>16</sup> Please refer to the sub-chapter on transnational migration.

<sup>17</sup> Here, meaning of alienation differs from the acculturation theory, as individual immigrant's choice.

<sup>18</sup> It means a plural society with multicultural policy and multicultural attitude of the host members.

influenced by their host culture than they do in other countries. To the best of my knowledge, there might be one Iranian association still active in city of Jyväskylä, one cultural society in Turku, and no scientific association, Iranian restaurant<sup>19</sup>, Parsi TV/radio channel or bookshops in Finland. A few Iranian food products enter Finland through Sweden and are more expensive. There are limited Persian publications in some public libraries. However, comparatively high level of equality, freedom, security, and honesty are qualities which keep Iranians in Finland.

Studying a context is not separate from comparing it with others. Besides a mutual collaboration, Iranians have achieved noticeable success in Swedish higher education and labour, greater socio-economic situation of individuals, and sustained their culture well<sup>20</sup>; even it is a small, remote, cold country, with fewer opportunities, shorter immigration tradition and multicultural experience compared to the USA. There are Iranians who hold sensitive positions<sup>21</sup>. In both countries Iranians represent secular middle class of major cities in Iran (Reze Eyrumlu in Korhonen, 2004).

To the best of my knowledge, until 2004 there was no research on Iranians in Finland. The studies covered a broader group under which they explained Iranians briefly. I found Korhonen's (2004) Master's thesis on life stories of a group of Iranian refugees in the Finnish city of Jyväskylä. In her qualitative study, she confirms research on Iranians in Finland is limited and rare. She explains the relation between each individual and the levels of self, ethnic group, hosts society, and environments of Iran and host country through a process of change from refugee to Finnish citizen. Kati Turtiainen examined Iranian refugee women in Finland. 'Turtiainen's (1998) central issue is the identity formation of refugee women in a new country, concentrating on Iranian women living alone or being the only parent of the family in Finland.' (Korhonen, 2004: 39). One story in Laura Huttunen's book (2002) is about an Iranian single middle age man's autobiography. Another enquiry focuses on the leisure activities and sport among Iranian refugees as a way of social integration.

### **2.3. Iranian Refugee Youth in Finland**

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<sup>19</sup> Some restaurants, temporarily and as a side activity, have offered a few Iranian foods.

<sup>20</sup> It includes great diversity of Iranian organisations, associations, bookshops, (food) shops, restaurants, several Parsi languages TV and radio channels.

<sup>21</sup> Maria Khorsand was President of the Ericsson Technology Licensing Company between 2001- 2004.

There are no studies or developed statistics on the target group and their education. We miss precise information on their age ratio, gender division, education, jobs, marital status, well-being, health, language use, geographical distribution<sup>22</sup> etc. Approximately, one third of the community (one thousand five hundred) were underage for many years including 2006 (OECD SOPEMI 2007). This figure confirms family is a very important element for them. Almost all of the 1.5 generation have come with their families. Comparatively very few minors have applied for asylum. Statistics show in last few years only three individuals per year have applied (Finnish Immigration Service, 2008). There is a difference between 1.5 and second-generation. The personality of the former is shaped during the early childhood crucial years in homeland or/and the first country of immigration. Owing to the short history of Iranians in Finland, second-generation were few for many years. I only found there were 31 newborn Iranians in 2005 and 44 in 2006 (OECD SOPEMI, 2006 & 2007).

Many young Iranians, as part of the young immigrants, do not benefit from the similar chances that Nordic welfare state of Finland offers including free higher education, study and rental allowances. Thus, they have poorer educational and career achievements. Their situation corresponds to *dissonant acculturation* (Portes and Rumbaut in Levitt et al. 2002), as one of the three divergent paths of second-generation youth depending on their different national origins and class backgrounds. They adapt to Finnish language and culture quicker than their parents. The other two alternatives explain a more harmonious change between the two generations<sup>23</sup>.

Several Iranian pupils of one Parsi language teacher suffered from (cultural) identity confusion/crisis and that made the teacher concerned about their well-being (Haghseresht, 2005a). The teacher believed the confusion resulted from lack of contact with and knowledge about both Iranian and Finnish culture. Because of the limitations, short history and small size of the community, the possibilities to practice Iranian language and culture are limited. Religion, as a significant element of Iranian identity, plays an unimportant role in their life. Additionally, Finnish culture has very strong direct and indirect influence on shaping their cultural identity. The Iranian youth in Finland might identify themselves partly as Finns.

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<sup>22</sup> It is unclear if the youth who no longer live with their parents can be identified by use of census data.

<sup>23</sup> Portes and Rumbaut (ibid.) find the *selective acculturation* in which both generations softly move towards integration by the help of a strong ethnic community, a more favourable alternative that needs the support of policy initiatives.

Ability to use mother tongue plays a very crucial role in shaping the identity of a child and learning a new language, the teacher reminded. Thus, besides their poor Finnish, language loss worsens the situation. Different from the remaining importance of rituals and cultural symbols, often there is fast decline in the language preservation after the first two to three generations of immigrants (Castles & Davidson, 2000). I personally have witnessed several second and 1.5 generation of Iranians in Finland understand Parsi but cannot talk in it. Even though several children often respond in Finnish at home; there is no official data on the possibility of becoming Finnish-dominant. Some can speak but unable to write or read in Parsi. Children learn Finnish language faster and better than youth and their parents (Haghseresht, 1995).

A common quality between the young Iranians and other young immigrants is their strong need to belong to and acceptance by Finns. If a young immigrant is born or raised in Finland, these expectations are greater. The rejection hurt older immigrants less because they have looser and fewer ties to Finland. It is a very important issue because young immigrants have higher demands and responsibilities<sup>24</sup> for Finland, since many of them consider themselves as Finns living in *homeland* not in a host country. They find the rejection harder to accept and cope with. The social circle of many young Iranians is much wider than older generation and contains family members, relatives, partner, friends and acquaintances from fellow Iranians, other immigrants, or small number of very open minded<sup>25</sup> and tolerant Finnish (young) individuals. Older people have fewer contacts with Finns.

Robert C. Smith (in Levitt et al. 2002) finds class, gender, and racial hierarchies in a society the causes for transnational activities of second-generation that are partly applicable for our target group. Some transnational activities of parents such as visiting Iran and practicing some cultural activities do not concern Iranian youth, but internet use may be changing it. Smith's expectation about reduction of transnational activities, as the adolescence changes into young adulthood, may be valid within the Iranian youth in Finland. Some get married, if not younger than when their parents did, but at least younger than similar generation in Iran due to socio-economic dissimilarities. They choose Finnish partner less often.

In the beginning of my arrival to Finland by the end of 1990, the well-being of Iranian community took my attention. I noticed the parents were complaining about

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<sup>24</sup> Attending military or civil service is one example.

<sup>25</sup> Since tolerance is not enough to provoke a contact, I differentiate openness from tolerance.



conflicts with their children. I conducted my Final Paper on the same topic for my education by mid 1990s. I made a qualitative study and interviewed some Iranian refugee parents, their children and some Finns as daily service providers for them. The language difference between the parents and children, which made parents more concerned than their cultural difference, damaged their harmonious coexistence. The paper was called '*Parents Walk, Children Run*<sup>26</sup>'. For parents it was easier to interact with their teenage offspring because the level of their language and cultural difference were minimal. However, later I noticed this age group has its own complication. Parents had a strong tendency to preserve their Iranian cultural identity and learn Finnish language slowly. The youngest children moved towards becoming a Finn more and learned Finnish much faster. The youth struggled in choosing the direction and the speed of change because the influences of both cultures were compatible. They belonged to the group some call the *generation in between*, a generation that does not walk, or run, towards a particular direction but often wonders where to go culturally. It motivated me to investigate their unique situation more.

Next chance came from cooperation between the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and the University of Tampere. The project mainly aimed to elevate the insider perspective of migrants as reasonable method of knowledge production and to problematise the welfare state (Clarke, 2006). The name of my study was '[Young Stranger Citizens: the Health and Well-being of Young Iranian Refugees in Finland](#)<sup>27</sup>'. I call it Community Research II. My aim was to have a closer look at the lives of a few young Iranians who lived in Finland and detect how they felt about and evaluated their lives and their well-being. For that, qualitative methodology and interview method were used. Although the interviewees integrated to Finnish society in different extend and manner, they faced common limitations including legal rights, lack of interest and participation in education and higher education, fewer labour possibilities and little hope for it, restricted chances to practice and reinforce their origin culture etc. They showed dissatisfaction, or different levels of satisfactions, and sign of confusions or/and contradictions. Some were rejected by Finns through marginalisation, racism, discrimination and prejudice in official level and every day life. Others claimed their need for acceptance by Finns was met while their contradictory replies and signs of (over) assimilation did not support it.

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<sup>26</sup> This paper is available in the library of *Tampere Institute of Social Work* in Finnish city of Tampere.

<sup>27</sup> For further information, this title is a hyperlink to that paper.

They had plan or interest in leaving Finland, minimal level of education, decline of cultural identity in connection to reduced sense of self-identity, and increasing the primary significance of the family. Some marginalised (alienated) themselves from Finnish society. Complications in identity preservation damaged the self-esteem to different extend. Lack of interest in higher education has diminished their job opportunities even more (Haghseresht, 2005). They expected extra employment possibilities and equality, accelerated citizenship process, limiting the prejudice, economic assistance, and improved education for service providers. The results supported the significance of national context in the adjustment to the host country and probability of *underclass* formation of the Iranian community.

### 3. What Others Have Done about It? – Theoretical Background

This chapter approaches education, career, and the factors affecting their qualities including culture, ethnicity, race, social class, immigration, and refugee<sup>28</sup> life. The last part discusses belonging in relation to cultural identity and activities of immigrants that exceed national borders. They explain many common education and career challenges and plans of immigrants and their reasons to compare with my results.

#### 3.1. Education, Higher Education, and Ethnicity

Since a single theoretical outlook hardly can cover all aspects of human's complicated/many-sided behaviours (Giddens, 2004), I was influenced by multiple theories. Additionally, '[narrative] analysis assumes a multitude of theoretical forms, unfolds in a variety of specific analytical practices, and is grounded in diverse disciplines' (Daiute et al. 2004: vii). I used different approaches of sociological theories to *educational sociology* (Moore et al. 1999). Marxists are concerned with how the ruling class continues maintaining its position by the help of education system. Neo-Marxism (New Left) is more useful since the category of class in Marxism needs the introduction of modern immigrants. *Postmodernists*, as they avoid doing overall interpretations of social changes (Giddens, 2004) in contrast with Marx and Weber, may show interest in how the education system *reflects* those changes.

Often hidden, education environment is a place for cultural thoughts and activities, and power relations (Giddens, 2006). Lack of, or limited information, on immigrants in the curriculum of school, even passively, could cause lack of power for immigrant students. The flexibility of the official world of school, especially through its curriculum, determines the level that young students merge that world with their home (Daiute et al. 2004). *Interactionists* focus on the relationships in the classroom influenced by teacher-student or student-student labelling each other. I focus on the relationship between education, as a social institution, and class, plus the emphasis of phenomenological approaches on the '*meaning* of the situation of the classroom to the individuals involved' (Moore et al. 1999: 334). *Ethnomethodology* concentrates on the construction of unwritten rules of the classroom (Moore et al. 1999). *Interpretative* or

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<sup>28</sup> Even refugees are particular immigrants, here except if there is a difference in their condition, I only use the term immigrants.

*social constructionist* views, that understand people as social actors, do not find only one correct way to describe the society (Temple et al. 2006) of education.

### **3.1.1. Education, Ethnicity, and Inequalities**

The shift towards *knowledge economy* makes higher education more important than before. The results for the less educated are inequalities in terms of unemployment, low level wages, instability at work etc (Giddnes, 2006). Giddens (2004) suggests a great correlation between the degree of educational achievement and occupational success in contemporary societies that explains the better paying the job is the result of the better grade. 'Social class background influences the likelihood of [...] carrying on into higher education.' (Giddens, 2006: 699) Pre-university educational success is the other factor. There are differences in education accomplishments and distinct educational experiences (Moore et al. 1999). The sociology of education suggests associations between exclusion from school and poverty, weak responsibility, absence, inadequate parental control, and delinquency (Giddnes, 2006). School exclusion may mirror larger arrangement of disadvantage and exclusion inside a society (ibid.).

Gender, social class, and ethnic background influence the educational success the most and the last two are extremely connected (Moore et al. 1999) since often ethnic minorities occupy a lower social class. The home background explanation by Halsey (in ibid.) finds family's wealth, availability of books, parents' interest in learning skills of their children, their cultural background and parents' values significant for their children's education. We can add language use (Bernstein in ibid.) and parents' education to them. This paper concentrates on the role of education system and education experiences at school. Studies show that IQ is less influential (ibid.). Furthermore, the suitability of measuring the intelligence and IQ tests for culturally distinct minority children has been under question (Kuper, 1984).

The cultural explanation focuses on cultural deprivation of certain groups from the values of the mainstream and cultural capital (Moore et al. 1999). Cultural deprivation approach describes those children who learn different (cultural) knowledge and mother tongue at home benefit less from school which does not reinforce that knowledge. Cultural capital approach explains school's values are from upper and middle classes (Bourdieu in Giddens, 2006). Bourdieu claims, schools facilitate the continuation of cultural reproduction, and economic and social

inequalities through generations. That result is exclusion of working class. Schools have performed a growing role in controlling and screening the social population (Giddens, 2004). By controlling economic foundation, controlling the beliefs and values are possible (Moore et al. 1999) and education system is a tool to achieve that *false consciousness*. Thus, values and beliefs of majority are reinforced.

Rutter (in Giddens, 2006) found four major factors related to success of school environment, including attendance, achievement, behaviour and degree of delinquency outside school. These depend on a collective commitment of all staff members for good practice with two dimensions; good teaching and the culture of the school. The economy's necessities and education system are strongly related (Giddens, 2006). There are disagreements about the emphasis on the equality of resources spent and the equal results (J. S. Coleman in Kuper, 1984). Education policy agenda has changed from equality into the educational needs of the high technology in the West.

*Hidden curriculum* and *classroom knowledge* teaches the intended habits, values, and attitudes that facilitate the opportunities of some, while limiting the others when they leave school. The hidden curriculum includes teachers' values, influenced by the values of the wider society, and the way they distribute them into classroom (Moore et al. 1999). The values that teachers transmit in their curricula influence the context in which students make sense out of the conflict experiences and the development of multicultural selves (Daiute, 2004). Classroom knowledge is what teachers find appropriate knowledge and behaviour. Accordingly, teachers categorize and respond to their students. Paul Willis (in Giddens, 2006: 711) asks 'how cultural reproduction occurs [and] how working-class kids get working-class jobs.' Ball (in Moore et al.), with *interactionist-based* approach, observed the teachers' attitude and behaviours that informally distinguished between the students and produced anti-school culture among the less favoured students.

*Functionalism* sees the school environment a place that offers similar opportunities to all and effectively grades students by their abilities (Moore et al. 1999). Thus, some achieve more important jobs. However, it is unable to explain why many intelligent ethnic minorities and working class perform less well than what they would (ibid.). *Marxism* concentrates on the whole point of the education system; achieving, maintaining, and legitimising the failure of working class in favour of the middle and ruling class (ibid.). That system convinces the former to consider their low intelligence as the reason. Marxists, who concentrate less on the classes, regard

division between racial groups playing as important role in promoting conflict (Giddens, 2006). Racial hierarchy and class hierarchy are very much related. *Cultural racism* has replaced *biological racism* (Barker in *ibid.*). ‘The idea of *institutional racism* suggests that racism pervades all of society’s structures in a systematic manner.’ (Giddens, 2006: 493) This view finds education system as institution that discriminates some groups in favour of others by promoting special policies (*ibid.*). One aspect of it is in the content of the national education curricula emphasising mainstream writers and history instead of a multicultural programmes (*ibid.*).

Educational context witnesses the clashes of self, cultural, national, and ethnic identities. We are not born with an idea of our ethnicity, but we learn it by culture and recently by education. School absorbs the norms, reflects the hierarchy of power as a place of intercultural interaction, and also maintains it as an institute of cultural assimilation (Levitt et al. 2002) through spreading common norms. It often operates based on ethnocentrism. That makes education an important political instrument in the process of ethnic socialisation, nation-building and its maintenance. While nationality tends to ignore the internal earlier ethnic differences, it neglects the dissimilarities between the immigrants and majority even more. There are major dissimilarities between the educational achievements and accomplishments of majority and minorities, within the minority groups, and groups from different ethnic backgrounds on average level (Swann Committee report in Giddens, 2004 & Moore et al. 1999). While ethnic minorities often belong to the working class, the education that causes educational failures and suggests the low intelligence as its reason, could fail to produce them high self-esteem needed for good educational performance. In Western multiethnic societies, schools are forced to promote both multicultural values and national and ethnic identities of the majority.

If because of cultural differences White middle class teachers do not understand ethnic minority students, they may not provide (immediate) feedback necessary for the improvement (Michaels and Cazden in Daiute et al. 2004). Many minority students generally perform well at school compared to the mainstream students from a similar class status, even better in some cases (Anne Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004a). Sharp and Green (in Moore et al. 1999) noticed higher expectation of teachers from their middle-class students as the result of pressure from school and wider society. Additionally, some White teachers favoured White students and expected less from

Afro-Caribbean pupils. That discouraged the second group, resulting lower self-image. Most books by White writers contain White culture science.

A research by Donohoue Clyne (in Häkkinen, 1999) on the education of Muslim (background) children or coming from Muslim countries in Australia points out; native teachers had difficulties with recently arrived non native language speaker students and their parents, which caused frustration. With pupils, it concerned complication on cultural differences about discipline, teaching and learning styles, and recognising and comprehending unknown cultural ideas and practices. With parents communicating effectively was hard. Teachers were unable to identify the extent of influence that culturally different beliefs and values have on learning and teaching. It made them and the education system unprepared. Teachers interpreted the events by using their own cultural values which was resulted from their lack of knowledge on specific culture or religious cultures. Target student group was disadvantaged because of their low achievement and low teacher expectations. The other categories included curriculum content and school-community relations.

### **3.1.2. Education of Young Immigrants and Refugees**

The complex interaction of the different factors would be one reason for lack of theory on the factors that predict the school adjustment of immigrant adolescents (Liebkind et al. 2004). Since 1960s the models explaining the ‘school failure’ of ethnic minorities have gone through shifting their emphasis from ‘cultural deprivation’ to ‘cultural difference’, and the structure of ‘mainstream’ society (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004a). They have been criticised for limiting the phenomenon to a macro-structural approach, or *blaming the victim* or his culture. Now there is an agreement among several researchers that many factors function simultaneously and change across time in the educational performance of minority children. An interdisciplinary approach by Marcelo and Carola Suarez-Orozco (in *ibid.*) attempts to prevent over-simplifying and homogenising interpretations based exclusively on membership of an ethnic group.

A portion of education challenges are typical to all students who feel a pressure between expressing part of their personal diversities and integrating to the social environment of schools (Daiute et al. 2004). This task is more challenging for minority students who additionally have to make a compromise between the prescriptions of two cultures. Researchers have had a tendency to mainly employ

educational success or school achievement of young immigrants as a common sign of their school adjustments. It is wise to recognize school adjustment also through what Berry (1997) calls the psychological adaptation. Immigrant adolescents, besides mental health and behavioural problems, often face other acculturation problems such as inability to integrate to or bargain the viewpoints of the host culture, or lacking social and communicative skills. Those are almost completely displayed at schools (Liebkind et al. 2004). Peer group relations at school have significant impacts on shaping the personality, such as learning gender roles (Giddens, 2006). Isolated immigrant students are disadvantaged in that.

There are differences in education of various ethnic minorities. It strongly depends on the length of their stay, status, out-looking, country of origin, ethnicity, religion, etc. Immigrants as new residents have less language, cultural, and general knowledge about a new country compared to the traditional ethnic minorities. However, the economical transformations especially the growth of service economy in the developed countries plus the advances in civil rights, opens the doors of opportunities to the well-educated young immigrants. There is also less need for assimilation due to some advancement in multicultural tolerance (Levitt et al. 2002). Despite fashionable denial of pluralism in some countries, '*de facto* multiculturalism' has forced them to use special measures for immigrant children's integration in inner-city school classes for their multicultural character (Castles & Davidson, 2000). Since refugees cannot visit their home country, their return is unclear, and their education is often interrupted, their children generally perform worse at school.

Crul et al. (2003) research on Turkish and Moroccan youth in European countries focused on the integration process in the context of education systems and the mechanisms for shift to the labour market. They asked how the dissimilarities in national context and immigrant groups benefit or harm the second generation. The position of second generation differed so broadly that it was hard to make a general evaluation, and evaluating the well-being of one group because of the polarisation within it. Furthermore, groups showed transformations by time which put them in different conditions. National contexts played significant roles in the integration paths ranging from performing well through education or apprenticeship, towards belonging to underclass. It is quite demanding to judge what system is more desirable since one country may have few young immigrants entering higher education, but it provides a



smooth transition to the labour market. In another, second generation reaches higher levels of education, because of a more open system, but it goes down deeper.

### 3.1.3. Education of Young Immigrants and Refugees in Finland

Noora Ellonen (2008) studied the connection between *social capital* and young people's well-being, with particular emphasis on depression and offending behaviour, as indicators of welfare, and social support and social control, as indicators of social capital within school context. Her results suggests that '[the] association between experienced social support and control and youth depression and offending behaviour is in the part dependent on school attributes [...]. Where social support is distributed unevenly among the pupils, the incidence of depression is increased.' (Ellonen, 2008: 106-7) I focus on the depression. No gender differences were detected. The relationship between the experienced social support and its consequences is in part determined by school characteristics. The results suggest it is impossible to propose that teachers' social support produces the same effect in all schools. This took my attention since in another part she informs Finnish schools are very homogenous<sup>29</sup>.

Accordingly, if the school environment is socially supportive and encouraging, it could prevent or minimise the depression of all students and raise their well-being. Alternatively, teachers' *unequal* treatment of the students will raise the risks of depression. Ellonen suggests, in practice it means that at school we need to have interest in the well-being of each other equally, fix clear limits for the behaviours, and become involved when the limits are ignored. We need to attempt to achieve a functional culture of communal. She thinks, the Finnish education system has developed the opposite by encouraging the individuality in selection of study subject choice and the teaching plan. The system attempts to integrate the students with *special needs* to the ordinary class, which in turn endangers the attention of the teachers to the unequal division. She questions, even the quality of educational performances are high in Finland, is the well-being of young students ignored because of it? The research did not include immigrant students.

'Few immigrants study in advanced level.' (Keskisuomalainen, 29.12.2010). There are few researches on the education of young immigrants in Finland. Liebkind

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<sup>29</sup> Venla Bernelius, Helsinki University researcher, informs the differences between the schools start to be noticed in Finnish school environment (YLE news agency in Helsingin Sanomat, 19.10.2009).

et al. (2004) discuss numerous researches that found immigrant students performed better than Anglo-American pupils. The factors they offered for explaining their own study findings about Finland support those results. 'Non-native children are found to be particularly disadvantaged with poor performance in some countries more than three times higher among children of immigrant families than among other children. This is the case in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Germany' (UNICEF, 2005). 'Most young immigrants do not attend upper secondary school.' (Helsingin Sanomat<sup>30</sup>, 2005) A twelve country study (Sheila Karmela, 2001) on Early Childhood Education and Care Policies (ECEC) reveals Finland was not among the countries that have acknowledged the role of ECEC in raising the educational opportunities of immigrant students who are at risk of social exclusion.

A research (dissertation) by Merja Anis (2008) found problems from negative attitudes towards immigrant students at schools affect negatively the child protection in Finland (Finnish TV2 news, 7.02.2008). Regarding security of schools, the party secretary of Centre Party required zero tolerance to marginalisation and bullying in general at schools (Aamulehti, 10.11.2008). It relates to the recent shooting incidents at some educational institutions. This provides positive changes for the immigrant students too. Finnish Media discusses the extra challenges of immigrant pupils because Finnish schools are unprepared and the negative attitudes are severe, especially the marginalisation and bullying. It has reminded the negative consequences of ignoring and mistreating young immigrants. Yet, recently one source emphasised the high motivation of immigrants in school attendance<sup>31</sup>.

'Despite the fact that education is free of charge and available to all, refugees in Finland have an exceptionally low level of education in comparison with many Western industrialised countries.' (Lavikainen and Salmenhaara, 2002: 21). According to Kunz (in *ibid.*: 21), '[in] comparison to the West, Finland is an exceptional case when it comes to the overall low educational level of refugees', even there is a basic right for them to enjoy (higher) education. There is no new result contradicting those comparisons. I found few researches on education of young Somali (psychology-anthropology) and one on Vietnamese (social psychology-

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<sup>30</sup> Leena Nissilä of the Finnish National Board of Education; only 1.8% of young people attending upper secondary school - fewer than 1,900, have a foreign background. 'In some schools it is possible to sense an attitude, that immigrant kids are easily encouraged to go to vocational school.' (*ibid.* 2005)

<sup>31</sup> The source does not verify the age of them, which means all ages, and what is the percent of *more than half* of immigrants like (very much) school attendance. Indeed 51% is not a good figure.

acculturation studies). In those researches, both target groups faced discrimination but in different levels. Somali students suffered more and showed poorer educational performances. Vietnamese received extra support, performed better, and showed better integration. The dissimilar educational accomplishments could be the projection of their diverse integration and dissimilar attitudes of the host country. The dissimilar discrimination partly depended on the level of their ethnic difference with Finns.

Minority students in general, compared with the mainstream student underachieve and have a higher drop-out percentage, Alitolppa-Niitamo's (2004a) school ethnographic study on education of Somali speaking youth in metropolitan Helsinki confirms. There is variability in educational achievement between and within ethnic groups although most immigrant children suffer from some kind of common challenges at school. The particular needs of minority students, especially the newly arrived<sup>32</sup>, should be met with concern. She offers a multivariate framework stressing on the multiplicity of variables explaining the formal educational accomplishments of second-generation immigrants. The complex relation of the factors could produce productive or preventive results. The individual agency, receiving society, and human/social capital variables are the main categories. Depending on the complex interaction of the variables, the relative significance of each variable varies in each unique case. Unpreparedness of Finnish schools to respond to the needs of immigrant students and school's mono-cultural practices were major variables related to the host society that slowed down the immigrant student performances. Racism and anti-immigrant attitudes caused harsh consequences in terms of self-esteem and access to social capital. The key to development is to avoid considering the students as representative of a particular group and instead to understand the specific incoming resources and (linked) social capital of an individual, she concludes.

Karmela Liebkind et al. (2004) in their study on Vietnamese youth in Finland also focused on factors which shape immigrant adolescents' school adjustment. They asked about the structural associations between the diverse features of acculturation and school adjustment amongst the young immigrant. They focused on demographic factors such as gender, age, length of residence in Finland, and group status etc. To them the better school adjustment meant better school achievement or educational attainment in addition to better psychological adaptation and better acculturation. The

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<sup>32</sup> In my earlier studies, I found their condition is due to lack of language skill and cultural knowledge of Finland, and weak social network.

measures included school adjustment, stress symptoms, self-esteem, parental support, cultural identity, perceived discrimination, proficiency in the majority language, and sense of mastery. Among the common criteria concerning the measurement of school adjustment and achievement, the regular attendance was considered. I did not find the average grades or number of students who graduated.

*Perceived discrimination* measured perceived frequency of unfair or negative treatment (being teased, threatened, rejection) by teachers, school peers, and others outside of school, because of one's ethnicity. *Proficiency in Finnish* was based on self-assessment. Measuring the *sense of mastery* involved the degree to which participants felt they were in control of their lives. Despite their socioeconomic disadvantages and perceived discrimination, the Vietnamese sample group performed better with school adjustment than that of the mainstream students. 'Contrary to what one would expect on the basis of their lower SES [socio-economic status], many immigrants actually do better at school than the majority population.' (Liebkind et al. 2004: 637) This idea does not define the extent of *many* immigrants. Other studies inform variations among immigrant groups' cultural advantage, rooted in shared tradition of family solidarity, individual motivation, and communal contribution.

Furthermore, they showed a collective integrative acculturation that improved their school adjustment. However, this selection did not force them to experience a new identity. School adjustment was damaged by perceived discrimination, whereas perceived parental support positively affected it. These factors, however, indirectly determined the adjustment through, for example, psychological distress, self-esteem and sense of mastery. The self-esteem of the immigrant adolescents and the stress symptoms affects their school adjustment directly and significantly. Additionally, there is more risk of complications at school for those who do not benefit from constructive and supportive contacts with adults and peers. That increases their psychological distress. The level of stress symptoms of the immigrants did not differ from those of their host national peers [...]' (ibid. 646) In support of many studies on immigrant children, the Vietnamese adolescents in the study, to some extent, were considered as disadvantaged in and maladapted to school. Their psychological adjustment and self-esteem may have been damaged by the negative attitudes of the dominant group to all immigrants. 'Contrary to expectations, the degree of acculturation (i.e. the degree of national identity) did not increase the sense of mastery

of the immigrant adolescents studied and thus had no significant impact on their school adjustment.’ (ibid. 647) My results contradict this<sup>33</sup>.

Gaining new cultural qualities does not necessarily involve adoption of a new identity simultaneously (Laroche & Tomiuk in ibid.). Thus, acquiring new cultural skills, not national/ethnic identity, resulted in positive effect on school adjustment. Nevertheless, the researchers consider that this outcome may be particular for their target group. In conformity with an interactional viewpoint on immigrants’ wellbeing (Phinney et al. in ibid.), already when a part of ethnic identity includes achievement, then immigrant adolescents may improve their school performance and adaptation (Oyserman & Gant & Ager in ibid.). Finally, the immigrant adolescents significantly had a better proficiency of Finnish language if they resided longer in Finland. The immigrant adolescents had a lower sense of mastery and lower self-esteem than the host nationals, although, on average, they adjusted to school better than Finnish students. Those qualities are both important resources for the immigrant adolescents, since they reduce psychological distress. Except the discrimination, this research needed to add the *adjustment of school* to the *school adjustment*.

Some positive qualities in Finnish education system are its flexibility, diversity, academic freedom, and importance of individual development. For instance, since the teaching curriculum is regulated by schools, it is easier and faster to respond to the special needs of immigrant students, if school administration decides to do so. Conversely, as a barrier, because comparatively there is no inspection of teachers and other school staff by the state, it is difficult to monitor the improvements for that group of students. Maunula primary school in Helsinki is planned to provide services for untypical Finnish pupils returning to Finland from abroad and students with foreign background. They take into account the needs of the Finnish and international community and promoting each pupil’s individual potential. Based on the family names of the staffs, one would notice that they are multicultural.

There are shortcomings in the ordinary education provision for students with foreign background. Ethnic co-workers are excluded in service provision. Exceptions are interpreters and teachers of first language because there were no other alternatives. Owing to the normative education service in Finland for the continuation of *Finnishness*, one notices the invisibility of those who do not fit completely with the

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<sup>33</sup> Integration involves learning and developing Finnish language, causing better sense of mastery and school adjustment. Good relation with mainstream teacher is useful, despite the low sense of mastery.

norm. Nelli Piattoeva (unpublished seminar material) informs that in Finland teachers and local children (even) unintentionally bring the elements of Finnish ethnicity such as unchallenged symbols, myths, and stereotypes to the classrooms. That means they have not reflected on such issues. She asks about the consequences of this continuation of ethnic socialisation for the majority students, as a privilege, and the complications for the others who are ethnically or ideologically in minority position.

Finnish TV1 morning news (25.02.2008) informed, the teaching of mother tongue for ethnic minorities is not a part of basic studies and not compulsory. Thus, its provision is divers. Newspaper Aamulehti (09.08.2008<sup>34</sup>) discussed the possibility of finishing this service. Newspaper Helsingin Sanomat (14.11.2008) informs, demanding jobs force teachers to change their career. Some researches support the article<sup>35</sup>. Furthermore, it informs (19.10.2009) the schools with high number of immigrants do not suit Finns. Thus, Finnish parents take their children away from those schools more and are even ready to move to new areas (YLE news in *ibid.*).

It is not possible to find statistics on the number of university applicants with immigrant background, and their higher education rate and quality (grades, attendance, and graduation). A small number of students with immigrant background who enter, have lived in Finland long enough to be Finnish citizens and are registered as Finnish students. In 2007 there were 132708 non-Finnish residents in Finland (Population Register Centre, 2008) from which 5897 (Ministry of Education, 2009), only 4% of them, were studying at universities. They also made only 3.3% of all university students (*ibid.*). Many of them were exchange students or visitor degree students.

In Finland, the higher education is almost free and state provides general education allowance and accommodation supplement in addition to education loans. It provides extra freedom, flexibility, and independence compared with many other European countries. Those should ease the possibilities for immigrants. However, the missing elements are the interest to *apply* and ability to *access*. In practice, race and ethnicity of immigrants produce inequalities and a social class for them, which prevent them from studying in advanced levels. Additionally, there is lack of support to compensate their shortages in terms of language skill, social capital, encouragement, self confidence etc. This causes lower education level and satisfaction with jobs under

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<sup>34</sup> Article by Henripakka Kallio (Alma Media, Helsinki): "Kuntaliito haluaa omat kokeilukoulut maahanmuuttajaperheiden lapsille –Kotoutuminen: Vieraskielisten koululaisten määrä rajussa kasvussa.

<sup>35</sup> There are some studies on this topic, two of them by Mariikka Almiola and Heta Tuominen.

the level of their initial plans. Finnish common urge for maximum independence brings obstacles to the elements that could prepare the young immigrant applicants for entering the universities. Here I do not emphasise on the lack of motivation to apply.

### **Education of Young Iranians**

Geert Hofstede (in Häkkinen, 1999) identified a model of cultural differences with four dimensions. That provides a handy framework to explain the differences between Iranian students, their Finnish classmates, and the school staff. That includes their expectations of behaviour and education. The first dimension is *individualism* versus *collectivism*. The second, *power distance* shows the degree of accepting power inequality by less powerful members of each society. The third, *uncertainty avoidance* is avoiding uncomfortable situations that are unpredictable, unclear, unstructured, by upholding a trust in unconditional truths and inflexible rules of behaviour. The last is *masculinity* versus *femininity* that shows the degree of maximal or minimal division between the roles of males and females expected in a society. Based on Donohue Clyne research (in *ibid.*), Finns were considered to be in favour of high individualism and small power distance while Iranians have totally opposite interest. They both have strong uncertainty avoidance and feminine<sup>36</sup> characteristics.

In connection to educational context researchers interpreted in Australia immigrants coming from Muslim countries, including Iranian students and parents, have positive attitudes towards traditional style of education. This involves teacher-centred classroom, respect for authority, and learning by repetition. Individual opinions were not expected and encouraged in favour of prestigious educational achievements such as certificates and degrees. Those students were more at ease with homework, detailed timetables, and structured education, and teacher's independence from parental involvement because they are professionals. Male students preferred the traditionally considered non-female study subjects. Additionally, inadequate ability in language of learning produced failure in school or in attaining academic potential which in return harmed self esteem and caused behavioural problems.

Edward Hall (in Häkkinen, 1999), found cultures such as Iranian, with strong uncertainty avoidance and collectivism; As example of *high context* cultures they place major part of the information in the context and *enculturation* of individuals

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<sup>36</sup> Except factory versus service labour division, this conclusion does not support my idea.

instead of the message. This causes misinterpretations. Parents emphasise the (culturally) correct behaviour of their children and expect teacher to teach this important educational objective. In *low context* Finnish culture, words and their absolute meanings are central. Pedagogy of most (Muslim-minority) host countries' education system is based on student-centred learning, often experiential, problem solving and unstructured. Though this should make students self motivated, confident and expressive, for Muslim background students, especially girls who brought up with modesty and accepting authority, the outcome looks like lack of interest in learning and passive behaviour. Through their study subject selection, the targeted students did not obtain a wider range of learning skills and they were disadvantaged because they did not choose the subjects that lead to higher education.

Teacher's role may be understood differently in host country. Teachers' understanding of the cultural values that strengthen students' behaviour is a good step forward but there is a need for development of coping strategies as well. Furthermore, some teachers did not understand the strong connection between the education, culture, and religion. Culturally based difficulties related to the language of the host countries with low context culture, where the written message is so important, were acknowledged by some teachers. They had implications for the students' learning. For instance, finding a teaching style, not too simplistic, to have hidden meanings, and not too complex in discourse, to get the meaning across, was difficult for teachers.

### **Education Plan of Young Iranian Refugees in Finland**

To the best of my knowledge, there has not been any previous research on Iranian youth, and their education and career in Finland, except my small-scale studies. There are only a few available researches on education of second generation immigrants in Finland. This causes a challenge. In the study of Korhonen (2004) youth are only part of the target group. As a part of immigrant youth in Finland, Iranian youth are underrepresented in Finnish higher education and related jobs. Korhonen (2004: 149), while analysing her Iranian informant's blaming herself for her educational failures, points out the benefit of considering 'a dialogue with others in a responsible position'. I noticed, not only some Finns could produce disadvantages for this community, but also several individual members consciously or unintentionally may consider themselves belonging to a lower class. Korhonen, as their Finnish language teacher,



became partly an insider who could understand them better than many others. Although, holding a lower education in our modern times causes a class division, Korhonen has noticed how extra effective it is within the Iranian community.

Since I noticed in Finland few young Iranians attend high school and universities, I made a small-scale study about the experiences of some Iranian refugee families with the Finnish education system. Beside the individual experiences, I observed the youngsters are in an extra vulnerable position for being older than children to learn a new language and adjust to a new culture, their sensitive ages, and pre-adjustment to the Iranian education system. Additionally, newly arrived individuals who miss knowledge and social network, are more helpless.

In my Bachelor's thesis I detected the education and career plans of some young Iranians with refugee background in Finland and the key influential factors that predisposed their plans and the quality of their lives, well-being, and education. I focused on realizing if and why any of the participants showed lack of interest in higher education and career paths related to it. The last question covered the improvements that participants regarded as important. It was a qualitative study based on interviews. The main results included lack of interest and participation in higher education and related careers, and minimal hope to obtain their expected jobs due to their immigrant origin. Finding a job was important. Significant factors included interest in emigration, negative encounters with Finns (discrimination), different adaptation to Finland, and identity confusion in different extend. The roles of social capital such as importance of family members and rejection by Finns, plus human capital (individual characteristics and values) were significant.

Participants performed extra actively and productively when they adapted more to the host society. The intention was to focus more on the social factors, because compared to the individual factors; they have a broader significance. In relation to the quality of life, they expected from Finns, particularly the officials, more equality, trust, acceptance, and attention to them, their needs and complications. The solutions, generally lays in modifying the changeable factors, not age, gender etc. The role of the Finnish education system and the experiences of participants at schools in relation to their education and career plan, as a changeable factor and related to the environment, seemed relevant, vital and needed further investigation.

### 3.2. Career and Ethnicity

High unemployment can damage the strength of social ties and communities (Giddens, 2006). The *youth*, the elderly, and the *least skilled* are more at risk of unemployment (Moore et al. 1999). By deindustrialisation and decline of manufacturing in favour of a knowledge economy, the increase of non-manual careers is clear and the professional, white collar, and managerial jobs become more needed rapidly (Giddens, *ibid.* & Moore, *ibid.*). By growth of professions, some who leave the (unskilled) working class join the middle class but many become unemployed underclass. Less qualified experience unemployment more than professional and managerial workers (Lilley in Giddens, 2004). Unskilled or less skilled workers become more unable to find a new work when they become unemployed (Moore et al. 1999). Wahlbeck (2002) by introducing the results of some Nordic studies explains the uselessness of several integration or employment courses for those who remain largely disintegrated in the labour market and become disempowered clients of extensive social welfare systems.

Due to racism and lower overall skill level, on average ethnic minorities suffer from extremely higher level of unemployment and long term unemployment (Moore et al. 1999 & Giddens, 2004 & 2006). They suffer from favouritism in acquiring jobs (Castles & Davidson 2000). They are often engaged in lower level skills and status works. Their incomes are considerably lower than average, with longer working hours, poor condition of working, and they experience less chances of promotion. Their jobs are less secure by fewer pension and insurance benefits. The males are over-represented in limited industries (catering, transport, manufacturing) while females mostly work in health care services and manufacturing (Moore et al. 1999). While the basic industries profit by using a flexible labour force with little expenses, there are the marginal workers who miss opportunities and are clearly much Asian, Black, and female (*ibid.*). Working very long hours for comparatively low wages is the condition of many *self-employed Asians* (Giddens, 2006). Despite the common disadvantages, there is huge variety between different ethnic groups. Immigrants have different backgrounds and undergo different experiences at host societies (Moore et al. 1999). Economic success of immigrants highly depends on education, family, community support, and hard work (Tariq Modood in *ibid.*).

### **3.2.1. Career of Young Immigrants and Refugees**

It is hard to measure the unemployment of youth as many miss appropriate social security benefits and exclude from statistics (Moore et al. 1999). With a highly developed social welfare system it might be easier in Finland. However, young people are particularly influenced by unemployment because less jobs become available compared to their rising number (ibid.) and they lack social networking and experience. Many youth are long-term unemployed, particularly those from the minority groups (Giddens, 2006). While lack of healthy economy increases youth unemployment radically, it strikes ethnic minority and immigrant youth more severely. Two important reasons are their lower than overall skill levels, and racism (Moore et al. 1999). Faist (in Castles & Davidson, 2000) believes that, besides intentional activities to keep immigrant youth in disadvantage position in order to reduce the costs in strong welfare countries, sometimes they result as indirect discrimination.

Castles and Kosack (in Moore et al. 1999) understand the division of class by immigrants who are the most exploited and underprivileged, and the native workers, whose condition is better. This allows the promotion of native workers by achieving white collar jobs. Working class students, including young immigrants, are more likely to accept *lowly paid* jobs because education system convinces them that they have low intelligence (Moore et al. 1999) and discourages them from higher education. Often career and employment of young refugees is even worse because of extra limited legal rights, lower education level due to study interruptions, and harsher psychological traumas. Being least skilled, young, ethnic minority, with refugee background, raises unemployment possibility of our participants even more.

### **3.2.2. Career of Young Immigrants and Refugees in Finland**

Finland is a technologically advanced country with particular labour demands. Almost since 2000, even ordinary Finns recognised their aging population and shortage of labour force. '[Authorities], politicians and pundits in Finland have begun to recognize the inevitability of further immigration to Finland, and even a necessity [...].' (Clarke, 2004: 10) The focus is *importing* labour immigrants. The new fast growing and seriously needed labour immigrants know little about Finnish language and culture, but have extra contact with Finns, with higher obligations and demands.

'[Immigration] will not solve Finland's future labour shortage' because it is not attractive enough in competition with other Western European countries (sociology Professor Tapani Valkonen in Helsingin Sanomat, 16.9.2003). He finds the solution in Finland's own unemployed people. Unemployed immigrants are part of it.

Although migrants are much younger group, they tend to have considerably higher unemployment rates than Finns, even this differs very much by the community (Clarke, 2006). The unemployment rate of Finnish people was 6% in September 2007 while for immigrants it was 20% (OECD SOPEMI, 2007). The average unemployment rate between 2005 and 2009 was 7.8% for Finns and 17.3% for foreign born residents (ibid. 2011). They suffer from long term unemployment as a result of economy, racism and structural unemployment. During late 1980s-1990s Finnish economic depression brought negative consequences for them. We are experiencing a milder one again. Often they receive no job interview, or if they do, they fail. Thus, they engage with jobs out of their own career or become unemployed. The reasons are cultural and language barrier, sometime unnecessarily, devaluating applicant's previous education/qualifications, unequal opportunities etc. Those outweigh the positive changes in immigration law on employment.

There are different responses to this obstacle. The Green party has demanded for approximately 3 percent job quota for immigrant recruitment and suggested that job applicants' names and background information such as origins should remain anonymous until the job interview moment. The Immigration Minister Astrid Thors has supported it. However, she expects rejection by the right party (Perussuomalaiset) (Etelä Suomen Sanomat 29.10.2008). The Trade Union for the Public and Welfare Sectors (JHL) has already been active to assist immigrants. Finnish media actively reports on the immigrants' employment, rarely with positive positions or news. A local newspaper (Hemming, 2007) discussed the helpful changes in the attitudes of the employers towards immigrant job applicants. However, they suffer from important shortcoming; temporal extra demand of market and renting immigrant labour, focus mainly on the blue collar jobs, and high demand for language skill.

In Finland, situation of immigrants from Southern and Eastern countries corresponds to Castles and Kosack's analysis (in Moore et al. 1999); Immigration damages the working class solidarity, causing discrimination and position of superiority by the locals. Additionally, immigrants are aware that hard work does not help them enough to climb up the occupational hierarchy. Refugees in Finland suffer

more than others. Recommendations of Finnish team on Finland in TSCR Research Project EFFNATIS<sup>37</sup> (2000) are the following; ‘The situation of young people who arrive in Finland at the age between 16 and 25 and who are not of compulsory school age any more is most problematic. Because of their weak command of Finnish it is extremely difficult for them to find a place in the educational system or labour market. This age group is not entitled to social security benefits either. This group thus is in danger of becoming marginalised and excluded from the society. Special policies have to be developed to avoid their social exclusion.’ (European Forum for Immigration Studies, 2001: 91-2)

Approximately, 47 000 persons, equal to 30% of all non-Finnish residents are children and youth. The real number is higher since some of them are registered as Finnish citizens. Losing that fresh labour force is an immense loss for Finland. There is an urgent need for research<sup>38</sup> and statistics on them. Based on a recent study, ‘[many] young immigrants would be eager to leave Finland’ (Helsingin Sanomat, 13.10.2009). Because of familiarity with several cultures and languages, and having relatives and friends in different countries, it appears to be an easy option. The news connects it to an interview survey signifying that ‘many young people of immigrant background find Finland a racist and prejudiced country’. Beside immigrant youth’s *indirect discrimination*, the public policies’ dead-end low quality training programmes (Faits’s in Castles & Davidson, 2000) are valid in Finland. Faits call it *structural discrimination* and a *mechanism of exclusion*. The result is transformation of immigrant school-leavers into stigmatised minority foreigners. In Finland, one explanation is the *paternalistic welfare system* as the ideological-political context of social policies. Even the decision makers and the other officials have some awareness<sup>39</sup> of the complications and the dangers; the level of awareness is not deep enough to cause changes. The employment of young refugees in Finland is worse.

### 3.2.3. Career of Young Iranian Refugees in Finland

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<sup>37</sup> Effectiveness of National Integration Strategies Towards Second Generation Migrant Youth in a Comparative European Perspective

<sup>38</sup> Do they share major features with our participants? How many have planned for or study in higher education? How is the quality of their education? What kinds of jobs they have, or have planned to achieve? How many are interested in or have planned to emigrate. Do those who eventually stay enjoy an active, happy, and useful life for themselves and the society?

<sup>39</sup> ETNO supports the equal education and labour possibilities for young immigrants.

Majority of the Iranians in Finland suffer from unemployment as a sign of *underclass* formation. ‘Somalis, Vietnamese, Iraqis and Iranians find it the most difficult to get work and stay unemployed longest’ (Helsingin Sanomat 18.10.2002). The next larger group of job seekers in Finland after Russian, Estonian and Iraqis were Iranians by year 2005 (OECD SOPEMI 2006). There have been less unemployment and more diversity in types of their jobs since my last studies. New statistics show that the percentage has reduced from 63% in year 2003<sup>40</sup> (OECD Finland, 2003) to approximately 45% in 2006 (Ministry of the Interior, 2007). However, it has been higher than average unemployment of immigrants. By the end of 2006 from 1134 Iranian job applicants, 544 were unemployed (ibid. 2007).

We do not know if the people belonging to the approximately 15% unemployment decrease are employed now or attending practically no useful enough Labour Office courses. Nonetheless, recently the office finances some vocational training providing whole degrees for immigrants that eventually provide more employment chances. Others with higher education from Iran find it hard to obtain a job. Consequently, some continue their studies; others move to Helsinki for more and better labour opportunities, or tend to emigrate in search of better job opportunities. However, the situation has been advancing very slowly. In contrast, less educated people or those with technical professions generally find jobs easier, but mostly unstable works, or not from their own working fields.

These employment features vary depending on the nature of the national context and of the ethnic group. EFFNATIS, as a reliable project, has examined the outcomes of diversity between the national contexts, including different practices and policies, and the ethnic groups. It reported on Finland; ‘Stimulated by the very high rate of unemployment among refugees from Third World countries, a discussion has begun to introduce a system of competence assessment of migrants to support their integration into the labour market’ (Heckmann et al. 2003: 14). It offers the next specific country policy recommendations for Finland. They include competence assessment of immigrants wanting to enter the labour market, Finnish language courses, special policies to counter the social exclusion of immigrants arriving between the ages 16-25, and concreting anti-discrimination measures from authorities (European Forum for Immigration Studies, 2001).

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<sup>40</sup> Now, the source only offers the average unemployment of all immigrants in Finland.

Generally, one could divide the Iranian refugee community in Finland into three major groups of occupational-financial status. *Business owners*: (e.g. kebab-pizzeria restaurant<sup>41</sup> owners), *workers* (e.g. employees of the restaurants, or recently, bus drivers), and the *unemployed*. I am not sure if I should add a fourth group to this list since highly educated white-collar professional employees are few and do not form a group. Korhonen (2004) explains her participants' problematic and pressurised working experiences. Due to the short history of the community, the differences in capital and other means of power are not high to witness *polarisation* yet.

Although there are no statistics on the labour situation of young Iranians in Finland, by considering the community's high unemployment rate and the percentage of youth members from the whole, it is possible to assume that they also suffer from unemployment. Additionally, combination of being young, belonging to an ethnic minority group, and refugee background suggest their high unemployment rate. Occupation of Iranian parents may affect the labour activities of their children in addition to studies. Usually, if children do not follow the restaurant job, some help their parents in the family business for a period. This is changing and more young people try other kinds of usually blue collar labour as their parents'.

### **3.3. Acculturation, Lack of Belonging, and Transnationalism**

Identity is '[the] distinctive characteristics of a person's character [...] which relate to who they are and what is meaningful to them.' (Giddens, 2006: 1020) Giddens (in Elliott, 2005: 153) connects it to the 'continuity across time and space'. Here it means the non-physical qualities in a person that do not change fundamentally over time. However, identity *types* (e.g. patriot) could change. Giddens calls it *self-identity*. New self-identities change the interactions of individual to the self and the others. Beside *individual* identity, people carry a *social* identity that involves a *sense of belonging*.

Fredrik Barth (1969) broadened view of ethnicity by adding *ethnic identity*, a subjective aspect, to the cultural behaviour. As *individual* identity is partly the result of interaction with other individuals, ethnic identity is maintained through personal or indirect interaction with in-groups and out-groups. Developmental and social psychological viewpoints propose that a protected and powerful ethnic identity

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<sup>41</sup>Grocery shop or small bar ownership, as recent minor variations in the type of their jobs, provide no major social class change but offer better economical condition or ease the hardship of their labour.

improve the psychological well-being of immigrants (Phinney et al. in Liebkind et al. 2004). Nguyen (in Liebkind et al. 2004) confirms that it is better to predict general and school adjustment by *national* than by ethnic identity. Verkuyten and Nekuee (in *ibid.*) uncovered Iranian immigrants' ethnic identity had only disadvantageous effects on their psychological well-being in the Netherlands. Liebkind et al. (*ibid.*) conclude that there still exist many inconsistencies about the relationship between adaptation to educational environment on one hand and ethnic and national identity on the other. Clarke (2004) explains how immigration, diaspora, wars and influence of foreign rules involved power relationships, changed definitions and have shaped Finnish national identity project. The Finnish project tends to construct a fix perception of belonging to a place, and culture, as a foundational necessity and through social memory (*ibid.*). It may cause lack of belonging enough to Finnish society and schools.

Immigrants may simultaneously hold both origin and Finnish cultural identity and consider belonging to both societies. Some may not identify with those socially accepted labels. Here the definition of cultural identity is similar to identity, but in a collective scale. Culture and language are the core elements of cultural identity. Globalisational trends have significant consequences for cultural definitions of identity and belonging (Clarke, 2004) and post-modern global society finds it increasingly challenging to deal with citizen/stranger categories that have dualistic nature (Clarke, 2006). One characteristic of cultural identity is its changeable nature.

*Acculturation theory* is helpful to understand attitudes and behaviours of immigrant youth and host society. By suggesting alternative cultural identities and belongings, it explains the education experiences and plans of the participants. I use cross-cultural psychologist J. W. Berry's (2003) definition and framework for better understanding of acculturation. 'Acculturation is a process in which contacts between different cultural groups lead to the acquisition of new cultural patterns either by one or both groups.' (Berry in Forsander et al. 1994: 43) Acculturation includes group (cultural) and individual (psychological) level. In group level, minimum of two cultures contact and it results in cultural changes in both, which influences the individual level. Individuals in both cultures undergo *behavioural shifts* and *acculturative stresses* during their *psychological acculturation*<sup>42</sup> that itself affects the

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<sup>42</sup> '[Psychological] acculturation refers to changes in an individual who is a participant in a culture-contact situation – a person who is being influenced directly by the external culture and by the changing culture of which the individual is a member.' (Berry, 2003:19)



eventual *adaptation* in *psychological* (internal) and *socio-cultural* aspects. The individual's *long-term adaptations*, as relatively stable changes, could be the result of attempts to cope with the acculturation changes. While conducting an acculturation research, we can use this framework as a map of phenomena that needs to be conceptualised and measured.

Behavioural shifts as actual outcomes are quite simply undertaken within the cultural identity in mode of talking, eating etc. Acculturative stress is collection of more challenging experiences of depression, uncertainty etc. The coping mechanisms with those are *passive coping*, such as *emotion-focused* and *avoidance-oriented*, or *problem-focused* of *active coping*. Psychological adaptation<sup>43</sup> may influence the psychological (e.g. self-esteem) and physical well-being. Capability in controlling everyday intercultural life activities in the new cultural environment that finely connect the acculturating person to others is the example of socio-cultural adaptation. All the strategies are made up of *attitudes* (e.g. preferences) and *behaviours*.

If one has positive attitudes towards the origin and the host society's cultures, the strategy is *integration*. Minorities can freely select and effectively practise integration when the majority has receptive attitudes regarding cultural diversity. It includes the preparedness through the adaptation of its national institutions such as labour and education to respond properly to the needs of all residents. When the individual's attitudes are negative towards both cultures, one had chosen *marginalisation*<sup>44</sup> or *alienation*. Maintenance of original culture and rejection of the host culture is *separation*. The opposite is called *assimilation*. When a member of an ethnic minority group faces discrimination and prejudice, one may become unwilling to engage in assimilation in order to avoid rejection. Most frequently people choose integration, with diverse goals and paths. In my results, *Iranian-Finn* represents integration. *Iranian* corresponds to separation. *Finnish-Iranian* shows assimilation. *Nomad* expresses marginalisation. I added extra alternatives. Alienation could mean *cosmopolitan*, *belonging to nowhere* or to a *hybrid* culture. By combining the choices (e.g. assimilated-integrated<sup>45</sup>) I finetuned them.

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<sup>43</sup> It is 'a set of psychological outcomes including a sense of personal and cultural identity, good mental health, and the achievement of personal satisfaction in the new cultural context.' (Berry, 1997: 14)

<sup>44</sup> 'Although marginalization can be a strategy that people choose as a way of dealing with their acculturative situation, it can also result from failed attempts at assimilation [...]' (Berry, 2003: 24)

<sup>45</sup> This means the participant is more often assimilated than integrated.

There is a similarity between the *acculturation strategies* of individuals in ethno-cultural group and the larger society. *Both* by encountering would<sup>46</sup> become acculturated. Integration process is only called *multiculturalism*<sup>47</sup>, while diversity is an approved characteristic of the larger society as a whole and when it chooses a positive reaction to the existence and activities of minority groups<sup>48</sup>. ‘When assimilation was sought by the non-dominant acculturating group, the process was termed the *melting pot*, but when assimilation was demanded by the dominant group, it was called the *pressure cooker*<sup>49</sup>.’ (Berry, 2003: 25) When the dominant group enforces marginalisation, we call it *ethnocide* or *exclusion*, and when it imposes separation, it is called *segregation*. Figure 1 describes the *acculturation attitudes*.

Demographic, socio-economic, cultural, and structural factors shape the result (Sheila Patterson in Moore et al. 1999). Additionally, the acculturation choice could go through changes and there could be phases with no strict order. Sue et al. (1990) see acculturation as a *process* with five stages of *conformism*, *conflict*, *sinking in*, *self reflection*, and *integration* that confirms the existence of *biculturalism*. My previous results suggest that the process of acculturation does not necessarily contain all those stages and their order could differ. Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004b) finds acculturation as a long-term process and discusses the *segmentation of acculturation* among immigrants. The complex mixture of variables generates unexpected division between the acculturation paths of the ethnic group members, she (2004a) explains.

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<sup>46</sup> I personally believe a contact between the two groups in essence involves a change in *both*.

<sup>47</sup> The integration can be practised only in countries that are openly multicultural where particular psychological preconditions (acceptance, low prejudice) are customary (Berry & Kalin, 1995).

<sup>48</sup> A society with people of diverse cultures, without multicultural policy, is a *culturally plural society*.

<sup>49</sup> I present a quote, since the figure showing *strategies of larger society* contains the term *melting pot*.

## “Conceptual Approaches to Acculturation”

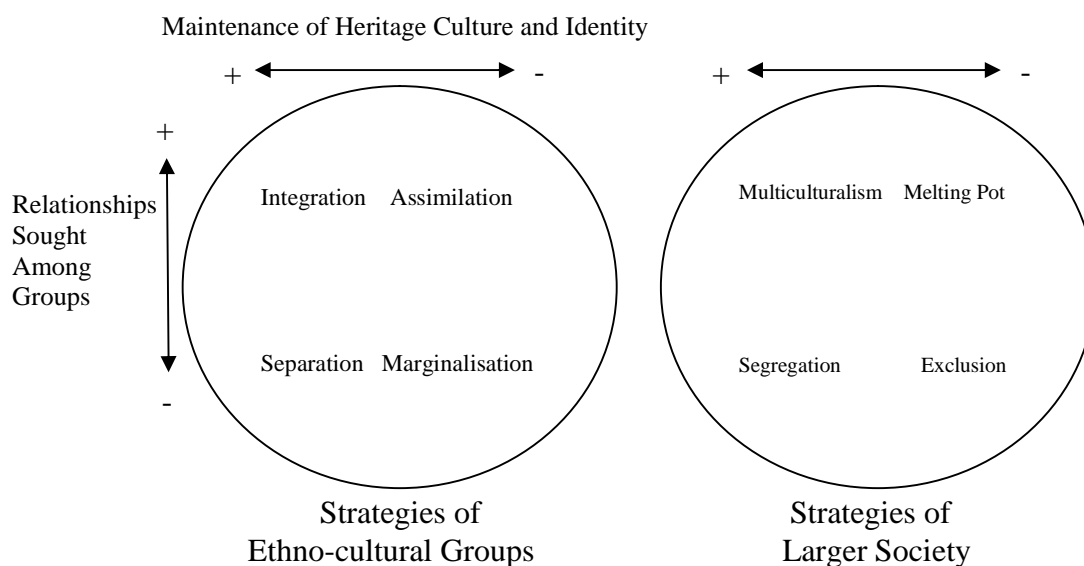


Figure 1: Four acculturation strategies based on two issues – views of ethnocultural groups (*left*) and of larger society (*right*).’ Berry, 2003: 23)

Refugee identity constantly changes and is not definite and identical for all. Part of it is negative, but natural and expected. The other part may damage the post refugee life. It is an available identity given by social, historical, and political instruments and social organisations such as mass media<sup>50</sup>, immigration policies, and popular opinion that consider them as people who deserve their negative experiences (Giddens, 2004). Media has a strong, effective, and generalised role in making a wrong image of refugees with hidden moral intentions, by reducing their individual features (ibid.).

### 3.3.1. Transnationalism

Acculturation theory is not new enough to offer sufficient contemporary explanations. Thus, I introduce transnational migration. Many studies on transnationalism do not find it obvious to identify an individual with a fixed locality (Bryceson et al. 2002). Majority of immigrants uphold several identities connecting them concurrently to several nations though some identify more with one society (Vertovec, 1999).

<sup>50</sup> [Institutional] racism has been revealed in spheres such as television broadcasting (negative or limited portrayal of ethnic minorities in programming) [...].’ (Giddens, 2004:252)

‘[Transnationalism] broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation states.’ (ibid: 447) Anthropologists find transnational migration as the ‘[process] by which transmigrants, through their daily activities, forge and sustain multi-standard social, economic, and political relations that link together their societies of origin and [settlement.]’ (Levitt et al. 2002: 7) The locations could include other countries.

When one chooses assimilation but faces rejection by majority, one often withdraws by distancing emotionally and physically through transnational behaviours. Robert C. Smith (in Levitt et al. 2002) argues that assimilative<sup>51</sup> *pressure* actually fosters transnationalism since it motivates to redefine the ethnic identity. Furthermore, studies emphasise that relative easiness of communication and widespread global movement changes individuals’ sense of place and related social identity (Bryceson et al. 2002) and advances transnational activities. Gayatri Spivac (in Vertovec, 1999) discusses the global technologies, particularly the microelectronic transnationalism, represented by internet and bulletin boards that contain communication of cultural distinctiveness for transnational consumers. Life course/cycle, generation, and social location would affect the *nature* of transnational participation (Levitt et al. 2002). Finnish context has relatively extra limitations for Iranian cultural practices. That adds factors of *location* and *community’s size*. What I call *Finnishisation* of Iranian youth does not necessarily imply that most of them never engage in transnational behaviour. They may selectively respond to events (marriage, births) occasionally and irregularly.

Wahlbeck (2002) suggests that the specific content and form of transnational experiences and social relationship of refugees have several major differences with ordinary immigrants. Thus, transnationalism is not precise concept. *Diasporas* is capable of considering this specificity well. Wahlbeck confirms that, although not all refugees and not always make diaspora, the concept is useful for analysing any refugee community by showing their specific refugee experiences and including their transnational social relations. A general criterion for defining diaspora is ‘forcible dispersal, settlement in multiple locations and the idea of a homeland.’ (Wahlbeck, 2002: 221) People also hold together or re-create diaspora in certain degree by shared imagination, cultural artefacts, and mind in our time of cyberspace (Vertovec, 1999).

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<sup>51</sup> Here assimilation is a force by majority to minorities, not the choice of the individual immigrant.

Deborah Bryceson (2002: 3) defines transnational families as '[families] that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely 'familyhood', even across national borders. Combination of *forced* assimilation with other factors reduces its identical duplication in the second-generations (Levitt et al. 2002). 'A transnational second-generation can be defined as all persons born into the generation after emigrants have established transnational social fields who live within or are socialised by these fields, regardless of whether they were born or are currently living in the country of emigration or abroad' (Levitt et al. 2002: 239). In my study I exclude 1.5 generation from it. Two means by which the second-generations show transnational behaviours include travelling and language use (Jones-Correa in Levitt et al. 2002). In relation to language loss, I consider, what I mean by Finnish when I talk of a shift from Parsi to Finnish. Is this Finnish a standard language, slang, or a hybrid? What difference does it make? Jones-Correa (in Levitt et al. 2002) asks<sup>52</sup> how regular and irregular transnationalism of immigrant youth might matter, despite the sharp fall in the intensity and frequency of it from the first to the next generation. Nancy Foner (in Levitt et al. 2002) recognised, even transnationalism provides resources, when immigrant child may not feel belonging to any of those places she experiences difficulty with her education.

This sub-chapter concludes that rejection caused by ethnicity, weak level of belonging to school and the receiving society could produce acculturation strategies that distance immigrants from that society with negative results. While producing poor education, it could create lack of interest in higher education and related career, and determines type and extend of the transnational activities.

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<sup>52</sup> He offers answers about longer-term effects on them, the host country, and their ancestors' homeland.

## 4. Research Process

This chapter explains the choice of research methodology and methods for collecting, analysing/interpreting, and presenting the data, their advantages and shortcomings. It describes the sources of data, the analytical tools and procedures, and some ethical issues. It clarifies why I chose narrative form, why such kinds of narratives, and the manner of writing them. Finally, it describes the relation between the informants, the reader, and me for increasing the effectiveness of the study.

### 4.1. Collecting the Data

For hearing the real own voices of the interviewees about what was important/relevant for them, gaining a more complex in-depth knowledge on the topic, and having a broader understanding of the social processes, I used qualitative methodology. Concerning the methods, for data collection, I favoured ethnography by use of open-ended questionnaire<sup>53</sup>, in-depth interviews (Moore et al. 1999) and participant observation, for producing biographical narratives. The questionnaire allowed the participants to discuss the questions in depth and details. I avoided ambiguous or unclear questions or sociological terms. I used clear standard Parsi. I considered five ethical issues (Hammersley, 1996); *informed consent*, *privacy*, *harm*, *exploitation*, and *consequences* for future research. In Finland, there is no need for official permission to interview friends. The informants orally gave their consent to participate before the interviews and after being informed about the aim of the study.

I conducted the last interviews in some Finnish southern cities in different locations, conditions, and times by end of 2005 and the first interviews by 2003. They were audio recorded and lasted about half an hour to one hour. The spoken language was Parsi. I employed face to face interview since it allows observing story creation, a chance for story collection, and stimulation of the storytelling (Czarniawska, 2004). It offered a possibility to confirm the answers, minimise and clarify the misunderstandings, and more detailed information. The interviews were semi-structured and flexibly planned in order to provide enough power to the interviewees and uncovering deeper and diverse meanings. They were free flowing exchanges and

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<sup>53</sup> For extra information, please check the questionnaire in the appendix.

conversational. For minimising the modification of the situations, I avoided suggesting things (Moore et al. 1999) or asking questions that might enforce ideas.

*Active interviewing* (Gubrium and Holstein, 1995) by allowing the participant to talk in detail and length about the most important and relevant issues for them, offered much room for their involvement in and reflecting on collecting and interpreting the data. Though the interviews were question-and-answer, as *free association narrative interviews*, they were narrative production environments (Hollway et al. 2000). Although the narratives were central in the interpretations, interviewees' free association had priority to narrative consistency. To obtain reply to unanswered question, examine the truthfulness of answer, avoid misunderstanding, clarification, and enrich poor information, I used follow up questions.

## **1. The Target Group and the Participants**

I chose sixteen-twenty five years old Iranian Pars fe/males with refugee background who live in Finland as the target group. I selected those who must plan their education soon. Due to their interrupted/delayed education, I was flexible with age limit. I found them as one of the vulnerable groups because of their ethnicity, national origin, refugee position, and age. Their out looking easily shows their ethnic difference, which is not welcomed. Their nationality is an obstacle because since the Iranian revolution, Iranians have lost a great degree of their positive international status. As (former) refugees they lack social, economical, and cultural, legal advantages. The label also has a negative reputation. The extra vulnerable position of *young* Iranians in Finland (Haghseresht, 1995, 2005a&b) justified the choice.

Iranian children and youth make a considerable portion of their community due to their larger family size and because older people immigrate less. Additionally, hardly there has been a research on Iranian immigrants although they have been living for over twenty years in Finland and their number has been growing. It was one of the most relevant target groups because, we all came to and have been living in Finland as refugees for several years. It has provided me extra familiarity and concern. I consider the young members important for Finnish society, their parents and me. As an Iranian-Finn, a fellow member of the community, with language and cultural similarity, and my refugee, education and career background, the well-being, prosperity, and harmonious coexistence of the target group with native Finns is my concern.

I chose eight Iranian young men and women, from age sixteen-twenty three who belonged to 1.5 generation<sup>54</sup> as the participants. They were born in Iran, and have lived in Finland for at least five years. As a follow-up study, I selected the same participants as my Bachelor thesis. I chose people as representative as possible of the target group who could also bring different variations and new influential factors to the analysis. They represented diverse life and education experiences, financial and labour status, family types etc. Selecting respondents from my ethnicity minimised misinterpretation. I knew them for several years. It provided participant observation data. It also provided trust. It was easy to locate them for the first interview due to our friendship, but challenging to find those who managed poorly since, sadly, I and the participants distanced us from them. For this study, I could not interview two.

There are facts about one that others are more aware of. It motivated me to interview the informants' parents separately. I was aware that parents' important comments could offer new dimensions since they were more experienced, paid (extra) attention to some common experiences, and sometimes with a deeper understanding. They could discuss what their children did not notice, found unimportant, or felt uncomfortable to mention. However, due to limitations, I avoided using their comments broadly. Though I can choose which of the contradicting views to believe, I do not have to take a stand on which one is wrong or right (Czarniawska, 2004). I only mention different views with possible explanations for them. I used other means of collecting information on (young) immigrants in and outside Finland<sup>55</sup>.

## **2. Me as the Interviewer, the Ethnographer, and the Ethnic Researcher**

For inviting and maximising reader's participation in the interpretive process, I provide some information about me, my perspectives, theoretical views, and biographical experiences here and in other parts. Since we cannot avoid the influence of our cultural/political viewpoints and values while researching, it is vital to make their influences clear and monitored (Moore et al. 1999) by reflexivity. I have belonged to the middle class. In Finland, I studied and become a social educator (sosiaalikasvattaja) and Bachelor in sociology. Since 1990, I researched the well-being of the Iranian community. Though in Iran I found myself alien in some ways, it

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<sup>54</sup> The second-generation was too young and few for interviewing by the time of the first interview.

<sup>55</sup> Please refer to appendix 3 for a list of them.



was already in Finland, when I recognised the depth of my Iranian identity. As an integrated Iranian-Finnish man I share some elements with Finns. Studying in the Western higher education system of Finland has influenced my research.

I chose *community member* as my voice strategy. For several reasons I am an insider to the informants. Being a co-ethnic fellow, born and lived in Iran provided similar national/cultural identity, values, norms, and language. We also became family friends. I have conducted research about such group too. These as produce some benefits, involve some shortcomings. As advantage, it produces commitment and concern to the target group about which, as an *insider researcher*, I have some extra language and cultural knowledge. If the researcher does not really belong to a community, it is difficult to be included in it or social context for studying it (Giddens, 2004). Membership offered deeper knowledge of the topic and eased communication and interpretation of verbal and other culturally influenced actions. It reduced uncertainties or misunderstandings. Insider researcher may notice or understand what others leave unnoticed or ignored. Likeness of gender and race between storyteller and listener could provide other similarities that facilitate extra themes to appear (Gergen in Daiute et al. 2004). The similarities and my student position strengthened a non-hierarchical relation. It helped to understand and *feel* informants' complications. In the interviews I used informal conversation and appearance.

Lack of distance and managing familiar could cause blindness, unclear sight or a wrong look to self-evident (Ylijoki, 1998). Familiarity with informants might prevent me from asking further questions. I minimised it by listening with an open and curious mind, and looking to the familiar with an outsider's eye. Yet, researcher-participant power distance, my education, career, experiences, social capital, and age unavoidably made me an outsider. Hence, I missed some information but I was not too close to loose outsider's eye (Giddens, 2004). I made 'an interpretation by a person who is not socialised into the same system of meaning as the narrator but is familiar enough with it to recognise it as such' (Czarniawska, 2004: 62).

## **4.2. Analysing and Interpreting the Data**

I transcribed the audio-recorded material<sup>56</sup> from Parsi to English. I tried to keep their original forms, but not verbatim. My perspectives might influence silencing the voices, and the choices on the transcription's design (Elliott, 2005). Ethics and analysis involve what is ethically proper to choose for analysis and how to analyse ethically. The truthfulness and inconsistencies of comments affect the former. The reliability of the data depends on interviewees' mistakes, their honesty, my own judgments, and the relevance of the information. Narrators may provide a new and a more appropriate picture of themselves, or seeking legitimacy (and frequently apply narrative that represents the events for defending their behaviours Freeman in Daiute et al. 2004).

Thus, I questioned (doubted), disagreed, modified, selected, searched hidden agendas, interpreted and brought into counter-examples, compared, employed other studies and statistical data, applied source analysis, and took part in the narrative production. The fictional part of the information is valuable knowledge too. It reveals what informants imagine as they prefer or fear to be, or have excluded from conscious (ibid.). Since we are unable to give voice to the participants<sup>57</sup>, the researcher and others better not try to artificially see the researchers as persons with objective position. If the researchers provide proper information on themselves, it is legitimate to choose the unavoidable *interpretive approach* (Riessman in ibid.), which is more ethical too.

Stories are worthy of studying since the telling of a story is social (inter)action in unique social context (Daiute et al. 2004). Thus we can analyse the texts as such, since they are part of the world. An important approach to analysing and evaluating the interview comments is shifting the focus from 'what does a text say?' to 'what does a text do?' and 'how does a text say what it says?' (Czarniawska, 2004) More than one (set of) techniques determined the analysis. The character of the phenomena, what were interesting and valuable to say about them determined the methodical techniques (Mark Freeman in Daiute et al. 2004). First I found the similarities and the differences between the participants' comments and lives. I chose those that are worthy of studying. Next, I constructed different types such as acculturation choices. I clarified how differently factors played their role in this choice.

I used four close reading processes for analysis of biographical narratives (transcriptions) as *voice-centred relational* method (Mauthner & Doucet in Elliott,

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<sup>56</sup> Later, the interviews tapes were kept in locked places for further study.

<sup>57</sup> We have no straight contact with other's experience but an image of it (Riessman in Hollway, 2000).

2005). I analysed the data for emergence of narratives. I approached the transcripts for studying the plot of the sub-narratives, the active 'I' who *told* the story, the respondents' relationship with their close people and with a broader social and cultural context. I also read each narrative to know what happened and for my own response to it. I asked *what* I notice in the text and *why* (Mauthner & Doucet in Elliott, 2005). Indeed my own particular background, experiences and my social relation to my interviewee, partly made me to notice particular issues.

Hammersley et al. (1996) divide the analysis phase of a sociological ethnographical data into macro (broader society) and micro-level (local society). Here, the macro-level is Finnish people and non-Iranians in Finland. The micro level is the Iranian community in Finland, family, relatives and friends. I added the individual level. I analysed some *symbolic activities* (Daiute et al. 2004) in narrating (hiding, exaggerating, performing, imagining) that assist or restrict life and its development.

To aid the analysis, I collected the most relevant and important *influential factors*. For finding and selecting the factors that mostly affected the quality of education and career (plans), I expanded the idea of *culturagram* (Elaine Congress et al. 2005), which included ten factors. I divided them into pre-conditional (before arrival to Finland) and post-arrival factors. I selected the transforming experiences from the (ordinary) events (Daiute, 2004). I looked at the total picture of combination and interconnection of all significant factors. I focused more on the age, language skills, cultural knowledge/identity, education experiences/performances, and attitudes. I selected the factors based on their flexibility for change.

I also divided the factors into individual, family, and society levels. In the first level, I concentrated on (cultural) identity. In the second, I mostly focused on the role (modelling) and importance of the parents. The role of individual, family, relatives friends and own ethnic community might not be changed easily due to their own vulnerability. Instead, some aspects of Finnish people (racism, policies, supports, laws) are more transformable due to their powerful position. I divided the majority into three categories of ordinary people, officials, and decision makers. I focused on the quality of the services by Finnish education system the most.

## **Narrative Analysis and Narrative Theory**

I applied narrative method for presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the life stories. 'Narrative analysis is appealing because its interpretive tools are designed to examine phenomena, issues, and people's lives holistically (Daiute et al. 2004: x-xi). The analysis covered temporal and content structures. Content structure analysis focused on *states*<sup>58</sup> (situations), *processes (activities)*, *accomplishments*, *achievements*, *semantic roles*, the *subject position* of the participant, and *expectation analysis*<sup>59</sup>. I added the *events*. I traced the sub-divisions such as mental, physical (material), and verbal activities. I especially looked for the participants' educational/work *accomplishments* that involved a certain activity in a particular period, which would result in an eventual educational *achievement* as a degree, or a job.

The processes helped to uncover the *semantic roles*. I looked if an informant was more a *logical agent* (agent, author, instrument) or a *logical receiver* (patient, undergoer/experiencer). I found the position of a person between the two extremes; *agent* who maintains the most and *patient* who upholds the least control on own life. Author acts, but based on the decision of the agent. *Experiencer* is more passive than author, as a reflector or observer. The dominant alternative was the *subject position* of the informant. I looked how the experiences produced different activities, the roles participants' chose based on them, and the position as the dominant ultimate result. I studied different elements of narrative structure; abstract, orientation, complication activity, result, evaluation, and coda. I focused on the evaluation more. I asked why a narrative was felt worthy of telling. People directly or indirectly use comparison, explanation, intensifying, refusal, and correction for their evaluations.

For temporal framework, I checked for frequency of verb tenses. I separated the definite from the indefinite *states* to know how continual and long lasting the experiences were. Definite situations and events have limited duration and may be short-lasting. I focused on the results of some happenings or situations, which were definite and indefinite *activities*. I differentiated the stories in which life was proceeding and tested the speed of progress. If nothing important happened, I asked

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<sup>58</sup> By extending the activities we will have states.

<sup>59</sup> For this analysis I used the materials from a narrative analysis course. The sources used include:  
Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi & Singapore: Sage.  
Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2009). *Analyzing Narrative Reality*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage.  
Herman, D. (2002). *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.

what had been the continual and unchanged state that did not progress as sequences. I examined how often an event occurred, which lasted shortly, for recording the achievements, and the unique moments, searched the non-specific time for the processes, limited duration for accomplishments or states, stable time for states, or repetitive such as iterative accomplishment.

For *expectation analysis*, I detected the negative or correction sentences. Examining the repetition showed what were important for the speaker. The rest included the use and amount of reserve words (little), intensifiers (awfully not), modal verbs (will, can), evaluative/judgmental vocabularies (not good hearted), and the presence of the 'I' (I, me, my, mine). I seek for the *key episode*, where one creates and breaks down/change the basic expectations. Expectation is followed by suspense and surprise through an exceptional case. There unusually little happens, and it contains more relational and mental processes, and modal/quasi-modal (future) verbs.

In my guideline for analytical procedure (Daiute et al. 2004), by *thematic analysis*, I selected and recorded the most common, important, and interesting topics, themes, terms, metaphors, contents, indexicals, and discourse strategies useful in addressing the research questions. I looked out for topics and themes that are explained in more depth or details, or more recurring, especially regarding participants' social position and self understanding, and how they were shown. Then I divided them as major and minor topics and themes. Some turned into influential factors. One example was the theme of rejection and topic of bullying at school. I detected the unifying common ground in participants, the literary tropes<sup>60</sup>, and the plot structures. Finally, I analysed all in order to discover why they were mentioned and what deeper meanings were unconscious purposes. Then, it was easier to identify the shared positions (e.g. isolation) that united the participants.

Secondly, by use of *Content analysis* (Daiute, 2004) partly, I analysed the data for three types of content, and finding the commonality and diversity simultaneously. The data was broken down into fewer content categories on the level of themes. I asked if all of the participants expressed the same perspective. If not, what would be the source of the difference? In content type one; I looked for uniformity and variation in *ideologies* and ideas about (higher) education, career, Finnish education system and labour market, Finnish society, belonging to and differences with it. I checked the

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<sup>60</sup> They are words or expressions used in a figurative sense (non-literal, metaphorical).

sources of well-established ideas and ideologies (parents, school). In type two, I examined the *cultural knowledge* by analysing the data for references to the specific places where cultural knowledge about (higher) education and other issues were produced, assumed, or shared. In type three, I traced the ideas (about higher education), values, or assumptions in *conflict*, the expressions of conflict, contradiction, counterarguments that resulted in their multiple social positions.

Lastly, I applied *structuralist analysis* (Czarniawska, 2004). By asking, 'how does a text say it? Additionally, through searching for deep structures in texts and *discourses*, structuralism discovers information about the character of a society (Finnish society) and human nature (participants). It has an objectivist explanation in relation to external structures such as class, power relation etc. I concentrated on the *discourse strategies* to capture the micro-details of cultural activities (Daiute, 2004) including the forms of *addressing* fellow Iranians (Sadaf), selection of the *audiences* such as Finns (Saeedeh), *code switching* (Mahboubeh), and *me* (Kamyar).

I used linguistic devices as tools to understand the dynamics of human interaction, purpose, and meaning. The *indexicality*, as marker of identity, produces the social positions of the speaker (Daiute et al. 2004). 'I' informed the positions of power (Kamyar), 'we', solidarity (Sadaf), 'before' and 'now' marked development of identity (Saeedeh). Next I triangulated the preliminary findings from interviews with the field notes and the other data. I turned theoretical assumptions, such as acculturation theory, into analytical questions. I refined, reclassified, or extended the preliminary findings and the theoretical grounds. That resulted in selecting and explaining the most suitable acculturation choice for each participant. I identified narratives where discourse markers and cultural activities cohered<sup>61</sup>. Finally, I determined what commonalities remained after variability was discovered.

I used *Hermeneutic triad* or *Hernadi's triad* (Czarniawska, 2004). I reflected on the text by expressing what I thought of it in combining three manners of reading; *explication* (interpretation), *explanation*, and *exploration*. In explication, I wrote a translation of what I understood by explaining *what* the text says. Next I asked *why* questions. Why does my informant tell me a story? Why<sup>62</sup> does the text say what it does? Why this type of story? Why in this way? I also paid attention to untold issues, which were important too, and asked *why* they were unsaid. Were they unintentional,

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<sup>61</sup> An example is the sub-narrative of Sadaf's visit to Iran and its coherence with her ideas about Iran.

<sup>62</sup> Why Saeedeh told me about her education, Sadaf about her religion, Kamyar about his work ...?

deliberate? Why? I looked for the main message<sup>63</sup> of the text, which is the open or hidden goal of the participant, and asked to *whom* it is given. For explaining *how* does the text say what it says, as the most revealing information, I concentrated on all of the narrative components; temporal and causal sequencing, appropriate lexical markers (we, here, now), a specific past episode, high points, rhetoric (expression, style, vocabulary<sup>64</sup>, speech-making), language of consciousness (I thought ...), and a final evaluation (solution, outcome). In explanation, I held a critical role by asking, what do I think of all this. I explained them by use of four story types<sup>65</sup> (*romance, tragedy, comedy, satire*) (Czarniawska, 2004). In exploration, I brought my life and preoccupations into the text, the empowerment ambitions of a narrative analyst.

I focused on narrative *form* (how), *function* (why), and *dynamics* (Daiute et al.). I looked for three forms; a historical-factual, a subjective meaning (hard work pays off), and subjugation of self. From distinctive models of narrative analysis; study of *reference, structure, and function* (its effects), I applied the last one. For narrative dynamics, I avoided choosing *absolute* stable stories such as *counter narratives* (Gergen in *ibid.*), by allowing higher flexibility for self-construction, cultural revision and creation of interdependent realities. Instead, I introduced combinations<sup>66</sup>.

I used *actant model*, a principal idea of Algridas Greimas. The model distinguishes the narrative itself and the way it is told. It deals with *actants* as acting elements of a narrative including a *subject*, or the main character (e.g. informant), who acts for achieving an *object*. *Senders* (e.g. a role model) motivate the subject in that. *Receivers* (e.g. informant) benefit from the result. *Helpers* (e.g. a parent) support the subject and *opponents* challenge it plus *helpers of the helpers*, and *helpers of the opponents* (*ibid.*). This process makes a *narrative program* (a minimal plot), which is a change of state, and could logically connect to other narrative programs in order to make a *narrative trajectory* (Todorov in Czarniawska 2004). Actant (character) is the one 'that which accomplishes or undergoes an act' (Greimas and Courtés, 1982: 5). It applies to human beings, concepts, animals, and objects. Actants may change role throughout a narrative, and if they obtain a stable character, they could become *actors* (*ibid.*). They assisted me to know better the other alternatives to higher education and their competing roles, and the multiple roles of the education system.

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<sup>63</sup> Saeedeh's message was complain to the decision makers and Finnish people in a clear manner.

<sup>64</sup> Saeedeh's strong negative words show her strong negative feelings towards Finnish people.

<sup>65</sup> I found more than one type for each story, while one was the most dominant.

<sup>66</sup> Sadaf and Saeedeh's stories are closer to both counter narratives and narratives of oppression.

By use of *acculturation theory* I explored the elements in life of the informants that corresponded to one of the four alternatives in the theory by finding the differences and exceptions. It was an easy task when dislike towards Finnish people and culture was openly expressed. That, in addition to the choices and actions, could be the indication of either *separation* or *alienation*. If, additionally, positive attitude towards Iranian culture was expressed, the result was separation. The opposite confirmed alienation. If the choice was not expressed openly, I looked for other signs such as choice of partner, career, and close people.

I tested the *psychological acculturation* (Berry, 2003) by concentrating on informants' *behavioural shifts*. To determine the interest in holding the cultural heritage and identity I tested their interest in, usage, and quality of (body) language skills, choices of art, dressing, food, and place of living. I recorded their socialisation type (attending cultural events), or contact avoidance. I examined their *acculturation stresses* (uncertainty, anxiety, depression). I checked their *long-term adaptation*. For *psychological adaptation*, I examined their sense of well-being and self-esteem. For *socio-cultural adaptation*, I checked their study, work, and relationships. For a self-categorisation of identity preference, I explained interviewees their potential *national identities* and asked their ideas as a type of face validation. The first nationality, in a hyphenated national identity, is the dominant, as *Iranian* is in *Iranian-Finn*. A participant could freely choose and fruitfully practise integration when the mainstream society has an inclusive and open orientation toward cultural multiplicity (Berry, 2003). Thus, I examined if the dominant group was ready to adapt better its national institutions (education) to meet the needs of all groups or not. By testing the expectations of the Finnish society from, and its responses to the demands of the participants, I detected its dominant acculturation strategy. While the exact choice is unclear, the possibility for extreme choices of *multiculturalism* and *exclusion* is low.

I identified signs of immigration transnationality in participants' talk and behaviours. They help recognizing the possibility of *assimilating* and other negative experiences by the host society. Additionally, they reconfirm the weakness of alienation and assimilation in an individual. I looked for and examined signs of missing, memories of, and thoughts about Iran, Iranians, Iranian culture, and plans for



going back there or to a country with larger Iranian community. I focused on the use of Parsi, content of their talk, and other behaviours based on the origin culture<sup>67</sup>.

### 4.3. Presenting the Data

I presented the results by narratives<sup>68</sup>. A narrative based on interview is a *co-construction* in relation to questions, interviewer's identity, interview's spatial-temporal characteristics, and their connection. I provide some definitions of narrative and story even use them as synonyms that mean the most complete form, as what I have produced. Narratives '[are] comprised of uniform, structural components of story telling [i.e., introduction, problem, and resolution] that are coherent to each other' (Daiute et al. 2004, x & 184). The structure of a story can be divided into duration, including a beginning, middle, and an ending, plus a moral issue (Daiute et al. 2004). 'When [...] we chronologically connect [...] a chain of events/actions, we have a chronicle or a narrative that presents some causal connections, but it is not a *story* yet, since it misses a plot or a meaningful structure. [...] It has a beginning time, a social centre, a geographical location and a subject.' (Czarniawska, 2004: 17 & 18)

Often one needs to find the factors and artificially connects them. I chose narrative because, comparatively (Berry, 2003), in a natural manner it presents the interrelationships of factors, linked in a chronological order, with meanings, in a life story for examining the acculturation choices. 'Narrative discourse organises life-social relations, interpretation of the past, and plans for the future' (Daiute et al. 2004: xi). The traditional dominant refugee narratives have been easier to recollect and mostly have been conducted by the majority's researchers, influenced by their non-immigrant mentality. 'Chronically, the pre-existing structure of the traditional narratives has the power to prevent people from hearing new forms of narrative.' (Davies in Czarniawska, 2004: 91) Some replicate social control and racism where white dominant position of narrators is power that is made by the description of the immigrants (Solis in Daiute et al. 2004). When their target group's experiences, and their evaluation, differ from the popular one, individual counter narratives seem a parallel method for the resistance against the dominant cultural narratives.

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<sup>67</sup> Choices (partner, clothing cuisine) and contacts with the community (internet, telephone, direct visits)

<sup>68</sup> For narrative making and analysis, I read books, attended narrative analysis courses, and a conference.

A story should offer *attraction, expectations, and unexpected*, worthy of mentioning. I made *Scripts*, which fix a sequence of actions Czarniawska (2004). For *chronicle*, I built chain of single episodes, with a beginning, topics in locations, made by temporal and causal sequencing of relevant and important events and actions, a development containing minimum of one high point, and a finalised evaluated ending. I made *mimesis* that is not a reflection, but a description (creation); *how* to represent happenings and *how* one event caused the other(s) (Czarniawska, 2004). I completed the *stories* by developing the narratives and answering *why* things happened the way they happened. A story involves characters, in space, and time, put into a *plot* by use of some discursive devices (Daiute et al. 2004). ‘The plot functions to transform a chronicle [...] into a schematic whole by highlighting and recognising the contribution that certain event make to the development of the whole.’ (Polkinghorne in Czarniawska 2004: 124) ‘Emplotment means introducing structure that allows making sense of the events reported.’ (Czarniawska, 2004: 122) For *embedding* (subordination) (Todorov in Czarniawska 2004) I made a plot and put sub-plots into it.

I made a basic structure<sup>69</sup> for all the stories with a *setting, episodes, and ending* (Mandler in Czarniawska, 2004). In the setting, I introduced the participant, the other characters, and a clear difference between the actors (hero, opponent). I made a beginning in time, and the episodes by the past life conditions to explain present and future. It assigned *functions* to the events and actions. For developing them, I added a simple reaction of the informant (a feeling) or a complex one (setting a goal), goal paths, and successful or failure outcomes. For plot making I looked in the transcriptions for problem (interruption/instability), progression, with or without a solution, a high point, an atypical event, and a resolution or evaluation of the results at the end (Daiute et al. 2004). The heart of that emplotment was finding an interpretive theme to which all the events and actions are subordinate. The result, a meaningful sequence, offers an idea of the situation which is close to failure or success.

For the content, I was selective with including plots that offered insight on thoughts, feelings, physical laws (Polkinghorne in Czarniawska 2004), actions, and events that were relevant for the future plots, and made the chronicle complete enough to be understandable. The *end* in future is unclear. I also developed the *ending* with explanations, my remarks about the consequences of the episodes, informant’s or my

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<sup>69</sup> The unique stories also made a *collective story* (Richardson in Elliott, 2005) with shared experiences.

reflection, and a moral point. Although narratives are universal, the content of these narratives are influenced by specific historical periods (1990-2005) and cultural traditions (narrative genre of Iranian culture) (Eakin in Daiute et al. 2004) my participants and I experienced. I selected the narratives based on their informative capability, relevance, and exceptionality. I chose four stories from eight; each represented one of the acculturation choices.

For reflexivity and writing, I mixed *confessional* and *impressionist* views (Van Maanen in Elliott, 2005) by demystifying a detailed explanation of data collection/construction, the historical-geographical context, and any analysis with its influence on the findings. Since mid-1980s the urge for objectivity has been questioned and substituted by ‘openly ideological’ research (Hammersley, 1996). Thus, I did not deny my non-academic motivations. For privacy and avoiding harm, all the names/locations are omitted or pseudonyms, the ages, years and the professions are imprecise. Elliott (2005) and *reader-response theory* (Czarniawska, 2004) consider narrative as a social product that its interpretations is the results of relationship and negotiation between the equal importance, intention, and power of the text and the *reader*. That shapes the process of meaning production and form of the product. It shows reader’s power in *co-construction* of the stories through the possible expectations of the reader. Additionally, I employed the *impressionist tale* that ‘[presents] the reader with a vibrant account that invites participation in the interpretive process.’ (Elliott, 2005: 165) Elliott reminds us the importance of local conditions for making meanings that influences the presentation of the results in an appropriate manner for *local readers*. Thus, I considered how Finnish history of migration would affect the manner Finnish readers approach and react to my study.

## 5. Results and Analysis

### 5.1. Sadaf – The Converter Separated Iranian-Finn

It is Christmas 2005 and as I am visiting Finland for holidays, I travel from one Southern city to another and one house to the other to interview my participants, before going back to the UK and continue my exchange study. As I listen to Sadaf talking to me in Parsi openly, eagerly, and smilingly, I look at her in that small room in her relative's home. She is in a good mood especially because of holidays and being with relatives. She has simple Western cloths. I imagine her, using my memory from a picture of her, when she was a young girl without make up. Sadaf is ready to answer all the questions but she does not have anything more to share about the topic.

This is the story of a young Iranian-Finnish woman with refugee background who lives in Finland. Sadaf enjoys a healthy, happy, optimistic, and emotionally strong personality. Besides some small and rare problems, she is physically quite healthy, as she also agrees. She is not a smoker or drinker. Sadaf's freedom is very important for her. Similar to her family members, she is a very social person. Speaking Parsi, Finnish, and English have been helpful in that achievement. Studying is not a priority for her and she is not interested in higher education. Despite that, she plans to have some lower level education. Currently, she is not a student and has no profession and job yet. She is very satisfied with her economical situation. Sadaf is not married and there is no information whether if she is in a relationship or not. She lives with her parents. She does not hold Finnish citizenship. She thinks she does not *belong* to Finnish society that has rejected her. Yet there are some reasons to call her partly Finnish, even at present she has chosen *separation*. She has tried very actively to save her transnational relation to Iran, after failing to compensate the distant people by the new ones in Finland. However, she has interest in moving away to the USA. I selected her narrative because of her unique cultural identity and suffering from higher level of cultural identity crises compared to the other participants.

Farideh, Sadaf's mother is in her late-thirties. She belongs to one of the ethnic minorities in Iran. Therefore, adjusting again to a new culture and language might have been easier for her compared to some other parents. Farideh has under diploma education from a vocational school. By profession, she is a hairdresser. In Finland, she is a pizzeria owner. Besides her mother tongue, Farideh speaks fluent Parsi,

Finnish and a little English. It is hard to notice her cultural difference with the majority in Iran. Sadaf is very satisfied with Farideh, since her mother provides her a lot of freedom and support, what Farideh missed herself in her youth. Though Sadaf's age difference with her parents is two extra years in comparison with her brother, nonetheless this is not a considerable gap and partly explains her close relationship with her mother. Sadaf describes that, her mother cares very much about her health. 'When I have headache, for example, she does her best to help me to feel better.' she continues. In addition to financial support from Farideh, Sadaf receives encouragement in order to reach her dream to become a singer.

Her father Parviz is in his early forties. He has under diploma education from a vocational school. His profession is sport man and sport teacher. In Finland, he has been working as a sport teacher and pizzeria owner. He was, and maybe is, critical about his son's relationship with the opposite sex and too demanding. This may be valid, or even stronger, in case of Sadaf. Sadaf believes that she and her brother Rad are very close. One explanation is their small age difference. It might not be a coincident, when she supposes to answer if she has had any difficulty concerning the differences between Iranian and Finnish culture, instead she explains how close her relationship is to Farideh and Rad. She even mentions that she does not find any cultural difference with her brother. Interestingly, while talking about her father, to whom she feels less close, she answers relevantly. I expected she is oriented to Finnish lifestyle more than her father is. Therefore, I did not question it until she revealed how her father has adjusted to the Finnish culture more than she has. This surprised me. None of the family members hold Finnish citizenship. Her Family, and especially her mother, is very important for her. However, this does not prevent her from remembering to care for the whole humankind.

## **Past**

Sadaf was born in Iran eighteen years ago<sup>70</sup>. There is little information about her childhood and her family in Iran. She enjoyed privileges for belonging to a Pars Muslim, middle-class family in a large city. Those have provided her with some rights and have partly shaped her expectations from Finland. However, being a girl in Iran definitely has limited her rights and lifestyle in that religious society. I could easily

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<sup>70</sup> This is her age by 2005 when the interview was conducted.

imagine her as she became closer to age of six, just before she was soon going to school and prior to the time her family left Iran. She had to start wearing restricted cloths in public places more often. There were strengthening experiences in her past. One of them is the freedom she has enjoyed at home. Indeed her family was not a strict religious environment unless she could not dare to convert to Christianity later on in Finland, were it was possible. The metaphor *converter* explains, not only she converted to a new religion, but also from a Finnish-Iranian into an Iranian-Finn. Possibly, conversion *package* to a new identity is an ongoing life style for her.

Because of her young age, she did not have any educational background in Iran. In her early childhood she developed an Iranian identity. For years, ordinary life went on until her family had to leave, as a major change. I have never discussed the reasons for the flee, the way they did it, and the reason for choosing Finland, because they are sensitive and private issues for many refugees. Sadaf and her family did not go through the difficulties of temporary stay in a second country before seeking refuge in Finland. Therefore, the family skipped the harsh condition of such exile.

Sadaf immigrated to Finland with her family twelve years ago<sup>71</sup> at age of six. This was a major change, coinciding with another one in Finland, the economic depression. She had to cope with the reality of being far from relatives, friends and all familiar. She had no friends. Life continued while Finland became a more familiar environment, her personality took shape, she learned Finnish language and copped with Finnish society and culture (a lot), and a non-human environment including a harsh cold climate. They all shaped her personality. For being younger than Rad, those influenced her more. At the background, refugee experience has been influencing her. It damaged her emotional health.

Sadaf was informative enough about her education. She did not need to readjust into a new education system since she did not have any background experience with Iranian education system. Two years ago, she had been studying for eight years. Now, by having a break in her education, she supposed to have studied for ten years; but she mentioned twelve years. Before, when I asked if she has had trouble with her studying in Finland, she replied 'not at all'. After giving that absolute comment, she explained why she was not interested in studying.

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<sup>71</sup> Please consider that the time of writing this narrative is the same as the interview.

It [my education] is ok but I don't like to study. If I liked it, I wouldn't have problem with it, and could have been good at it<sup>72</sup>. The reason is time to wake up in the morning. It's too early. Also, I don't like to listen to the teacher. I get bored and loose concentration.

However, even if sometimes Sadaf felt bad about these matters, she forgot them very soon. Only once she disliked her teacher, but not the school. She had problem with mathematics<sup>73</sup>, or more precisely, with its teacher. As a reason, some teachers expected less from her performances compared to Finns. That problem decreased in higher secondary school. Fortunately, in general, teachers did not easily give her a good grade, if she did not deserve it. Sometimes she has lost her motivation partly or completely towards education. The reason was lack of patience. '[It'll be better] if I become more interested in studying. [...] I should try to study more.' She likes high level of freedom and rights at schools. She also felt satisfied with helpful attentions.

The teacher used to help me more than others [Finns] in the beginning, when something was difficult for me. [...] I got more support when I needed, more than others did. When someone raised hand to ask something, the teacher didn't always reply, but in my case, [s/he] did.

When seldom there was a problem, she discussed it with her parents and school staff. If necessary, her mother met the teacher and solved the problem.

They paid attention to me. When I argued with my teacher who used to bother me [continuous complaining about me], my mother discussed it with the head of the school and the problem was solved. It was my teacher's fault. The teacher expected me to be less vivid [vilkas].

Sadaf has faith in positive result of talking and good communication. She thinks there has been enough contact between her parents and the school. Every two or three months, school arranged parent-staff meetings and they documented the discussions. Generally, the regular yearly checkups at school were good. The other important service was the guidance for the study plan.

The study advisor, who is responsible for the future education plan of the students, talked about it with us. She was very helpful. We could ask our questions from her. [Interviewer: How often did you discuss?]

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<sup>72</sup> For example, she claims that has no problem with the language while studying.

<sup>73</sup> While Iranians have performed well with mathematics, even in international competitions, this was a common barrier among the participants.

From the ninth grade, when we had to choose our study direction, we met once a week. That person guided us very much. It was very useful because we were told about things we didn't know, like the grades we needed to be able to choose our interest subjects.

Thus, we may think the root of her study plan and attitude towards studying was not at school. However, another time she reveals that she has no clear idea about the role of university. Sadaf also had the chance to talk with both her close Finnish and foreign friends about their study plan often and found the discussions useful.

[We got information] from many older friends who were studying in higher level [vocational schools]. I asked them questions and they guided me. [Misinformation did] not [happen] to me but sometimes to my friends by the school. A Finnish friend was told that it's not possible to choose a study line because of her low grades, which was not correct. [Interviewer: Where did your Finnish friends and classmates get their information?] They<sup>74</sup> also got it from their parents. [Interviewer: Did they also get the knowledge from the school?] Yes.

The older friends who studied at higher education were missing and she had only access to those who were studying in lower level. Simultaneously, Sadaf experienced individual major changes. They are conversion to Christianity, choosing to be a Finnish-Iranian, and later an Iranian-Finn because of disliking them<sup>75</sup>, some short visits to Iran that transformed her personality and attitudes to Iranians a lot in a positive way as she claims, plus a negative experience with violent racism, plan to go to the USA.

Once a woman hit me and we went to police office for that. She was a middle age woman with her husband. While I was leaving the building, she attached me. Police told us, even if a Finn who goes abroad can face similar situation. I told them when my Finnish white blond friend went to Turkey; she got a lot of respect and care. I said you don't know how to treat people. Since then I dislike Finns. [...] I need to see that people have a good and friendly relation with each other and we have a better world. I don't like to see racism grow here.

Those turning points influenced Sadaf's life, her plans, and the way she looks at human relationships very much.

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<sup>74</sup> It remained unclear that who she meant by saying 'they'. One can only assume that, by saying *they*, she meant her Finnish friends because foreign parents usually do not know much about these issues.

<sup>75</sup> These last major changes in ideas motivated me to call her a converter.



## Present

Even she claims to be motivated towards education she does not find herself prepared for studying now and needs a break before starting again. Even temporarily, her motivation is low. She does not explain further the reasons for this decision. By now, she has not finished her secondary education yet. Though she finds no difference between males and females regarding education, she believes there is more freedom and equality for women in Finland.

Sadaf receives enough support from her parents. Farideh is the closest due to her extra support. 'At the moment I need to keep having the love and care of my parents that I already have.' she continues. At home, she communicates in Parsi. Even sometimes she has difficulty finding the right words, mostly she manages well but she is not able to write in it. The level of cultural variation between her and her family members is minimal, and causes no considerable conflict. She has a strong social capital and a close connection with her relatives in Finland. She gains a lot of support from them. While explaining how happy she feels in Finland, she describes the reason; '[It's] because I have good friends and family. I don't miss love [...]. Everything is good.' Thus the problem with her education is rooted somewhere else. She has two expectations from her parents. '[I expect my parents to continue] to guide and love us, what they already do now. [I have] the same expectations from the relatives.'

Interestingly, Sadaf's closest friend Minna is not Iranian, but a Finnish girl from a similar age. One would wonder if it is a sign of remaining strength of her Finnishness. You see them always together, even in parties where Minna is the only non-Iranian person. Sadaf told that Minna knows about Iranian culture and likes the way Farideh treats Sadaf. Sadaf's strong character becomes visible also in her behaviour with Minna. It is mixture of care and dominance. She does not emphasise on her relation with Iranian community in Finland even she actively interact with the members. Her family, relatives, and the Iranian community in Finland, and in other places, have produced and reinforced her Iranian cultural capital. She still visits Iran.

There is no information about the kind of contact she has with other immigrant groups in Finland. Unfortunately, Finnish people are almost excluded in her social capital. What she likes about Finland include, her friends, especially Minna, and beautiful summer nature, but not winter. The common religion connects her to Finns even more. Despite her negative comments about Finns, when explaining how she

feels about the cultural differences between Iranian and Finnish culture and its influence in her life, she says, 'It's very good. It's because I speak Finnish very good and I do not let people talk negatively about me, by showing a quick and strong negative reaction to them.' She claims she has no problem with Finnish language because her Finnish is better than her Parsi. Her mother says that Sadaf had once problem with language at school, but her Finnish classmate had also the same problem and could not help her with it. Sadaf told me that Finns are surprised how well she *speaks* Finnish. We miss information on her Finnish reading and writing skills. After what she said about her idea and attitudes about her life in Finland, Finns, and the cultural differences, she surprises me again by revealing something unusual about her cultural identity and attitudes towards Finns.

I'm Iranian-Finn<sup>76</sup>. I'm more Finn than Iranian, but I'd like to be more Iranian, because I don't like Finland and Finns. When I was small, I didn't know anything about it [Iran]. After I visited there, I started to know and like it more and more. I started to like to be Iranian. Now I want to be Iranian. Before, I had wrong ideas about Iran.

Besides her pro-globalist ideas, she explains that her thinking is Iranian but her behaviour, such as clothing style, is Finnish. Sadaf has some expectations. She expects from Finns to pay attention to all, including immigrants. She clearly informs that not only she is concerned about the well-being of her and Iranian community, but *all immigrants* in Finland. Her comments also confirm that, to some extent, some characteristics or problems are common between all immigrants in Finland. The missing group to care about is the Finns.

I don't like very much to be with Finns. I expect them to accept us the way we are [as foreigners]. I expect authorities not to judge people based on the skin colour and give the minors and adults [equal] rights.

She expects that Finnish government makes her family's citizenship application process faster. It is for her transnational plan, since her concept of her legal rights is not realistic. She thinks she has the same rights as the Finns.

## **Future**

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<sup>76</sup> I explained that the influence of Iranian culture is more in her if she uses that term.

Sadaf supposes if she was younger, she would have been less concerned about future. Two years ago she planned to apply for vocational school and study tailoring. Now she still finds her study important but she intends to study tourism in an occupational adult education centre. When discussing her concrete plan and questioning about the time of starting her first study term, she does not know the answer. She will find out about it. Most importantly, she asked me a question that relates to the role of the school and the quality of its services including the provision of knowledge for study plan; ‘do I have to go to university after vocational school to get a job or not?’ She does not have a clear idea about what exactly a university is, and for what purpose she may need it. However, she does not like to attend university or similar educational institutions even she wanted that before. She does not seem to feel bad about it. Now she claims that she *never* wanted to go to university. This contradiction is by itself a useful knowledge. Surrounded by similar people in her smaller social circle, she has not had role models who hold higher education or white collar jobs.

Sadaf’ is not interested in education. This also means that she even may not continue studying at all. Stopping her education confirms that even she will continue, most probably it will not be in higher level. Besides, starting education or working involves time investment in Finland, what the USA plan does not allow. Indirectly through ideas for solution she revealed one shortcoming of the schools.

[We can prevent] by paying more attention to the foreign students, by using the teachers who like foreign children, who naturally have the patience to deal with and helping them. [Interviewer: So do you think those teachers who do not pay attention to foreign students are not patient enough, or is it because they do not like those students, or any other reasons?] Yes [both of them]. [Interviewer: How can it happen?] By selecting those who like foreigners and have already worked with them. Or by training them well, if it is their first time.

Sadaf as a Christian has learned to avoid worrying about her needs such as finding a job, but she worries a little. She talks more about her ideal activities than her concrete labour situation in the future.

It’s my dream to sing. I feel I’ll succeed in it because I like it and I have my god with me. I talk with my close Finnish friend all the time about singing. I don’t need to study for this job. By then, I’ll work as a singer. [...] I don’t want to become a singer for the money but spreading the message of Christianity [making a better world, giving

the message to the youth to stop smoking, using alcohol and drugs, and helping the poor].

Sadaf has some thoughts about future labour situation of young *foreigners*.

[It would be good] if Finns become more open and friendly minded, if there would be more jobs for foreigners, especially for young foreigners. I like to see foreigners who work. I also get more friendly service from them. I like foreigners very much, and I am in their sides, even if they make crimes.

Leaving me with shock about her strong attitudes, she explains; ‘Racist behaviour won’t push immigrants away because they cannot leave.’ Being a victim of racism could have been a driving force for her cosmopolitan ideas. She thinks, distancing from pro-nationalist ideas, in favour of international thinking, or alternatively transnational thinking, is important since it will change the negative attitudes. The main problem with racism is its uselessness, she reminds those who disagree with her.

For her ideal future, Sadaf wishes to have a good family, which includes a husband and child. She already describes what would be a good future for her. Alike many youth, she is full of hopes and dreams, and very eager to share them with me. She talks extremely fast, possibly, in order to avoid forgetting something.

[Future will be] better, because now I’m in better situation than before, so it will be better than now in the future. After five years, I’m with my mom in US. If my dad is with us, it’s ok, but I’m closer to my mom and we talk all our secrets to each other. She knows what my dreams are and she wants to help me with that. For example, she helps me with money that I try my chance with singing.

Nevertheless, missing Finnish citizenship disrupts this plan. She does not know any solution to this problem. I became curious to know why they feel so unsatisfied here that they only wait to obtain their Finnish citizenship, the Finnish passport, and leave as soon as possible, even if it will not happen in reality. One explanation is the general limitations immigrants suffer from in Finland. She does not mention any second plan.

Alongside her unfair thoughts against Finns, she has another belief, which could be unexpected for you. While thinking of the ways for positive changes, her first idea is that she herself should be good with others. This may show that her final intention is a peaceful coexistence with people including the Finnish nation.

## Analysis of Sadaf's Narrative

The narratives focused on explaining *what*, which means the situations and events in Sadaf's life and what are her thoughts, feelings, and actions including her comments. Here I answer the research questions in an analysed manner; *why* and *how* the narrative says what it says. There were significant failures in the education of Sadaf mainly caused by shortcomings of the Finnish education system (*opponent*), especially at school level, which affected strongly her education plan, causing lack of interest in higher education. As her failures, she had low grades, was not motivated and did not like to study, got board and lost her concentration, failed to choose and study her subject of interest, withholds her studies, and did not know what the role of a university is and how she can apply to one. Her avoidance to explain the reason for delay in study might be sign of escape to reveal something unpleasant such as her failures, disinterest to study again, or being busy with a more relevant issue to her. Possible involvements would be working on her cultural identity formation, religious activities, and changing her study plan. Sadaf's claim about her efficient knowledge of (spoken) Finnish<sup>77</sup> does not support her proper quality of the written language.

Discussing and criticising the shortcomings of the education system openly was not a preferable choice for her because it involved revealing her own failures, and because it was hard for her personality (fighter and a winner) to accept that fact. Additionally, talking about the wrong doings at school, a place that she spent a lot of her time every day, which made her dislike Finnish people (*opponent*) is not easy. A research reveals that in Finland bullied students do not discuss their problem because they do not believe that it will help (Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, 2009). Thus, she provides a picture containing the shortcomings for others, not for her. The conscious and subconscious hiding tactic motivated me to consider that there might be some hidden negative experiences at school too. She told she received enough attention from school authorities, excluding one negative isolated incident.

The school was unsuccessful in offering enough motivation, information, and encouragement. In her recommendations, Sadaf emphasises more on attitudes than professional qualification of teachers. I wondered that her satisfaction and these expectations do not confirm each other. How an education system with such shortcomings made an exception to her. Additionally, some teachers, by expecting too

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<sup>77</sup> The quality of her language skill reflected strongly on the quality of her behaviours and interactions.

little from her performances, prevented her from a normal advancement. There were positive sides in the school services. However, some were under influence of some outsider demands. For instance, maybe Farideh's (*helper*) high demands and cooperation with school initiated extra support from school.

For her education plan, Sadaf has no interest in higher education. Her aim is studying tourism in a vocational education centre. Her negative education experiences and failures that relate to the shortcomings of the school, missing a well educated encouraging role models, plus lack of interest in gaining academic knowledge and reputation, are the reasons for her plan. The school did not offer enough awareness about the meaning and the use of university, encouragement to apply for, and knowledge about how to apply for it. She missed the information that Finnish students received by their wider Finnish social networks. Furthermore, tourism brings good for foreigners (tourists) and immigrants. Finnish education system is the main assistant who supports her to this direction. Her mother has been an important challenger of her education plan. However, Farideh is helpless. Some *influential factors* such as her parents' low level of education existed before her migration (pre-conditional factor) and her education in Finland started after that change (post-arrival factor).

Sadaf is less concerned about finding her future career. Her labour plan is not well-planned, concrete, clear and realistic enough. Lack of interest in integration could be one reason for that and the delay in her education. I assumed, after education in tourism, she is going to work in tourism industry. However, surprisingly, she *dreams of working* as a religious singer, what she calls as her future *job*, not career, though it is not completely clear if it would be a voluntary work or not. Nevertheless, work remains more important than education for her. Stopping her education might cause her to consider involvement in whatever activity that needs no education, including what she said or unemployment for some time.

For Sadaf, existence of a strong social capital because of a *big family*, as a *group* to belong, provided her extra opportunity. As Finnish society rejects her, she rejects it back because she enjoys having another powerful alternative. She does not care any more if Finland accepts her or not, because she does not want it *any more*. The alternative includes her family, especially her mother, plenty of relatives and friends, Iranians in Iran, Iranian and immigrant community (*receivers*) in Finland and the USA to whom she belongs. However, the shape and the meaning of the big family

have changed since the escape. Though her own nuclear family and some relatives are present in Finland, she had to replace the rest with new people.

Rejection by Finns motivated her to keep the remaining sources of belonging tightly. One of them is her nuclear family. The family has become very important for her. Sadaf talked and explained more often, in more details, depth and clarity about *love* and *care* of her parents. For her, emotions and Farideh are more important. Farideh, as a supporter, is a strong element in the family and its unity. This motivates Sadaf to rely on her more. She emphasises on Farideh in her monologs the most. In contrast, she criticises and somehow ignores her father. Maybe in that manner she punishes him. Since her dream (mission) has remained a wish, and in reality there are two *sides*, one belongs to the *white Finnish blonde-haired people*, and the other to the darker foreigners and immigrants, she chose the side of the latter group. This offers an alternative reason for using the word *foreigner* while talking of her. She expressed her solidarity with immigrants but in a blinded, unfair, and racist manner against Finns.

The influential factors also affected Sadaf's *acculturation choice* and the change in it as a process. The uninteresting pre-migration encounters in Iran, the positive initial tourist type experiences in Finland, and a child's urge to belong motivated her to choose assimilation. After some negative experiences in Finland and some positive ones in her post-migration visit to Iran, the *separation* would be the closest acculturation choice as Sadaf's (*opponent*) new tactic to manage her life in Finland. The new choice was the result of negative experiences in and outside school and reinforcing those experiences later. Rejection, her individual characteristics and the parents' influence made her to develop some negative and pessimistic thoughts towards integration and education. Acculturation theory revealed Sadaf's present acculturation choice, not only as an outcome but also a reason for further difficulties.

Sadaf's narrative is not only an individual's life, but also knowledge on the society she lives in, and an institution within that society. Violent racism plus the institutional racism of police were triggers for the attitude change, as a turning point. She is dissatisfied and her negative feelings are dislike and contradicting Finland, Finns, Finnish culture, and Finnish part of herself which were the reasons for emotional and physical distance from Finns. In a bias manner she repeated talking positively and in details about Iran/Iranians and avoids (directly) mentioning their negative sides. She uses the opposite tactic with Finland and Finns, though less she talks about why she thinks and feels so, and what has happened in past. Maybe, since

as a Christian Sadaf should not be a racist herself, which is difficult for her, she could at least tolerate one Finnish individual, her close Finnish friend (*helper*) who is an encourager. Her acculturation choice, in connection to her conversion, has influenced her future religious activity plan. Part of Sadaf belongs to the whole humanity. Her minimal cultural identity confusion, caused by immigration and visit to Iran, was maximised by mixture of initial assimilation and violent racism.

Acculturation choice is not one forever alternative but could be a stage with no precise direction. While the Finnish-Iranian girl not only changed into an Iranian-Finn, but also a cosmopolitan, depends on the future experiences with Finnish people choice could undergo another transformation in its direction and speed. She may continue to be more Iranian if the causes of the shift do not change. New experiences with racism would reinforce her negative attitudes towards Finns. The opposite chance is valid too. During her life in Finland economic depression lessened, number of immigrants and their expectations rose, and the official and unofficial responses of the Finnish society (*helper*) to that increase went through adjustment.

Besides her use of Parsi and contact with Iranians, acculturation choice maximised Sadaf's *transnational* thoughts and activities resulting an actual visit to Iran and interest in emigrating from Finland to the USA. Her visit to Iran might be a stimulus for that. Nancy Foner (in Levitt et al. 2002) reminds a chance that visits to home country may result in recognising that actually the host country is the home. This depends on the type of experiences. Iranian society in the USA (*potential helper*), a place hosting many Iranians, has attracted her to migrate there. Farideh, some relatives, the USA environment, including the Iranian community and some Iranian friends assist the plan. Those who try to stop her are Finnish authorities that delay issuing her Finnish citizenship that eases her remigration.

In addition to her motives, the negative experiences with the Finnish society, including the Finnish education environment, especially with some racist Finns, through rejection and isolation, are the motivators for Sadaf's interest in emigration. Leaving Finland has become very important for her. The possibility of staying is minimal. The journey more possibly will continue, especially because Finland was once a home, but not anymore. She has already gone far to the borders of assimilation, and has come back toward separation from the host society in an extreme way. For her, staying is more complicated because it involves her personal-ethnic identity shaping and Iranian-Finnish identity is experiencing a conflict in her. Her travel to



Iran started by following her family who are active in this matter. A longer visit to Iran might open her eyes to the negative sides of ordinary life there compared to her honeymoon type tourist visits in past. Trying the USA might be a different case. Alternatively, as it has happened often, one or several positive long lasting experiences in Finland such as a successful career or marriage, could motivate her to rethink her cultural orientation and transnational plan.

Interpretation of the story finds Sadaf's narrative as an example of a *satire* story, emphasising change of values which has caused development in her. The story shows her expectations from Finland, experiences that challenged them, and consequences. Sadaf's story contains several negative encounters with Finns and plenty of positive experiences with others. That explains why her life is not sad and without peace. Thus, she has another strong pole to choose for belonging. Finnish people have challenged her initial strong eagerness to be a part of them. Thus, she dislikes Finns, expresses her feeling openly, and has positive hopes about a better future somewhere far from them. Finnish education environment, as a part of the whole Finnish society, had a similar nature and was largely responsible for her educational failures and education plan. Change is an important element of her life and story, and it might continue to be in the future. The scope of the plan for positive changes of future is very broad, and in addition to her life, it includes the humanity as well. She describes why she has decided so and how she will achieve it.

Injustice, her acculturation change, and her conversion to Christianity (*helper*) have encouraged her to choose her religious mission very seriously. Those experiences also motivated her to leave Finland, not to Iran<sup>78</sup> that she loves, but to the USA where she can find the freedom of the West and a larger Iranian community to belong. Her study's failures and negative experiences, her mission, financial satisfaction, and her emigration plan have caused her interest in a low degree for future education. Besides the extreme identity shift, the experiences have not caused any major emotional harm to her. The value of family in Iranian culture and the weak role of her father motivated her to consider her own made future family more.

The *heart* and main message of Sadaf's story is her *care* for the well-being of humanity. Alternatively, she might be interested to influence people by her religious faith. Singing (*helper*), even sounds important, is only a tool. For her, it is not enough

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<sup>78</sup> Her belonging to Iran would be the result of an urge to protest Finland. Otherwise she could have interest to go back and live in Iran.

to take care of only her own concern or her family's. She also has to work for the happiness of her relatives, friends, immigrants, foreigners, and needy people in the world. The origin of these expectations is combination of her feelings (*senders*) about her mother, Iran, Iranians and foreigners in Finland, plus Christians (*helpers*), her own faith in relation to caring for all humanity (*receivers*). Yet, sadly, her care has a blind spot towards Finns. Finnish people, except her closest friend and some other individuals are not included in the list. This exception is important. Partly the close friend may represent the Finnish part of Sadaf that she still would like to preserve.

Sadaf's method of care for herself and others is *change*. Her mission brings change to them. She has started with herself. It is a central point in her life. The change covers her cultural identity and religious belief. They are all interconnected. Religious conversion, even if it was a new choice for having a better belief, also was a protest against injustice. Sadaf's motivations would have been the negative encounters in Iran and later in Finland. She wants to fight back such encounters for the better future of others and herself, and healing the wounds of the past. The injustice in Finland has been in form of racism (*sender*), and spreading the word of Christianity (*helper*) is an anti racist act, since Christianity from theoretical point of view is an anti racist faith. Hidden in her comments is caring about disappointed Sadaf of the past (*receiver*) who needs reparation for how badly people treated her.

Sadaf talked little about her study and job, especially in the future, but she did not avoid discussing them. She did not find them as important as other topics. There is not much common between her ideas and education (plan). She directed the topic towards a new path<sup>79</sup>, the sense of *belonging*. The *terms* she mentioned often or emphasised, which explain the centre of her thought include, religion, religious mission, what she talks about the most, singing, family, mother, justice, Finland, Finns, Iran, Iranians, immigrants, foreigners, emigration, the USA, love, and caring. She avoided discussing her failures. She (*helper*) has some personal intensions to mention openly a few issues. She is a person who has plenty of messages for Finns and the others. She uses the interview as a possible tool for that purpose. Two examples are her intention to submit her demand when she talks about her delayed Finnish citizenship and her expectations from people about how to treat each other.

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<sup>79</sup> I did not disrupt her natural flow of her ideas in order to gain more information about what was important for her. However, later on I brought the topic back to our discussion.

Here I explain the manner analytical tools helped me answering the research questions and supporting my answers. Narrative analysis helped to detect *why* and *how* within the past experiences, including the states, processes (activities), accomplishments, and achievements, there were many factors that shaped her past, have formed her present, and will affect her future. Harsh refugee life (*sender*) and cultural identity crisis are the negative significant *states* (situation). The positive instances are being in a favourable condition of a Christian and enjoying a good relationship with her mother. Singing and religious activity are the rare major concrete *processes*. However, most commonly she has *mental processes* which make her story the closest to a *psychological novel*. Examples include her plans for the future etc. Sadaf discusses the states most commonly and holds the position of an *undergoer*. They both confirm her story type. As her behaviours, she is open to talk about those thoughts and feelings, and her expectations. Besides talking, she is slow or avoids other ways of action. Thus, many actions are in form of plans.

Thus she became a *patient*, as a *logical recipient*, which is her *subject position*, her most dominant *semantic role*. She has a passive role whose internal state has changed from initial assimilation into separation, plus a religious conversion. This role, in opposition to an agent or actor, has a very minimal function in shaping her life. Conversely, as an attitude and not her subject position, she has some strength. Though she considers the disadvantages to be something common between the immigrants, Iranians, and refugees in Finland, her personal attitude is different than many others in a positive respect. That motivates her to try to be helpful instead of being in need of help. The *narrative form* of Sadaf's story is closer to a historical-factual record of the events (Daiute et al. 2004), a heroic myth where she is the supreme in some issues and the victim of circumstances that pushed her far from her original cultural identity, and others that pulled her back later. Conversely, as a hero she tries hard to be a fighter when facing the circumstances of life. She has not given up resisting the unfair treatment by some Finnish people and still has hope for fulfilling her plans. The *evaluation* of Sadaf's story is mainly based on *comparison*. She compares Iran with Finland, Iranians with Finns, justice and injustice, good and bad etc.

The act of moving from Iran to Finland and later visiting Iran both have been two of her most important and rare *accomplishments*. The unique *achievements* have been her conversion to Christianity, the decision to change her acculturation choice, and entering to Finland though she does not find it an achievement any more. Small

number of accomplishments, achievements, and activities notify something about both Sadaf and her living environment including the school. The need to be prepared for studying, conversion and being a Christian (*senders*), with its anti racist ideas, and her religious activities prevent her (*receiver*) from undertaking or reaching other concrete accomplishments or achievements now, but planning for future religious mission.

In relation to *temporality*, Sadaf's narrative contains all times. Future is the most dominant because it is more promising than past and present. Her comments about future are mostly the not-yet-happened accomplishments and achievements. Since her story contains more states, the *indefinite* type is the most dominant. Continuous negative indefinite states in Finland, including the rejection at and out of the school, have happened several times. Thus their negative outcomes such as education failures were strong. Some choices, such as her separation (sinking in) have happened once, but its result as the state of being separated, continues now in an indefinite form affecting her education plan. Learning Finnish language, studying, plan for migration, and religious activities are the most important indefinite processes. *Definite* states include positive and negative conditions in Iran. Her assimilation and practicing her former religion are two main *definite* states. Though the rejection by Finns has occurred several times, violent racism was definite and lasted a short time. Her education in past is a definite process. Visit to Iran is a definite accomplishment. Definite achievements are Immigration to Finland, the conversion, her acculturation choice and its change. Those plus decision to emigrate, are her life's unique moments.

*Expectation analysis* explains that Sadaf tried to be assimilated. Since the results of this effort did not meet her expectations, she became disappointed and chose criticism and separation. To show her critique and disappointment she uses devices such as negative sentences and comparison, and by future tense she explains her fait in a better future somewhere else and with other people. Sadaf's uses a very direct speech. Considering that Iranian culture usually does not allow direct speech, there could be extra emphasis in her point. Sadaf did not use any particular shared affective stances such as 'beloved Iran' to address other Iranian immigrants and position herself as one of them. Instead, she expresses them very openly.

By help of *actant model* I considered Sadaf as the *subject* whose main *object* in life is her religious mission through singing religious songs. She did not find higher education and related jobs *helpers* to achieve her mission, and since her information about university is poor, she did not have an idea about using that alternative as a tool.

Her plan has been the use of *Christianity* and her *God*, and *singing*, as the method, for spreading her message. This is the role of a teacher, not a student. That may be one explanation for her disinterest in higher education, and related jobs, besides the other reasons. Sadaf's main mission is not material enough to involve higher education, related jobs, and better salary etc. Instead, she plans to be a teacher, not a student. However, one can question that has she had those plans as her original goals and later she had to give them up for a more urgent need or not. Some (*standard*) actants that could change their character within the same story and could act as a helper and opponent are Sadaf herself, Finnish people, her mother, and Finnish education system. She does not mention the Finnish people at school (*hidden/absent* basic actants) who caused her harm and made her dislike Finland and Finns. That confirms her hiding tactic. How is it possible that she dislikes some people and at the same time she does not mention enough about any wrong doing by them? Comparison of Sadaf's narrative with other participants shows differences in acculturation choice, transnational travelling, object of life, type of narrative, and racist experience.

My previous studies revealed that often younger interviewees did not discuss some issues compared to older informants. It is not wise to analyse only the participants' comments in isolation from their parents' views. Often if Sadaf criticised something, it was a cause of problem for other students not her. She may not noticed, ignored, paid less attention, did not voluntary discuss or avoided discussing what Farideh mentioned since it was difficult to admit some of her failures in her education. Farideh, Sadaf's mother believes, as the main failure, Sadaf has not studied well because she did not have the necessary grades to follow her education plan and she did not continue her education. Sadaf did not reveal her educational failures openly. Sadaf's comments support Farideh's idea when indirectly she explained that her studies were not sufficient, even they could easily have been better if she had the patience and interest. Farideh criticised the education system by finding lack of proper support, inflexible education laws, regulations, and administration responsible. She believed the system, especially the teachers, played important role. The school expected high grades from Sadaf in order to let her choose her favourite topics for continuing her education, which affected the education plan negatively. Because Sadaf did not gain the expected grades, she could not have studied the subjects she wished. Furthermore, teachers did not provide accurate recommendation and ignored

Sadaf's future. Farideh feels helpless and incapable of being effective because visiting the school and discussions with the school staff did not help.

## 5.2. Saeedeh – The Analyser, Alienated Nomad

It is Christmas 2005 in Finland. By chance, I am talking with Saeedeh in a peaceful empty room at one university. I assume that it was a respectable and consequently a comfortable place for her. She wears ordinary Western cloths. She is in good mood and feels comfortable. Communication with her is easy. After experiencing a lot of new harsh times and extra responsibilities in such a short time since the last memory I have from her, she talks and behaves more maturely. She is very sensitive, and at the same time, a strong intelligent young woman. Although quite weak at the moment, but she is a fighter. She is not a very social person. She does not consider herself religious. She thinks carefully, and makes a deep analysis of her life and Finland, before answering my questions. *Analyser* indeed is suitable word to describe her. With these skills, she has the potential to be a very good student at higher education. Possibly, her sufferings are some of the main sources of such deep thoughts.

Currently Saeedeh does not study. She seems to be physically almost in quite good shape, and she confirms it too. In contrast, she explains, 'emotionally, partly [I am] not [healthy]! It bothers me that here I cannot have the emotional health that I had in Iran.' Her experiences have damaged it so much that she is worried about it. She does not have either a profession or a job yet. She is married to an Iranian man. They live in a Southern Finnish city. She does not have strong ties to either Iran or Finland. 'I do not want to belong to any particular nation. I am just a human being who lives here and has the values and the rights of a human being.'<sup>80</sup> she explains. Even she has transnational ideas and bounds; she did not mention any thing about her direct or indirect contact with Iranians (relatives and friends) in Iran or elsewhere. I chose her narrative because of her exceptional cultural identity, she chose higher education, and she was extra informative. The interview lasted much longer than the younger informants'. She talked more openly and was able to analyse more and very well.

Her biological mother, Parvin is in her early forties and lives in Iran. She is a housewife and has under diploma education. Since Parvin has not moved to Finland

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<sup>80</sup> Compared to other interviewees, she intentionally often talked in formal Parsi (written and academic).

and Saeedeh talked little about her and contact with her, there is little knowledge about her. Parvin married again in Iran and has at least one child from the new marriage. The physical distant has limited the support Saeedeh has received from Parvin and there is no information about the nature of their relation. Hamid, Saeedeh's father is in his late forties. He has high school diploma from Iran and there he worked as a civil servant. He is unemployed. He has adjusted to Finnish language and culture in a minimal degree. He has lived in Finland for about ten years. Being a daughter and having less age difference with her father, compared to her brother-father age difference, both are factors for producing a possible good relationship between Saeedeh and Hamid. However, in total she is not satisfied about it.

Saeedeh's brother, Mehdi is twenty years old. He studied for ten years before stopping it. He does not have a profession or job. He has not adjusted well to Finnish culture. He told he has no problem with his Finnish. Saeedeh bond with Mehdi is good. Small age difference and similar experiences such as the initial years of immigration, partly explain the good relation. They all live in the same city. None of them holds Finnish citizenship. Saeedeh does not discuss it. She has few small step siblings. They do not live together. Indirectly she makes it clear that they are out of her parents' nuclear family. The role of her parents and siblings is not very important in her life. She needs to have more support from her family. 'I *dream* to have it [the support] one day', she continues. Nonetheless, she is not completely left alone.

## **Past**

Saeedeh was born twenty-four years ago in Iran. She belonged to a Pars Muslim middle-class family who lived in a large city. Thus, she enjoyed more rights and freedoms, besides the limitations for being a female. Therefore, she may have higher expectations from Finland compared to immigrants who missed those privileges. She is well aware of female's position in Iran. She studied in Iran for several years<sup>81</sup>. It provided her a clear picture of Iranian education system. Since she came to Finland through family reunification procedure, she did not live in a second country. Thus, she did not experience an escape as a major change in her life.

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<sup>81</sup> She provided contradictory information concerning her studies in Iran.

Saeedeh came to Finland seven years ago<sup>82</sup> at age of seventeen with her brother, some years later than her father's arrival. Life in Finland as a refugee was a turning point for her. At that age, compared to children, she had to try harder to adjust to the new language and culture, some relatives, and new friends. Saeedeh and her relative who lives in Finland have positive contacts and support. Her personality did not experience any major change and she has not adjusted well to Finnish culture.

Coming to Finland as an adult, with a personality that had taken shape a lot in Iran, staying here for only seven years, and plenty of negative experiences have brought some unfavourable results in Saeedeh's life. She experienced several major changes in Finland including her father's second unsuccessful marriage and her move from home because she went through more than one marriage and divorce, and those may have been too much for her to handle especially because of her age. They caused some extra main changes such as living by her own independently and physical distance from her brother and father. These experiences, beside their damage, have made her more mature than many other young Iranian women in Finland. She has not learned Finnish language well enough to fulfil her dream of studying at university yet.

Disruption in her studies was another turning point. Due to her experience with Iranian education system for several years, she had extra difficulties to adjust into the Finnish system. She can compare the two systems. While criticising Finnish people she made a comparison; 'In Iran, even a teacher gets a very low salary, but [s/he] works with devotion [...].' Comparatively, she was able to notice, recall, analyse and provide extra useful knowledge about her education in Finland.

[...] At school, you see Finnish students communicating with each other and laughing, but the foreign students are isolated in a corner. When either in the right way or through disturbing the Finns they try to be noticed and join the group, it does not work. Finns laugh at and bully them when they make mistakes while speaking Finnish. This makes them uninterested in education and they become satisfied with only the minimum knowledge for survival. [...] It was very difficult to study in the beginning. There were age differences between other students [Finns] and me [and the other refugees]. We could not become a part of them. We joined the mainstream group for some classes, but mostly we had our own class.

She had a negative experience with the cultural dimension of language differences.

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<sup>82</sup> Consider that the time of writing this narrative is the same as collecting the data in year 2005.



[The language difference] plays the biggest role. You cannot easily explain or defend yourself in different situations because there is the language obstacle. Thus, you cannot avoid misunderstanding, or if it has happened already, you can only solve the problem with difficulty and it needs long time.

Possibly, because of her age in arrival to Finland, she has not developed her Finnish language as good as the younger ones. Yet because of her age, she might be more confident to talk about her weaknesses with Finnish more openly. Those experiences caused her negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. After she talked about the negative role of the language differences, I asked her extra questions<sup>83</sup>.

Language is one important factor. If I study in my mother tongue, it is much easier and faster. With a foreign language, it needs several times more energy and time. [...] It is because foreign students cannot consider that, with a good spoken language they cannot manage well at school. Academic language is something different, more demanding.

She told me the reasons for this shortcoming and unawareness about it. The teacher and appropriateness of the class played important roles.

We had one especial teacher who thought foreign students in small groups and in an easier manner than the ordinary class. It had its own benefits and losses. For example, we could not have enough contact with Finnish students or get to know about the regularities of teaching in a mainstream class. The positive thing was that we proceeded slower. We sometimes also attended the normal classes. There the study happened very fast and it was not important for the teacher if you understand the issue or not. You just needed to show your coursework.

The class lasted one year. From the upper level comprehensive school they did not have such classes anymore. The special teacher's role in the class was significant.

My especial teacher expected too much from me. Because usually my grades were good, when sometimes something did not work well, she immediately became worried and tried to find out what is wrong with me. She was asking; why you have not done your task? Why you are not in mood? Your eyes are red etc. Once she told my father that I am a very good student and she likes me, but my behaviour is not good. When there where a disagreement between me and my teacher, the

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<sup>83</sup> Even though many claim that they did not have problem with Finnish language in general, nevertheless when discussing the education, it seems that it has been an obstacle. Some students mentioned it themselves. In other cases, their parents told me about it. What is the reason for it?

head of our school always supported the teacher [...] As I told, the school staff support each other and do not care about a foreign student like me. When I complained about a teacher to the headmistress, she did not accept my saying but she believed the teacher. My teacher was able to defend her better because of lying and her better language skill. The headmistress did not care about me and did not warn her colleague because of me, a foreign student. At the end, I had to give up.

Sometimes she has better justification for complaining about her teachers.

[F]or example, I told [teacher], as much as you expect from me I have some expectations from you, like helping me. Once, after trying three times to answer a question and failing, I asked her to help me with the question that was difficult for me. She did not help and said that I have to solve it by myself. After trying again for a few times, when I was not able to solve it, I asked help again. Again, she said no. Then I stopped doing it and threw my study materials on the floor. [...] The teacher tried to convince me to continue [answering the question]. I said I do not do it because you did not pay attention to me. Finally, she helped me. I thought with myself, why I have to take it some much, and then I have to react so strongly. [...] Those teachers I had did not make any special attention to foreign students compared to the Finns.

For solving her study problems, Saeedeh actively talked very much with her teacher, but she did not get enough support. Then she told me how her study plan started. In past most of her classmates did not have any clear idea about what they wanted to do or study in the future. Earlier, one obstacle for her education plan was lack of information, or misinformation in some cases.

Misinformation was given by the person in charge for the education of immigrant children in my city, claiming that it was for my own good. I believed it and paid a price for it. I asked, since I studied at high school in Iran, why could not I go to high school, not necessarily in the same level I was in Iran, but I have to start with upper secondary school? If the problem is language, give me extra language course. But, that person did not agree and said, "It is for your good".

The consequence of the mistake was waist of time. Once when I asked if anybody, for example at school, ever talked with her about her study plan, she replied 'not as clear as that. [...] after they decided in which class I should start, we did not have any meeting.' School played a negative role in her plan as well.

[...] What they asked me at school several times, which irritated me, was that, "why do not you go to high school, and instead, you want to

go straight to university?” [...] despite the fact that they know I graduated from high school in Iran. I do not know what harm it makes to them. I need explanation. If I should put extra effort for that, it is a burden on my shoulders not on theirs.

The outcome, fortunately, was only her disappointment but not the change of her interest and plan. Now she is already graduated from high school and does not study. Despite all the obstacles, she has been active to plan and act concretely for her higher education. For two years she has applied for entering university, studied for the entrance exam, and made contacts with the authorities, but has not succeeded yet. ‘The obstacles, as rules, disturb my plan. The rules are the same for Finns, but they do not consider the limitations of a foreigner in finding a job and studying, for example, continuous use of dictionary [...].’ She has not received any special support to compensate what she has missed as an immigrant, including proper language skill, strong social network, enough job opportunities etc. Two years ago, she explained the reasons for choosing her topics of interest.

[I am interested in] psychology. I cannot start studying it now because it is difficult. It will become my minor subject [later]. After a few years of studying sociology, I will start with psychology. I like this subject because I am very interested to know what happens in the mind of the other persons and what they want in their lives.

Her plan changed again. There were others who encouraged or discouraged her.

My husband encouraged me to study [...]. I have read two books about it. They were very demanding and made me very tired. After that, independently, I chose social work even it surprised some people. I thought with myself that, why there are only Finnish social workers who give service to the foreigners? Why not people with foreign background, who can understand the situation of immigrants [can also be involved]? I liked the subject very much. Many discouraged me by saying that “Do you think they will give you job? Do you think they are desperate to give job to a foreigner? They have enough workers.” But, I knew the statistics on the need for social workers.

She notices other negative factors, which do not relate to the role of the host country.

Being a refugee also plays a role on this issue. In Iran, I used to study regularly year after year without interruption and distance, which are the outcomes of migration. Migrants go through some damages that in

some cases it is never possible to get rid of them. For example, they experience confusion about what to want and expect from life.

Often she felt losing her motivation towards her education in Finland<sup>84</sup> partly or completely. It might have happened unintentionally. After high school, she had been busy with other studies and work, each one lasted almost a year.

## **Present**

Saeedeh explains her current situation with education, career and relation with Finns. Fortunately, she has not given up trying for the first one.

After finishing high school, I tried several times to get into the university but I did not get in. This year I applied for Open University with the plan to try entering the normal university as well. But, I cannot do it this year.

Lack of job possibilities has caused her different kinds of negative experiences.

It is good that there is a social security system here, what we do not have in Iran. However, here you can use that opportunity but you are forced to feel ashamed of doing that at the same time. For example, when signing a paper in social office they say, “You should not take this money, but instead, you should work. Do not you feel ashamed of using our tax money?” I think it does not happen to Finnish clients! [...] I think I am poor even I am entitled to a small amount of income. It disturbs my emotional health. The financial situation of my family was much better in Iran from what it is here. I personally prefer to have more job possibilities here instead of going to social office.

Even though her parents are not well educated and her father has not been active in his career<sup>85</sup> since he moved to Finland, her supportive husband has maximised her interest in higher education and activeness in career plan.

No, I do not get any support from either Finnish authorities or my parents! I only [have] got support from my husband in issues such as helping me with financial matters, letting me having peace in mind, providing security, helping me at housework and encouragement.

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<sup>84</sup> She provided contradictory information about the number of her study years in Finland.

<sup>85</sup> This fact does not support that he has not been active in finding a job.

But, the husband is not her closest person. She has no child. So, who is the most intimate character? She shared her thoughts about her needs with Hamid. Yet, she received little understanding and support. So, she has negative and pessimistic views about her own family. Family has not been able to remain the centre of the big family to *belong*, neither the host society has been. Still the family itself is important for her.

Saeedeh speaks Parsi, Finnish and little English, but these abilities have not resulted into a well-developed social life. She does not mention any non-Finnish friends, either from Iranian community or from other minorities. At present she is *alienated* as someone who does not *belong* to anywhere. She is partly satisfied with her life in Finland but there is not enough social capital in it. She appreciates the high civil rights and freedom of speech, right for social and health care services and the free education. She finds them very important. What are the negative sides that make her displeased? How (much) the well-being and emotional health of Saeedeh, could relate to her education, career, and planning for them. Saeedeh reveals some of them.

But, I feel lonely here. For example, divorce as one result of immigration, facing [encountering and contradicting] a new culture as well as being influenced by that, and other reasons, can be seen to happen in many families. Those families are not entities any more and do not enjoy the warmth and supportive relation they had in Iran. All Iranian immigrants live somehow like Finns, individualistically and independently. This bothers me very much.

She feels lack of *belonging* to home. She is not accepted by Finns and *belonging* to them either. Therefore, she does not feel being interested to belong anymore.

Also it bothers me that Finns cannot [have difficulty to] accept us as well as we cannot [have difficulty to] accept their culture and mix with them. It is not easy to ask a Finn why the situation is so, but when it is asked, the answer is that, there is a short history of immigrants in Finland. This is many people's answer and is not a satisfactory answer for me. They are friends for short time and then it is over. When I try to keep contacting, they do not show interest any more claiming that "I am busy" or "we do not fit together."

The experiences have left her extreme pessimistic and negative attitudes about Finns.

We should change thoughts and behaviours of Finns from the base. They are hard [unkind] people though they show the opposite. From inside, they are not good hearted. [...] Anyway, it is not in our [immigrants] power to make a change, but only Finns can do it. The

question is if they let it happen and if they do it. I think people like us [immigrants] will suffer until the end, because we are not the problem.

When I asked if she feels happy about her life in Finland or not, and why, she replied;

*Awfully* not! Because I feel I am isolated here, which is difficult for a young person. I do not cope with Finns. They disgust me, because I have many bad experiences with them. They are not good hearted. Many things they say, like being democratic, liberal, respecting human rights, are just words. With some exception, they do not put the law into practice. I also find myself responsible for my isolation. I feel bad when I see and hear Finns. I am afraid of becoming crazy.

There are more concrete examples of Saeedeh's negative experiences.

When I think of Finns, I wonder why they cannot see us [foreigners] with the same eye as they look at each other. Why when they see that we have different hair and eye colour, we aren't similar human beings to them in terms of thought and intelligence? It is also good for them not to start a day by saying, "God damn!" [saatana] to a foreigner. Why they don't start it with a different heart, a kind heart? If they don't want to say good morning, at least it is better that they do not swear. It has happened to me. I had played my role [to solve the problem], but since Finns do not care, I am tired to try again. Ignoring their bad behaviour, being patient and friendly, did not help. There is a limit in trying.

She not only criticises Finns, but also tries to approach the issue in a less judgmental manner towards them, and focuses on the role of others and her expectations.

It is not fair to criticise just Finns. We foreigners also have our share in making the complications. I think we should say good-bye to nationalism. I think it is one of the most important solutions to our problems. The other one is that we would better to have a unity. For how long we should have conflict. In the history, has conflict made anything else but destruction? When it is possible to be constructive, why we destroy instead? This is one of my biggest expectations. On the other hand, I am aware that it needs time. Besides, I am not responsible for what people do and what they should change in them. It is better not to have any expectations from anybody. Life is easier that way. Before, I expected very much, as much as I did for the others.

Her responses concerning cultural differences are surprisingly strong and clear.

The difference between these two [Iranian and Finnish] cultures is a lot and complicated. I do not feel I am between the cultures here, since I was not very much influenced by Iranian culture in Iran and there

where things I could not understand [digest] or accept about it. I think Islam is different from culture but they are mixed in Iran and it has made it difficult to have a clear idea about what is my culture.

Although she has no personal experience with physically violent racism, however, she considers that, 'it has existed and will continue to exist. No law can destroy it. This is because it exists in the system.' As an example, she mentions using drug to deport asylum seekers, which is a kind of violence in her point of view.

## **Future**

Some of her hopes are unique compared to the other young Iranians in Finland.

[My dreams include,] Having no financial difficulty, living in my own country and use my own mother tongue, having a good job with good salary and good family, a good house and a car, the basic things, and security. I want to study first and then start working. My education is not only important for me but also for my [future] child. I can raise my child better if I am well educated.

Those comments motivated me to call her an *alienated-separated*. Despite the difficulties of the present time, the future seems promising for Saeedeh.

[Future will be] better because I am trying hard to achieve my goals. Before, I was not like this. Loosing time, and feeling sorry for that, made me act more seriously. Five years from now, I hope that I am not in Finland. I would like to enter to university and study for at least two years, but within a few years, I will leave Finland. I cannot stay here.

To achieve her dreams, she has high plans for education. 'I just hope, educationally, I can succeed to the level of doctorate. Nevertheless, I cannot be sure if it will happen. I do not know if I will have the capability for that and put enough energy for it.' Saeedeh provides more information about her education that is the focus of her message. She shares her feelings with me.

I feel sorry and sad when I cannot make some basic aims in my life like education. I do not expect to be rich but just to be able to study. In future, when I will have a child, should not I have proper education? Should I be in the same position as my grandma's mother who could not have education?

Hopelessness and helplessness coexist in her. She has tried enough to improve the situation, but has failed. There is nothing more to do. Once when she shared her complaints with an official, she was told to put her written complaint into a box. She believes that an individual cannot make any change. Besides complaining about her past education, Saeedeh has a positive view about her future career.

There are some discussions about, if social services will be finished, what will happen to young people who do not have a job. I personally am not very worried because I am young, will study and definitely will enter the labour market. The ideal case is being able to get into a university and have a peaceful life. Secondly, a good job and getting out of social security system and being independent of my husband financially and make a better life for my future child. When all of these happen, I will leave Finland.

She actively seeks to enter university because she is more interested in intellectual jobs. She explains more about the nature of the career she is interested. 'I like very much to be a teacher in [...] psychology and speech therapy. I like the nature of teaching. For example, when my brother asks me a question and I help him with that, [I enjoy it].' While explaining the contrast between what should be the ideal study environment and what it is in reality, she uses an example from an ideal workplace.

It is not only the matter of language. For example, at the working place when you think of the colleagues, your boss, and their attitudes and the rules are very important to motivate you to the work and make you feel you like to go to work because you like it and you are respected.

She is concerned about how others will treat her at work in the future. One can trace the source of her concern in the negative experiences of the past.

### **Analysis of Saeedeh's Narrative**

Saeedeh openly discusses the significant failures in her past education that are largely the result of shortcomings at schools and in the Finnish education system (*opponent* and *helper*<sup>86</sup>). The failures, however, have not prevented her from planning higher education (*object*), applying for university, and a white collar job. Conversely, she feels weaker than before. Saeedeh's failures in past include poor performances, lack

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<sup>86</sup> Two (standard) actants that could change their characters within the same story, and can bring about problems and solutions, are the Finnish education system and the participant herself.



of interest in and dissatisfaction with education, being pleased with only the minimum knowledge for survival, language barrier and problem expressing her, lack of knowledge about the realities of education in a foreign language, and difficulty to study especially in the beginning. She found it very important. In occasions important role of the language skill was related to defending own right. Initially, she (*opponent*) overestimated her Finnish language skill and did not notice the difference between the spoken and academic language, while she is aware of it now. Consequences were negative thoughts, feelings and reactions. Now she has a dissatisfactory education level, does not study, and has no concrete advancement towards higher education by being unable to enter university especially because of language barrier.

Shortcomings of the schools and education system took place intentionally and unintentionally by the decision makers and the less powerful service providers. The intentional attitudes were bullying, isolation, discrimination, bias attitude towards her, and unfair judgment of her behaviours, extra control and misuse of power, and lack of flexibility with a refugee student who had harsh experiences, and lack of respect. The unintentional shortcomings were attitudes, (inflexible) rules and behaviours, mostly caused by inefficiency and shortage of professionalism, ignorance, power, and limitations of young immigrants. As thoughts, we could name cultural incompetence and missing knowledge (on her, immigrant and refugee students). As actions, there was a possible lack of balance between the hours spent in ordinary and special classes, which brought isolation from the mainstream students, general teachers and materials. There was deficiency of given information, missing enough support and especial teachers, and poor quality of their work, improper guidance such as the knowledge provided by school about the difference between spoken and written language, and inadequate awareness about role of written language on the study results of immigrant students. In crucial early stage at school the shortcomings were more damaging. School did not bring a sense of normality to Saeedeh's life and her refugee youth.

Sometimes, there was discouragement, misinformation, or misdirecting by school authorities. There was also unintentional isolation and rejection, which is a failure in making immigrant students a part of school social environment and belonging to it, when she wanted to be noticed with urge to join the mainstream students. It resulted in unsuccessful try for achieving attention and acceptance in positive and negative manner. The language and age differences between the

immigrant<sup>87</sup> and Finnish (*opponents*) pupils produced extra complications. Finally, the school did not make special attention to foreign students that minimised the students' interest and encouragement. Education that involved bullying and discrimination made it very difficult for her to study. It is important for her to be able to defend herself strongly, what she sometimes did also at school. However, in some occasions she might have misinterpreted her teachers' intention.

There was no clear talk about study plan at school about (further) education. The school staffs limited her hopes and horizon of expectations. She felt that school administration tried to discourage her from having a time saving plan. The explanation would be their inefficiency or negative intentions. Negative feelings are the result of her limitation to make independent decision in general and for her study in particular. These leave her with regret and sorrow. Even many strong negative experiences have damaged her strength; she is still strong enough to think and decide independently at least in some issues including her education plan. Despite the shortcomings, Saeedeh has planned for university level. She has high expectations and intends to continue to the doctorate level. *Doctoral* degree serves as a sign for showing her high hopes. Higher education is very important for her.

The main motivations (*senders*) as pre-conditional factors are rooted in past before the migration, a comparison between the life of an uneducated grandmother's mother, symbolising the weak position of women in Iran, and herself, and positive experience with Iranian education system. The significant post-arrival factors are negative education experiences in Finland, (financial) disadvantages and dependency, her personal enthusiasms, the encouragement by her highly educated husband (also *helper*) as the role model at present, and in the future, with future unborn child that she imagines and cares for. Saeedeh chose subordinate position of her illiterate grandma's mother because she symbolises weakness, what Saeedeh dislikes. It may remind her of the times when she was weak as well and could not *defend* herself at school because she was also illiterate in Finnish language.

*Higher education at university* mainly represents her interest in power, and it is what she has missed for long time at school. It also means a better job opportunity, better financial situation such as house and care (*objects*) and prospect for her and her future child. Education is tightly connected to Saeedeh's financial situation and

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<sup>87</sup> This is an example of a common condition between Iranians and non-Iranian immigrants in Finland.

independence because after moving to Finland it worsened. Consequently, she cares very much that in future she will be financially independent without any major difficulty. Even though the outcomes of the higher education could be extra wealth, but she places the education into the non-material wealth, a peaceful life with happiness. It also offers knowledge to avoid the same mistakes her parents and others did to her. Finally, it stands for a sense of normality, which was disrupted by the refugee life. They are stronger than the preventive factors including education experiences. This causes indirect interrelation between the generations.

Entering to the university (*opponent*) is difficult. Her plan has become more flexible, which raises her chances. A smaller goal may help her to achieve it first and set a higher aim later. However, she is determined; even she has more doubts (*opponent*) about her academic future; her capability and having enough energy for it. Now she talks about her own possible weakness. One reason might be her challenge with concrete experience of reading difficult books for entrance exam. She might not do her best and give up trying at one point. Confusion of a refugee<sup>88</sup> about what to expect from and plan for life and her loneliness could be the other reasons. There might be a relation between Saeedeh's search for independence and her loneliness.

The ideal working place is where she is motivated to go, if she likes the job. She is concerned about how others will treat her at work. She wants to prevent the possible negative future incidents through holding a high position at workplace based on a good qualification. The source of her concern is in the negative experiences of the past. Repeating this topic confirms the possibly of several disrespectful encounters. She would like to avoid what happened once at school in her future work environment. In addition to the attitudes of the boss and other colleagues, the law and the rules can disrespect her. There might be personal needs for choosing the topics she would teach as a teacher that could be related to her own emotional and communication difficulties in past. The motivations (*senders*) are the broken families, trouble in expressing herself at school, and future pupils who will not suffer as she did. Together, they might function as solutions to own unsolved problems of her childhood. Not excellent or very good, but a *good job*, with a *good salary*, and a *good financial situation*, they all mean that money is important for her but they are not the priorities. She preferred to talk less about her future career. One sign for being strong and a fighter is her urge

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<sup>88</sup> This is an example of a common condition between Iranians and non-Iranian refugees in Finland.

for (financial) independence and independent thoughts. She repeats talking about financial burden. Finally, she showed lack of interest to discuss the positive examples I reminded her concerning education and career in Finland. This shows how severely she has become obsessed with Finns and Finland.

Studying immigration in Britain directed me to a new dimension; the connection between my informants' general well-being and emotional health (e.g. belonging) to their education, career, and plan for them. Saeedeh has been unwelcome to Finland indirectly through contact avoidance or short lasting friendships<sup>89</sup>, racism (verbal violence) etc. She is aware that, besides some ordinary Finns, the *system* as the official body of Finnish country holds a hidden racism (*opponent*). That racism is an obstacle in front of her plans. Consequences are her disappointment, dissatisfaction, a huge sense of dislike and mistrust towards Finns and her acculturation choice. Her anti-nationalist ideas that unite different nations support her acculturation choice. She also has isolated herself and does not want to belong to any nation.

One would wonder if she is detached from nationalistic ideas, even when she talks positively about Iran and compares it to Finland, or not. She does not consider some of the supports for her by the education personnel, other authorities (e.g. financial aid). It is blindness, attitude, problem of using absolute words, or their combination. Her strong negative attitudes towards Finns are warning. Fortunately, she can notice her own role in making the situation worse, as worse as losing her mental health. She feels helpless about changing the situation. Saeedeh has had many unpleasant experiences with Finns. Unfortunately, she used strong negative words while describing Finns. The Finnish society provided no Finnish friend for Saeedeh. Additionally, the complete Finnish system, as a combination of different institutions, is wrong. One example is the racism in the system. As a result, she does not cope with them, openly dislikes Finnish people and *awfully* feels unhappy in Finland.

As a personal solution, she compensates the missing support of the government with her husband's, and plans to emigrate. She compares Finland and Iran. Despite some exceptions, Iran is the more favourable place. Things were good there. Devotion of Iranian teacher was more. Family was extra united even one divorce already occurred there. Unity in general is important for her. Saeedeh's acculturation choice is also the product of many influential factors in and outside

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<sup>89</sup> In contrast to her remarks, typical comments of immigrants about friendship with Finnish people usually confirm that Finns are slow in becoming friend, but do not easily leave the friendship.

school. She chose alienation. This is a radical decision. One may find the roots of this choice already in Iran when she did not feel belonging enough to that society and its culture. This may influence her future. She may not feel belonging to Iran if she emigrates back there. Saeedeh belongs to nowhere even she would like to live in Iran.

Even Saeedeh left Iran at the age of over seventeen and she discusses Iranian and Finnish cultures and how different they are, not only she does not select an absolute cultural identity, as an outsider to both of them, but also she has even difficulty with choosing where approximately her cultural identity is located between the two. However, if she knows herself better, she will find how more Iranian she is. After making it clear that she does not belong to any particular country, using the words *my own country* and talking *my own mother tongue* reveals some hidden thoughts and feelings about Iran. This is a sign of separation. Thus *separated-alienated* is a clearer explanation. Language difference, which is a central issue, is not isolated from cultural difference and determined Saeedeh's level of belonging to school/Finland and acculturation choice. In return her acculturation added to the complications caused by language dissimilarity. It is not necessary to talk about *defend*, if there were not enough occasions forcing her to speak for her defence.

During our conversation, once she used the term *refugee* while talking about herself. However, in other occasions, though she did not correct me when I used it, but avoided to use it herself. Instead, she talked of *migrant* or *foreigner*. This may mean she has more courage to identify herself with a weak group that, unfortunately, does not have a positive reputation. However, repeating that word did not seem pleasant to her. Saeedeh strongly feels that she does not have a *big family*, as a group to *belong* because the meaning of big family has changed a lot since her parents divorced in Iran and later when she moved to Finland. New people came and went out of the picture. Negotiating a new big family was unsuccessful. She did not mention anything (particular) about her relationship with Iranians in Iran. She does not feel belonging to Iranian community in Finland either. Hardly any new friend compensated the old ones. She did not talk about contact with Iran friends or relatives.

As the results of the above changes, her parents' family is more nuclear than before and its ties are looser. She decides to recall the influence and damage immigration and host society have caused her, her closest people, and the Iranian family community in Finland. She talks about her parents' broken family indirectly through explaining the harm to all Iranian families. She almost did not talk much

about that family. Only her brother has been remained in the picture strongly all the time. That might make him especial. She did not discuss about direct or indirect contact with her mother. Additionally, she has experienced isolation by her family, which is not an entity any more. Even often she asks for support, possibly, as her parents do not or cannot provide what she *expects*, she avoids their help. This will add to the lack of closeness to them. A good family brings security. Thus she belongs to her *own made family* that includes a supportive husband though she did not emphasise on feeling very happy and satisfied about this relation. She did not talk about a candidate as her future child's father or even the qualities of such a person.

Unfortunately, despite all the future positive achievements, finally she has enough reasons to emigrate from Finland. The negative side, *not belonging*, should matter a lot. However, one may ask if it really is a problem within this individual situation or not. However, some factors such as having her own family including her possible children in the future, before leaving Finland, may change this choice. Saeedeh's thoughts about Iran are examples of what Yen Le Espiritu and Thom Tran (in Levitt et al. 2002) explain about the other dimension of transnational activities beside the actual practices, while it happens in form of imagined returns to the homeland by use of memory, longing, or crucial discoveries. Saeedeh's acculturation choice has increased her transnational thoughts more, and her transnational activities to a lesser degree, resulted in a plan to move back to her country of origin. Not only the transnational behaviours were the result of some conditions such as negative experiences with host society, but also they caused or reinforced some. In addition to extra difficulty to enter university as a psychology or sociology student, maybe interest in leaving Finland faster, motivated her to consider social worker education.

Next is the interpretation of the story. It corresponds to a *tragedy* the most, through change of values and critique of irrationality in many issues, which has elements of a *satire* story too. Thus, it is a story of development. It explains the expectations of the main character, her experiences that have challenged them, and the consequences. Saeedeh's narrative is combination of many negative and sad experiences. She would like to say that she has had a bad life. Saeedeh suffers from both internal conflicts with herself as well as clash with the outside barrier for achieving her goals. Some social, cultural, political, and historical explanations have

shaped her life<sup>90</sup>. The interruption and opposition Saeedeh has faced is especially from Finnish people who have rejected her. That is the main reason for her negative feelings; sadness, anger, dislike of many elements of life, especially Finnish people, as well as her (re)actions such as alienation as her acculturation choice. Her family or (Iranian) immigrant community have not provided a place for her to belong either.

Finnish education environment was a miniature of the Finnish society and responsible for her educational failures, but not her education plan. The results are in form of expressing her expectations and her negative reactions such as complaint about wrong doings of the past by telling her story, the story of disappointments, as well as hopes, and some positive plans to respond to the negative experiences. Disappointment is one of the most important elements in her life. In her plans she will change her future. Additionally, she explains why she has decided so and how she will achieve that. Her emphasis is that her life will definitely change. Her personal strong ambitions and motivations, uneducated grandma's mother representing the weak role of woman in Iran in very old times, and also at present, her highly educated husband's encouragement, and her *unborn child* of the future all have inspired her to consider higher education seriously. Their power are stronger than the negative experiences of past including the Finnish education system. Higher education is vital as her *main object*. Her success and happiness depends on the education and the child.

Negative encounters with Finns have encouraged her to plan for leaving Finland. Positive experiences in Iran have motivated her to go back to Iran (*object*). Financial disadvantages and weak social position in Finland have stimulated her to wish and plan for a good job and salary, and a strong position at work and the whole society in the future. Broken families of parents, and her own, influenced her to make a future happy family (*object*). Also a good *family* as an *entity*, with its *unity* and *support*, entirely represents a sense of *security*, what Saeedeh has missed in her life.

One may perceive the *heart* of Saeedeh's story is the dominance and importance of higher education, and the reasons for it. However, a profound attention reveals her deeper intensions. The education is only a tool to achieve what she misses badly. Past and present have not offered good experiences and people to *belong*. Neither Finland nor family responded enough to her social and emotional needs. She also spoke little about her supportive husband and gave an impression that he, though

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<sup>90</sup> For more details, refer to the discussion of Sadaf.

helpful, is not an important figure. Therefore, the future becomes important. Since she has positive attitudes towards the future, she has hope too. Her hope involves the arrival of a new individual in the picture, a new person to *belong*.

The new person is a child who does not even exist yet, the most important and intimate person in her life, her *future unborn child* whom she cares about very much and she wants to offer him/her a lot of love and a good upbringing. The relation between a mother and child is seen as strong and trustful. Thus, this is a relationship worthy of belonging and investment. Providing a good life for that child (*receiver*<sup>91</sup>) is the most important matter for her (*receiver*). Since her family owing to individualistic and independent lifestyle, along with lack of warmth and support was not an entity any more, although the family is important for her, but not the ones she has experienced. Now, support of the husband compensates the missing support of the family, and in the future, a good family is the one that she will make herself. Since she did not talk about the potential father of that child and expected qualities in him, maybe that family would include only a single mother and a child.

However, maybe even the child is more important than the education; a better opportunity for the child does not mean that the child is necessarily the most important person. Therefore, a child and a better childhood would function as tools to achieve something even more important. The education is useful for providing a good motherhood for the child, what she has missed herself. After all, maybe the future important *unborn child*, who needs to be taken care of, actually in some way, might represent Saeedeh herself. It is the memory of the *little child and a teenager Saeedeh of the past (receiver)* who is disappointed for all that went wrong, who seeks for *compensation*, and needs a final satisfaction in shape of a happy child in future and future happy little Saeedeh<sup>92</sup> inside her. If it is to compensate her own difficult childhood, actually Saeedeh is the most important person. Maybe Finland could learn from Saeedeh and be more caring about both the new generations and itself.

Here I describe more the use of analytical tools for answering the research questions and supporting the answers. The thoughtfully and/or frequently used terms by Saeedeh include illiterate grandma's mother, defending, higher education, doctoral degree, university, psychology, good job and salary, system, family, entity, unity, support, child. Narrative analysis provided extra explanation on why and how things

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<sup>91</sup> The receivers also include some (Iranian) immigrants in Finland.

<sup>92</sup> She is the major hidden (absent) basic actant that is not directly mentioned by the participant.



have happened and might happen. It helped to differentiate the states, processes, accomplishments, and achievements in Saeedeh's life. The noteworthy *States* comprises of good financial situation in Iran, emotionally less healthy and hard refugee life in Finland. Although most of her *processes* are mental, such as plenty of hopes and plans for the prosperous future, for material activity we could find the preparation for entering university. Actually it is the only time that she talks about concrete realities. Consequently her *subject position* is more a *patient* as a type of *logical recipient* who has a passive role and directly experiences the changes that she did not ask for. This role has a very minimal function in shaping her life. As her second important *semantic role*, she holds the role of *experiencer* since her internal state changed by the negative experiences.

Saeedeh is not in the position of a person who has achieved what she has been looking for yet. She struggles between being a hero who fights back and a victim of the forces of fate, who has lack of control in the inevitability of the outcome. Though she has not given up her hopes and attempts for achieving higher education, she seems to be quite weak in this effort and a target of many circumstances. Thus, her narrative form (Daiute et al. 2004: 30) is a *historical-factual* record of events, such as a heroic myth, and she is less a supreme (hero) but more a victim. Future will make it more clear which one she will end up being, only for longer term.

Very rare *accomplishments* are Saeedeh's education in Iran and getting married. *Achievements* are very uncommon too. Examples are migration to Finland and being married. Little achievements, accomplishments, and activities not only inform us something about her, but also about her environment including the school. Her story is the closest to a *psychological novel* because states are dominant, she is mainly an *undergoer* who has a more passive role, and mental processes are dominant. *Evaluation* of her narrative is mainly *comparison* of the dissatisfactory past and present versus a beautiful future, and a better Iran compared to undesirable Finland. She uses very direct speech. To a lesser degree she employs *intensifying* mechanism while, for example, she says 'awfully not', to show the degree of dissatisfaction.

In relation to *temporality*, the narrative covers all times. The future is dominant since not much happens at present and past is not a happy time to focus, except when explaining the motivations for making a better future. *Indefinite* times, especially the states, are dominant. Past and present have been indefinite, stable and slow. Continually, several times she has been rejected and the victim of racism.

Alienation, preparation for university entrance exam, and plan to leave, continue in indefinite form. As *definite* situations and events, she studies certain amount of books for certain amount of time (limited duration) for the exam. The unique moments of her life are when she was rejected, planed to leave Iran, come to Finland and emigrate from it, become alienated, marry three times, and apply higher education. *Expectation analysis* shows that Saeedeh expected a better life in Finland before her migration, and after that, she became disappointed because reality was different. For showing that, she used many devises such as negative sentences to criticise Finland and Finns, future tense to show how life would be better somewhere else and with other people, and using comparison and question form to prove that life in Iran was and will be better. She did not avoid repetition method to confirm that.

*Actant model*, by providing a frame to place Saeedeh in the centre of focus as the *subject* and *receiver* who has an *object* for future (higher education) and many influential factors as actants, showed me the reasons for her education plan and different roles of the education system. The model helped to make a clearer division and connection between the causes (subject and senders), the outcomes (side objects<sup>93</sup>), and the final results. Comparison of Saeedeh's Narrative with the others show, unlike other interviewees, the most important aim in her life is her *compensation* through higher education. She is the only informant who has a well-educated person in her close environment and has enjoyed encouragement of him. Other participants miss comparing the two education systems. A high position at work and the society is important for her. Her cultural difference with Finns is the highest. She felt the opposition and rejection from Finnish people towards her the highest.

Here I shortly explain in which ways views of Hamid, differ from Saeedeh and why. He considers the inability of his children in continuing their education as a failure. He focuses more on tracing the source of the discrimination, isolating, and racist behaviours at schools, inside Finnish students' homes, without questioning the role of the school in failing to provide a suitable environment free from those. He is aware of the role that the education system can play in dealing with the problem and the source of the problem as well. He analyses the reasons for the difficulty in a deeper manner compared to Saeedeh. He believes that in Finland generally many

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<sup>93</sup> The *senders* for her *side objects*: Her difficult past in Finland and her acculturation choice motivated her to plan for moving away from Finland. Her happier life in Iran encouraged her to immigrate back to Iran. Individualism, divorces of own, parents, and Iranian immigrants, motivated her to give a special value to family but only the one she will make herself later.

students continue their education with minimal grades which causes a barrier for their entry to the universities, what is worse in case of the immigrant students.

### **5.3. Kamyar – The integrated Iranian-Finnish father**

It is Christmas 2005. I am with Kamyar at a coffee shop<sup>94</sup> in a Southern Finnish city. He is calm and eagerly answers the questions. It is hard to believe this large young man in simple Western cloths, who is a father, is the same person as the image I have from him since he was a child, a very peaceful child. I still have a picture of his family and their guests, including me, when there was a warm family atmosphere. That time I did not have any idea of a day when his parents would choose different paths for their lives and he is a father himself. Even I do not belong to their family, I envy those joyful times. His personal development, combined with his physical growth made it even harder to accept that fact. He is informative and talkative about his education in past and analysing it but not eager to provide extra information.

Kamyar is an integrated-assimilated Iranian-Finnish man with refugee background. In general Kamyar is a fighter, honest, flexible, independent, hopeful, survivor, understanding, responsible, with self-respect, self-confidence, strong personality and will, and high patience, encouraging, and a solution oriented who has been able to avoid difficult negative experiences damage his strong physical and emotional health in different times and places, including Finland . He has managed to survive well and develop his life. His reputation is important for him. Despite the fact that he has already settled down here and his integration, he seems to have confusion about feeling satisfied and staying in Finland. Kamyar seems to be a quite peaceful man; possibly too peaceful for his job as a security man (järjestysten valvoja).

He has a positive attitude towards life and its complications. ‘Evidently, there are easy and difficult periods in life’, he explains. He is satisfied with and happy about his life but he does not need to shout it out. He silently and simply enjoys it. His identity is stronger than it used to be before. Good physical health, strong willpower, his achievements in labour and successful marriage has raised his self-assurance and optimism. He even encourages others to be hopeful and strive until the success. Family is very important for him. Because of his family’s well-being, his job is very

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<sup>94</sup> The first interview took place in his father’s restaurant.

important. He has no interest in higher education. He holds Finnish citizenship. He is not religious. I chose his story because of his unique acculturation and achievements.

Akbar, Kamyar's father, is in his early fifties and studied for nine years in Iran. By profession, he is a technical worker in metal field. In Finland, He has owned a pizzeria/kebab restaurant. His Finnish is not good enough. He confirms this fact, which limits his social activities. His spoken Parsi shows that he is not well educated. Akbar has adjusted very little to the Finnish culture. Kamyar's age difference with Akbar, twenty-seven years, is almost a lot in Iranian culture. Considering Iranian culture of the past, Akbar married quite late. Kamyar's relationship with Akbar seems to be between good and a little bit of conflict. Akbar does not show any sign of that conflict. Only Kamyar indirectly reveals it, when he talks about the support he did not receive from his family. Akbar says that his son's education and life is important for him and he considers himself as a responsible father. He does not blame his son for the failure in education and tries to be supportive. Kamyar's mother, Fereshteh is in her mid-forties. He has almost five years less age difference with his mother in comparison with his father. Fereshteh is active, educated, and works at health care field. She speaks Finnish and some other languages well. She has adjusted to new culture well. Parents' divorce may have influenced Kamyar's relationship with them. However, he did not know if the domestic problems such as divorce within Iranian families could also be influential in their children's education and career plan. Kamyar's age difference with his younger brother Kambiz is six years. This might have distanced them to some extent, especially in their different adjustment to Finland. All family members carry Finnish citizenship, which has provided them more rights. Kamyar is aware of this fact by saying that, 'My rights are the same as Finns.' He may minimise the unofficial rights he misses as a person with a non-Finnish origin.

Kamyar lives with his Finnish wife Päivi and child, Saara. Päivi is a housewife who takes care of Saara and receives unemployment benefits. The reason that she is not Iranian might not be a coincident. While discussing about if there is any difference between the genders and the ages in relation to life satisfaction of Iranians' in Finland, he says something about Iranian women in Finland. '[...] even I don't know very many Iranian females in Finland, but I can say that some women I know have lost themselves here.' I wondered if one of those women was actually his mother.

## **Past**

Kamyar was born twenty-five years ago in Iran. There is little to know about his and his family's life there. He enjoyed more freedom and rights there because he was male and belonged to a Pars middle-class Muslim family who lived in a large city. Those features have shaped his expectations from Finland. Being Finnish second-class might be unacceptable for him. There is no knowledge on why they had to leave Iran. Beside the flee, which was a dramatic change in his life, staying in the second country as refugees before coming to Finland, under financial difficulties, where harsh for him and his family who did not suffer from those matters in Iran.

Sixteen years ago Kamyar faced another major change when he came to Finland with his family as a quota refugee at age nine. He accustomed to a new culture, non-human environment such as harsh climate, religion, and political system. Simultaneously, he had to accept the fact of being far from all familiar including old friends and relatives in Iran, speaking only Parsi, and practicing Iranian culture and he had to find new friends. During the years living in Finland, Kamyar's personality has taken shape under the influence of refugee life in new environment such as racism in one hand and home environment on the other. He learned Finnish language and Finland became a more familiar environment. In Finland he studied, went to army, found a job, moved away from his parents' home, got married with a Finnish woman and has a child. Since he was at Iranian school for short time, his adjustment to Finnish education system was minor. He studied all together for nine years at school. At school some students bothered him. 'It was very difficult when I was studying fifteen or sixteen years ago at age of ten [...] because there were only a few immigrant students at my school. We were bullied because we looked different with dark hair.' The other negative encounter was with culturally incompetent teachers.

Language teacher was not good. When the first day at school I took spoon and fork to eat rice, s/he immediately brought a fork to show how we should eat rice, thinking we don't know how to eat properly. It was not racism but just s/he taught we don't know. Of course, there are always some racist people at schools but they didn't show it openly.

However, usually teachers treated him impartially. 'No [discrimination ...] happened to me. I heard that it happened to some other students, and my mother too, but it didn't happened to me. The teachers expected no less no more from me compared to the Finnish students.' Besides, if he needed help, teacher provided that. He received

enough attention from teachers. There were other matters at school environment that was not prepared to meet the needs of the non-Finnish pupils causing him difficulties.

It was difficult to study in the beginning. I had a language course for one year. Then, when I went to ordinary schools, it was very difficult to write in Finnish; but after two months, it became ok. Teacher was reading and we had to write quickly. They didn't wait for us at all. From the fifth class we started having some subjects, such as history, what I didn't expect. It was very hard.

One would think if Kamyar had somebody to share his taught and feelings.

No [I didn't talk with my parents about it]. You know, children don't talk with their parents very much. I kept all of them in my heart without sharing them with anybody. [...My parents] helped as much as they could. I thought things would have gotten worse if I told my parents and they would have come to school. So I didn't mention about the problems. [...] No, [I didn't talk with my only brother who] was still very young. [...] If it became very complicated, like a big fight, I had to [talk about it with the school staff], unless no [I didn't talk with them]. The result was no solution. We all where forced to stay one extra hour or two at school, even me, who was the victim. They didn't solve the problem. [...] In a few schools I changed, I didn't have any friend to talk with about my problems. Now I have plenty of friends, but when I was badly in need of a friend in past I didn't have any.

He expressed his negative feelings about the situation at school and its reason.

Often, [I felt that I lost my motivation towards my education in Finland]. [It was] mostly because of bullying. But, soon, the feeling was over. First, I was feeling frustrated, but soon, I told myself that it'll be over. [...] That] time I was really alone. No solution [for it]. Like I just had to take it until school was finished, others have to do the same.

In reality, *soon* was equal to many years. Before, school nurse was always concerned about students' health and checked them properly when something happened to them.

In the meanwhile, school and he planed for his future education.

Yes, sometimes [at school we talked about my study plan]. In ninth grade, it is actually compulsory to ask about this from students. It happened twice or three times altogether during my whole study. [...] They gave] no misinformation, but [they were] not useful. Because my mind was somewhere else, all times. When you became very tired you [...]. [Interviewer: Where this tiredness come from?] [It was] because of bullying at school. Sometimes I felt I didn't want to continue, but

finally, I decided to finish it. [...] I never planned for my study. I just decided to do the compulsory stuff and see what happens with the rest.

Kamyar finished his studies. Next, he completed a security course. He never wanted to study at university. '[...] I started to know what I want to do when I finished my military service. I found that there is a future for this field [security services] since crime will increase [...].' He experienced racism in its different shapes. Nevertheless, finally, he has survived. After school he faced discrimination in finding a job.

I never planned for my future job. It just has happened by itself. [...] For three years after military service, I tried to find a job in this field [security guard]. They didn't take me because I was foreigner. They didn't mention it straight. But you have to show yourself to them. I didn't give up. I tried another job, but kept trying this job as well, until I got it. My main point is that, if you want something truly, you get it!

Only in some occasions Finnish society has accepted him as its member.

It was the first time only in the army that I didn't feel myself as a foreigner. [Interviewer: What would be the reason?] I don't know. [Interviewer: Could it be because they considered you as a Finn since non-Finnish people do not attend military service in Finland?] Yes, and I was doing something [positive] for Finland. Also, they don't expect to see a foreigner in an army uniform. So, the uniform was helpful.

Unfortunately, he could not wear the suit for the rest of his life.

## **Present**

For Kamyar present is the most important time. Even, while explaining his family's social class in Iran, he replied 'Middle class, but I don't remember well. I want to concentrate on *presence* and *here*.' Two years ago, he studied and claimed that he could continue it. Now he does not study any more. He did not continue to high school or similar education. He was studying in his own field in order to develop in his present job. He explains how he thinks about higher education in relation to job opportunities in general, and how he found his own field of work in particular.

You don't always need to go to university to be successful. Here in Finland, you can work and study both at the same time and make continuous progress in both. Of course, there are some [jobs], which really need higher education. [...] One reason that young Iranians don't consider higher education is that Finnish language is very difficult. [...]

The other reason is that higher freedom here makes their mind busy with other things. But if one likes studying, one will study.

‘One who is interested can learn a language properly’, he continues. He thinks those who really want to study here would do it. When I ask why they do not learn Finnish well, he replies, ‘I don’t know. Maybe they are stupid or they don’t want to. If they want, they can learn’. I asked if the main reason for lack of interest in learning Finnish language is simply laziness or could it be because some feel, even subconsciously, that they are not accepted in this society, or they may have even other reasons. He replies, ‘Maybe, but the person who can and wants to study is not foolish to believe that Finnish language is difficult and he cannot learn it.’

He likes challenges in life. For that, he is a security guard. His salary is enough for managing the basic expenses and very little saving. While discussing Kamyar’s effort in finding a job, the matter of support from his parents came up.

My parents are my supporters just by being my parents, nothing more<sup>95</sup>. They give emotional support or advice. I cannot ask help from them. I stand on my feet. [...] I didn’t get support from my parents to find this job. They discouraged me by [saying there is] no chance for foreigners, and asked me to work with them at our restaurant.

There is a change in Kamyar’s working life and development in it. [...] No big change happened since the last interview. My study about my job is finished almost one and half years ago. Now I can do higher jobs [...]. But, it is not as much I expected.

Family life is significant for Kamyar and more dominant than friendship. His attention is more towards his own made family. His relation with Saara is very close. He talks about her when he discusses his life’s positive sides and important needs.

Positive thing about [my] life is; the most important thing is my child, especially because of her I chose the right direction in life, and my job. [...] [My most important need is] Just to be able to provide a good life for my wife and child. When one is married and has a child, one lives for that child. I think I’ve lived for myself [enough]. I still take care of my leisure time, but most of my time after job, is for my daughter.

Kamyar easily communicates in Parsi at home. He has a slight problem with Finnish. Since, his wife is a Finn, if something is unclear, he asks for her help. He positively

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<sup>95</sup> There was a slight tone of disappointment in his voice when he said this.



thinks that he will learn more Finnish by practicing and daring to ask questions. He also speaks other languages. This provides him higher chance to have a wide social circle. Kamyar has a strong social capital. His warmth, gentleness, honesty, vast net of relatives in Finland, and friends through relatives, working environment, and his wife are the reasons. However, he may be loosening those ties as a result of involvement in post-migration busy life style and focusing on his nuclear family.

By considering himself as an Iranian-Finn, he makes his relation to his country of origin clearer. He even explains why he thinks so as simultaneously confirms enjoying a strong cultural capital. '[I am an] Iranian-Finn who is better than an Iranian and a Finnish person, because of the language and cultural richness.' This way he confirms that he does not suffer from identity confusion. Another sign is that he speaks Parsi with his daughter. Kamyar explains how he feels about his life in Finland and the reasons for it. 'I'm very satisfied now. I have a wife, child and job. When I was jobless, it was difficult. The only complain [I have is that] work and study together is too much, but it will change to better later.' His other comments maximise the possibility of integration as being his choice.

[I have some] cultural problems because, even I grew up here, there are some issues about Finnish culture that I disagree with. [It's because] I grew up with my parents here, and naturally, I'm influenced by my homeland culture indirectly. I disagree with some parts of Finnish culture, but we have to live with it and solve it, because it's possible to solve everything. My parents don't accept them, but we [the younger generation] do, because we have to live with Finns! My parents have more isolated social life.

Time and the environment affect his experience with racism. '[I have no] problem with racists now, but until four years ago, I had problem. [The] Reason [is ...] because people around me know me well now, that which kind of a person I am.' When talking about those responsible for his frustration and suffering during his study, he reveals more hidden thoughts about Finnish people in past and present.

Finns [were responsible]. They are culturally backward. They think Finland is the centre of the world and can't see the outside world. Maybe after thirty to forty years it will be different and ok. They [mostly] don't know what happens outside Finland. Who foreigners actually are and why they come here. Even the young people [don't know it]. But now, the situation is much better than fifteen or sixteen years ago, but still many prefer to offer job to Finns instead of

foreigners. [Racism] was obvious before, and now, it is hidden. [...] No [I don't feel happy about my life in Finland]. [It is] because Finns hide their hatred towards foreigners. They showed it before but now I don't know if the [Finnish] person sitting beside me hates me or not. Finland may be ok after thirty to forty years.

In addition to unawareness and ethnocentrism, he adds more reasons for Finnish people's way of thinking, this time from a totally different approach and attitude.

Because they have been victims too. Because of, for example, their wars and bad memories with foreigners. Mostly, because it has been a country for about only eighty years. Eighty years independence is a short time. Because of that, they didn't manage to have enough knowledge about other nations. Also nobody new about them or came here, and because of that, Finns haven't got used to foreigners.

He also has an idea about a slow but peaceful solution.

We should give them time. It's not possible to force them to accept the fact that the foreigners cannot leave and they will stay here. They are not a nation to accept force! Slowly by time, they'll understand it. We should suffer and pay for it until our grandchildren will see the result. [...] I try to well behave and if I'm treated badly I'll ask why. If I get no answer, I accept it as the other person's problem. I'll not fight.

Kamyar has expectations from another party capable of influencing the situation.

From some foreigners I expect to go towards a right direction, and when there is an obstacle, try to solve it instead of making it worse. Many young [immigrants] have become tired of the difficulties and loose control. They misbehave or even commit crimes. I feel sorry for them. I expect them to resist the difficulties more and behave better, and if they really are tired of living here, they just better leave and don't make the situation worse for the other foreigners. [It's] because Finns immediately generalise and blame all the foreigners. Then they won't take foreigners [immigrants].

He does not mention his contact with Iranians in Iran or other countries including relatives and friends. His relation to Iran as fatherland is loose, though it is a part of his national and cultural identity. When he explains his attitudes toward here and now, we could have some ideas why he avoids discussing his connection to Iran and Iranians that may remind him negative memories of the past (in Iran).

## **Future**

Kamyar has a positive image of the future in general, and in his personal life.

[Future will be] Better than now. Why not? As long as my body is healthy, things will be better. Hard times will come and go. After five years, I'll have made development in my job, hopefully live in my home [...], and I'll have a successful family life.

Kamyar will continue studying in the future because he can and likes to do so. His employer supports him by providing the opportunity to develop in his field through extra education. Currently, he aims for vocational qualification, and later on, for specialising in it in an adult educational centre. He explains the reason why he is not interested in higher education. 'Because I think, I can develop and become someone in this job. I cannot become a doctor. I also like the challenge in this job.' Kamyar is hopeful about his future career, knows what he wants, and how to develop in it.

Having a better job [and] it's in my control, by studying well. This is not what I expect from others. I, myself, have to do the change. [...] [I can develop at work by] studying in my field and rise my position at work continuously, even I like to remain an employee.

Lately, Kamyar's sounds less certain about the future in a more realistic way and does not make clear prediction. 'About the future, I don't know, because I never think about it. As long as I want and I can, I'll continue this job. When I can't do it, or don't like it any more, I'll do something else.' He discusses one reason for losing his job.

[The worse case would be] if I lose my job, because I like my job very much, or if at work I experience a situation that I won't be physically qualified to continue any more. My job is a risky job with danger to some extent. [...] Unfortunately,] If I am jobless, I get a course from labour office to cut the number of unemployment rate. Those courses are not useful.

He trusts on one group for positive developments of immigrants in Finland.

The possibilities will grow for foreigners in the future because the new generation of Finns will replace the old one. When I came to Finland, people were wondering why my hair is black. In Sweden, because of a longer experience with foreigners, Swedes have already digested many things. The same is happening in Finland.

He has some ideas for prevention, though he finds it difficult to have clear answers.

I don't think anybody knows the answer [how to prevent such conditions]. I personally try to avoid problems because they already come to our lives. This way I somehow prevent it. Also in case of difficulties, one should ask for help. Now it's different than it was in past. There is a help ready for one who asks for it. Finding a friend is important and it is easier now than before.

Kamyar intends to stay in Finland. Then again, a bit later he claims that, *hopefully*, he would not continue staying in Finland. He would like to go to a warmer country and develop his job there. He did not mention any particular country, and based on his other comments, that will not be Iran. This raises the possibility that he belongs to only two Finnish people, his wife and his child, but not Finland.

### **Analysis of Kamyar's Narrative**

Kamyar suffered from failures with education that were mainly caused by shortcomings of the education system and school (*sender*) and affected his education plan. They are interrelated and influence each other. His failures (*opponents*) were difficulty with his study and Finnish language. He confirms that the language barrier is an immense obstacle. Shortcomings include rejection, bullying, improper response to Kamyar's needs, and lack of preparedness, due to cultural difference and cultural incompetence. Changing a few schools shows schools were unable to solve his problems. Thus Kamyar lost his motivation for study several times, became very tired of it, and just waited for its end. The shared nature of the problems in several schools shows common shortcomings of the education system.

The idea that he cannot become well-educated, as much as being the result of his individual character, could be a sign of unquestionably internalising the wrong idea that the school and closer people have brought in to his mind. There is a chance that his intellectual abilities are more than he knows. Initially, with a poor Finnish skill, the school provided no especial arrangement to meet his needs. Thus, initially he was forced into an unpredicted and very demanding condition with subjects that require sufficient language skill. Fortunately, teachers did not expect less from him, or gave good grades easier. Bullying at school was the main reason that he was not interested in continuing and concentrating in his education plan; even the school encouraged him and provided proper information and compulsory study planning,

though the numbers of meetings were not enough and they were useless to him. This shows that, if one part of a system does not function well, no matter how properly the other parts work, the result could be dissatisfactory. School did not bring a sense of normality, but took it away. It not only did not provide solution to him but also added to that by punishing him unfairly together with those responsible for bullying.

Kamyar did not plan (*helper*) for higher education. He believes one does not always need to go to university in order to be successful. He makes sense except when higher education in particular countries play an important role in achieving well paid, employee friendly, and stable jobs. As main influential factors, because of marrying at a young age and providing for his family (*receivers* and *helpers*), lack of role model, difficulty of Finnish language, believing that he is not capable of intellectual jobs, and interest in a manual work he decided to study for a short time and enter the labour market soon. The positive activities of the school such as the meetings for his study plan were not enough and useful. Discovering his career only at military service shows that school was not able to offer him the knowledge for making his decision.

He likes his job (*helper*) and work in general very much, especially because of its challenges. When he was jobless, it was difficult. Being a security guard, even looking foreign, has brought him *security*. Other reasons remain hidden. If the school has manipulated him to be sure and internalise the idea that he is not suitable for higher education and the related jobs, and consequently he did not plan for them, this might not be completely a success story. Additionally, his expectations about his rise at work did not come true, either due to his miscalculation, failure of the employer, or the nature of blue collar jobs. The future of his work is mixture of challenge between development and risk. Even he (*receiver*) wants to develop *a lot* in his job; he is not interested in radical changes. The challenge is the vulnerability of this profession, a 'risky job with danger'. Continuing and development of his career very much depends on his physical health (*helper*), and consequently less predictable. If he would loose his job, his integrated part might damage severely since it relies partly on this factor.

A strong sense of normality and belonging, and healthy acculturation support a better education. Concept of Family and metaphor of *big family*, a group to belong, including nuclear family, extended family, friends and other fellow Iranians were important parts of Kamyar's social life. His big family broke and he has missed some elements of it since the escape. He tried to compensate the loss through seeking acceptance from Finnish society. Unfortunately, the society has not filled the missing

parts well. Neither did the Iranian community in Finland. His broad net of relatives and non-Finnish friends, or much-tolerated Finnish friends, could have replaced that partly. However, his parents' divorce brought about another break. He may have tried to repair that damage by his own marriage at young age. Additionally, the meaning and value of the family and big family have changed since the fleeing because of the geographical and time changes. It is more nuclear, ties are looser, and more divorces threaten. Kamyar has been bargaining the meaning as a process. Since the members of his extended family and friends in Iran do not exist in Finland, he had to replace them with new people from the Finnish environment. This has been an on going procedure and the recent part of it is the production of a completely new family.

Kamyar focuses on his family life the most. He believes he has a successful family. He aims to provide a good life for his wife and child. This shows his high sense of responsibility. His daughter's welfare is the most important matter. He lives for her. He spends most of his time after work for her. He talks less about his wife and her well-being. He talked even more about his job. Possibly part of that decision is the result of witnessing his parents' responsibility towards him. Conversely, this way he might have tried to compensate what his parents did not provide for him. His marriage survival is more dependent on his daughter. Thus, the possibility of divorce (*opponent*) could depend on how much he would like to sacrifice for his daughter. Divorce could cause an interest in distancing himself from Finland, physically and emotionally. Although he is integrated, but he also has not been experiencing the feeling of *belonging* to the Finnish society enough. Since the two reasons for his happiness, his wife and child are both very personal, his belonging is more the result of an unstable feeling based on integration into only two persons or integration to Finnish society through these two. Thus, depending on the context, he might choose to leave Finland, and before that, he might show more interest in isolation or separation. Additionally, even the basis for his happiness is not the Finnish society as whole; the three reasons for his happiness are all Finnish, a *Finnish* wife, a *Finnish* child and a *Finnish* job.

He has an unpleasant memory of his parents' discouragement. When he says he cannot ask help from them and prefers to stand on his feet, one wonders if it is because of his interest in his independence or more for the bitter memories of the

past<sup>96</sup> when he did not get support from them. Additionally, keeping his sorrow in ‘his heart’ means communication problem, lack of closeness, or being introverted. Kamyar did not talk much about his relatives, friends and Iranian or other immigrant communities in Finland or Iran. His comments about immigrant community in Finland are mixture of care and open criticism that has not made him dislike them. That shows his belonging and commitment to the community. His manner of talking about Finnish young immigrants means he feels belonging and close to them.

Despite claiming to have a double cultural identity (Iranian and Finnish), which is a sign of integration; he several times uses the term *foreigner* while talking about himself even now that he already holds his Finnish citizenship. He does not use the word Finn, or at least immigrant, which has a more permanent connotation compared to foreigner. Nonetheless, he has a positive attitude towards being bicultural. When he talks about his cultural problem and some aspects of Finnish culture that he disagrees with, besides showing the influence of Iranian culture in his identity (*my homeland culture*), he means that he is not an obedient or assimilated type. He expresses how he feels about his original culture when he criticises the few Iranian women he knows, those who have lost themselves in Finland. In that comment, he tells us what he thinks about the importance of cultural identity preservation.

Comparing his parents and his own socialisation and coping with Finns proves Kamyar is realistic, not isolated or separated. However, his strong words about *culturally backward* Finns surprised me. One could consider this as a sign of minimal separation and his difference with Finns. His belief about Finns’ hidden racism, discrimination, ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and lack of or wrong knowledge and ignorance about outside world, even by their young generation, shows how he experiences Finns and interprets it, and his try to be aware of the changes in Finland. His view, that racism can also happen to a Finn, is unprejudiced. He avoids being racist, judging and blaming Finns since he tries to find the reasons open-mindedly.

A contradiction in kamyar’s thoughts may only show different dimensions of a phenomenon. It depends on his focus on that moment; his family, job, or Finns. He claimed to be very satisfied about his life in Finland by the first interview, which shows well-integration. In his last interview, firstly he claimed he was very satisfied, but later he stated he did not feel happy about his life in Finland because Finns hide

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<sup>96</sup> I asked no more questions about the reason since I did not find it proper to remind his past, as he did not voluntarily showed interest in explaining more. Later on, he touched the topic again.

their hatred towards foreigners. This shows his integration is weaker now or if there has not been any change at all but he reveals more secrets now. Additionally, he experiences a fragile sense of *belonging*, since his satisfaction and the tie between him and the society is an indirect bind to Finland through his Finnish family and job, not Finns and Finland. The only example of good memory is about how well Finns accepted him when wearing an army uniform, as a symbol of solidarity. Temperature is not the main reason to consider emigrating from Finland after many years of adjusting to Finnish climate. Instead, his positive attitude towards life in Finland has changed and he is not satisfied with the developments he expected at his work.

Kamyar has limited transnational activities. Once he talked about his interest in staying in Finland, though he talked contrastingly in other occasions before and after. For him, even though the hope for going away from Finland exists, however, now it is a small hope. Because of finding a job that he is interested in, his own successful nuclear family, and concentrating on present time and here, he is encouraged to stay in Finland, at least for some time. However, he remains motivated to leave Finland in future because of lack of acceptance by Finns and minimal importance of his first family with two divorced parents and minor reasons such as hard climate. Despite the fact that his journey may also goes on and he might move away from Finland, he does not consider going back to Iran.

Interpretation of the narrative reveals this is more a story of development, story of *romance*<sup>97</sup> (Czarniawska 2004) but in terms of regaining success, not love, even Kamyar's expectations were challenged by Finns and his parents. Kamyar has experienced life and complications in Iran, fleeing, refugee life in the temporary and permanent countries of asylum, lack of role model, rejection and lack of enough support to some degree and being powerless by school and Finnish society (bullying), and less by his parents who divorced and did not support him enough. Still his message is you can win as I did. He has found a final solution through job and family. He gained power by his job. Thus, he will maintain and develop in it. However, the bitter feelings are present under the surface and the solution is unstable. Some social, cultural, political, and historical reason have formed his life<sup>98</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> In a romance the hero, after a prolonged search including various trials and adventures, regains what is lost-love, the meaning of life, success and glory, or all that above (ibid.).

<sup>98</sup> For more details, refer to the discussion of Sadaf.



As a result, he does not think/feel belonging to Finnish society and his parents' family (*senders*), and is unhappy for the way Finnish society receives foreigners and immigrants. Trying hard to find his favourite job, establishing his own-made family at young age, developing them in future, integration, plan to emigrate from Finland, and telling his story are the other outstanding reactions he has done to respond to the experiences. These provide him a sense of security. He feels happy about his family and job, which needs no higher education. His childhood silence was action avoidance. Part of the silence relates to Iran, where he will not emigrate, but to a third country. He explains how he will make the developments. Future is important and hopeful. His emphasis is that you can change your life. In many occasions, he wants to clarify his ability to achieve whatever he aims for. It might be the sign of an urge to clear the memory of the time when he *could not* reach what he hoped very often.

The *heart* of Kamyar's story is his job and development in it, which relates to his family. It is even wiser to say that the family is the centre, since the job is only a tool to provide a good life for his family. Within the family, the role of his daughter is even more important than his wife, as he often talks about her. She is the most important person for him. Even family is important for him, due to lack of support and warmth in his parents' family, only his own made family is important. However, he *compensates* what he missed in his past family life and school, the *belonging*, with this new and important family of his own, maintaining it and providing well for it. That way, Kamyar becomes even more important than his child. If Finland decides, it can learn the devotion of a father from Kamyar and become a fatherland to young immigrants. A child like that will be loyal to the father.

The significant terms he used more often, emphasised more, or mentioned in more clarity, depth and details are *child, daughter, job, family, better, can, development, right direction, good future, and health*. Use of the word *frustrate* expresses his situation with low energy left. He avoided using the word *refugee* while discussing his past when he was a refugee. This might show his lack of interest in accepting that fact as a part of his past identity. Generally, what he did not find important to talk about or avoided answering or talked little about relates to the positive and negative roles of his parents and the Finnish authorities. In contrast, he emphasised that his own role, the role of the other immigrants and Finnish people to be important. He may have not noticed the influence of his environment on his decisions concerning his education and labour choices, and consequently, did not

mention them. His lack of interest to think about the past made it difficult to know what he may have forgotten and what he does not want to think and remember.

Narrative analysis explained why and how Kamyar's past has shaped his present and possible future. The main *states* include being a disappointed student before, now being graduated, married, a happy father, and satisfyingly employed. The main material *processes* are work and family duties. The major mental processes are planning to develop at work, buy a house, and leave Finland. His *subject position* as the most important *semantic role* is *agent*, a kind of *logical actor*, because he got the job and family he expected, though we do not know how school influenced his study plan. His second semantic role is *author* because at his work he does not have enough control but as a follower puts the orders into action. He could not develop enough at work by extra education because of some regulations (*opponent*). Before he suffered until the school years were over. Kamyar's story is a good example of a *narrative form* representing a *subjective meaning*. Hard work pays off, which is the *evaluation* of his story. The other one is his idea about Finns that is not positive enough.

The *accomplishments* are his school studies, job related courses, and temporary jobs. The *achievements* are the graduation from school and the courses, gaining his job, getting married and child. His story resembles an *epic*, with lots of accomplishments, followed by plenty of achievements, and activities in life. The *temporality* of his story is future oriented even it covers all the times. While thinking of the future, his comments express two ideas, unclarity and positive attitude. A part of unclarity is he, since he never thinks about his future and makes no plan for it, which is not an absolute fact. Because of several accomplishments and achievements, present is also very visible. Here and now is more significant. It is a healthy and realistic attitude, which possibly aims for forgetting the sorrow of the past. Past is avoided except while answering questions. Interestingly, it is actually the past, what he is not eager to think about, which brings the hope of the better future.

*Indefinite* times such as state of continuing the work and family life, planning for them, and buying a house are dominant. Past (felt) indefinite slow and stable difficult time at school is outstanding. Every now and then *definite* time of activities such as extra education for work (*helper*) has happened. Even he thought the difficult situation was going to be over; in practice that period lasted for long time. The *expectation analysis* explains that Kamyar's expectations from Finns were challenged soon after starting the school. Though he is not a rebellion, he does not accept all

realities completely either. He used negative sentences to show his criticism and future tense to explain a better future by development at work, holding a happy family, somewhere else. He used comparison and question form to defend his point.

*Actant model* assisted me to find the *object* of Kamyar (*subject*), the reasons for it, and its relation to his educational experiences and plan. The object is his mission to maintain and provide a good happy life for his family, especially his daughter, through holding and developing his job. Some (standard) actants which could change their character within the same story and could bring about problems or solutions include Kamyar, by making right or wrong decisions, his job (employer), if it makes him unemployed or handicapped, his family, if divorce happens, his physical condition that could remain or change, and Finnish society, if racism hit him severely again. A hidden (absent) basic actant that is not directly mentioned is younger Kamyar in him who has compensated the bitter past.

Comparison of Kamyar's narrative with other participants shows he is the oldest and the most integrated, more has happened in his life. This partly makes his narrative one of the longest. Combination of his higher age, having a permanent job and a family with a child, altogether makes him to be possibly the most mature person within the interviewees whose present and future life situation is clearer, more stable and more concrete. These make him less interested in higher education.

Akbar finds Kamyar's education very important. He believes Kamyar has not studied well and did not go to university because of the education system. The school did not encourage and demand Kamyar enough to study properly but discouraged him. There was lack of responsibility and expectations from him who spent seven to eight hours a day at school and only a few hours at home. 'They were told they have to study up to ninth grade and they did so', he explains. The school also limited Akbar's interference. One explanation is cultural difference. I could not interview Fereshteh.

#### **5.4. Mahboubeh – The Junior Assimilated Finnish-Iranian**

It is a cold dark day in Christmas holidays 2005 at Mahboubeh's home. I still can remember when as a small girl she was so energetic and happy even after the exile in Finland. She used to talk openly and joke with me. Now, while I look at her wearing casual Western cloths, as a young woman she is shy and behaves more seriously. She seems to be in a little hurry and not enthusiastic. Her uncertainties about the quality

or/and the outcome of our conversation may reinforce that. She is not eager to voluntarily analyse her comments. Two years ago, she was eager to talk but did not mention anything about her difficulties. This year, she did not show enough interest in the second interview in the first place. I tried to ease the situation by showing flexibility. For example, I told we could stop the interview anytime she felt so.

This is the story of a very young *assimilated-integrated Finnish-Iranian* woman, with refugee background, who has been living most of her life in Finland. Mahboubeh has an independent and very strong personality. She is a fighter and very social. She seems emotionally healthy and generally considers herself to be physically in good condition. She is satisfied with school health care services. Mahboubeh is not married and does not talk about a boyfriend, marriage, or making her own family. Family is important, though her independence from it is also vital for her. As a student, she does not work and holds no profession at present. She and her family hold Finnish citizenship. I selected her narrative for her exceptional acculturation choice and the challenge between her strong urge for independence and the need to keep her family, which might be the most exiting part of her story.

Marzieh<sup>99</sup>, Mahboubeh's mother is in her early forty's. She has high school diploma. She is a tailor and youth leader by profession. That should provide her extra experience and knowledge useful for her own children upbringing. She has been a teacher and housewife. She speaks Parsi, Finnish and English. She has adjusted very well into Finnish culture and language. She holds Finnish citizenship. The mother-daughter relationship is complicated; a mixture of freedom, support, control, flexibility, positive and negative feelings. Their age difference is less than the father and daughter. This may function positively in their relation. The bond between them, as Marzieh claims, is good since she has decided to influence less in her daughter's life after having negative experiences with her son. Mahboubeh's father, Morad is in his late forties. Morad has high school diploma. His work in Iran was technical. In Finland he owns a pizzeria-kebab restaurant. He speaks Parsi, Finnish, and English. There is not enough information concerning the father-daughter relationship. Her father's adjustment, their noticeable age difference, which might have made the generational gap between them even greater, and his career have minimised the level

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<sup>99</sup> Due to lack of information by Mahboubeh, richness of Marzieh's comment, and extra difference between their explanations, I put more information by Marzieh inside the story than in the analysis. Her ideas are a part of participant observation data.

of belonging to her father. Dana, the brother is six years older than Mahboubeh. Because of that age difference Dana and Mahboubeh are culturally different enough to experience it in their belonging to each other. Dana finds her less responsible than she should be. Dana, as he likes his sister, finds it difficult to understand Mahboubeh's behaviour that is far from Iranian mentality.

## **Past**

Mahboubeh was born in Iran eighteen years ago. Leaving Iran very young limits the knowledge on her life there. For the same reason, she does not have strong ties to Iran as the fatherland and that explains partly her national identity. In that early age in Iran, possibly her gender did not play an important role. For example, she did not need to follow the restrictions on the use of cloths in public places. Additionally, by belonging to a middle class Pars Muslim family in a large city, she inherited some extra advantages, which influence her expectations from Finnish society. Her life was continuing normally in Iran until the family had to escape. Since she was very young when her family fled Iran and temporarily resettled in the first country of refuge, before coming to Finland, she may not understood the causes of the escape, suffered less than the elder members of her family, and it was a smaller change for her.

It is possible to assume that arriving in Finland with her family fifteen years ago<sup>100</sup>, as a UN quota refugee at age of less than three, was not as major change as it was for her family. Compared to her elder brother or parents adjusting to the new culture, language, and the non-human environment, and finding new friends was much easier and faster for an ordinary child in her age. Additionally, the new political system and religion were not her concern. She did not study in Iran and consequently did not need to adjust to a new education system. Very much possibly, Mahboubeh forgot a lot about the relatives, friends and familiar places or things such as speaking Parsi to and practicing Iranian culture with every body in Iran in a daily basis.

Life went on normally. Mahboubeh grew up, as her identity and personality took shape within a new cultural, political, religious environment, she also learned the Finnish language, culture and the Finnish way of life more and faster compared to her parents and brother. Finnish environment became more familiar to her. Immigration life and racism in its non-physical violence also affected her. She did not mention

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<sup>100</sup> Please consider that the time of writing this narrative is the same as interview in year 2005.

anything about her relationship to Iranians in Iran or another country including her relatives and friends. This means that even if such activity existed, it is not important enough for her to mention. For example, she did not discuss visiting Iran. Two major turning points in Mahboubeh's life have been the start of high school, and soon after that, the vocational education, and to some degree, the difficulties of the family business, which affected her directly and indirectly. Essentially, she thinks about her future independent life more and more. Mahboubeh has studied for ten years. She explained how school responded to her needs related to the language differences.

At the primary school, my Finnish was not as good as now and I got many help for it. [...] It was not a problem but they helped me with that. [...] I remember that when I was in upper level of comprehensive school [ULCS], when I supposed to choose some subjects, my teacher suggested me to attend such classes that my Finnish could develop, that I believe it was something good. Then, about the first language, they took me as a foreigner, and gave me the points I needed easier, because my mother tongue is Farsi, but also I got extra support.

Even growing in Finland, since the age of three, did not provide enough language skill suitable for her school activities. Additionally, the first years of primary school were not enough to provide that skill completely. However, her school's encouragement in attending Finnish language courses and additional assistance indeed were important and useful. Considering her as a foreigner based on her language skill also provided Mahboubeh an extra understanding of her cultural identity, as someone different. That would have played a strong role in her future decision on who she was and she is now.

Unlike Marzieh, Mahboubeh did not evaluate her teachers to find any limitation. Mahboubeh is motivated to continue her study because people said that, if she studied, she would have got a good job, a good salary and a good life.

[My] First plan [was that] after primary school, [I would study at] upper secondary school and in a vocational school in hairdressing and [...] field. First I planed to go to the USA, but plan changed [and I] went to high school [in Finland].

She experienced bullying at school. She avoided mentioning it until I asked her about it. This shows she may avoided touching that topic. Compared to her mother's version, she also minimised the degree of her suffering; 'In primary school, some bullied me, but at ULCS they didn't laugh when I didn't understand something. Instead, they helped me. With my language mistake, I didn't take it seriously. Instead I was able to

laugh at it.' Marzieh also explained that Mahboubeh's behaviour was Finnish and did not match with her foreigner's out-looking. Therefore, some Finnish and *immigrant students* disturbed her. Possibly she took those encounters seriously and did not voluntarily mention them. The increase in age of the classmates, and the number of years they have been in contact with immigrant children, minimised their interest in bullying. Thus, there was a difference between the situation in primary school and more advanced years of study. Marzieh said, many times Mahboubeh considered ending her education because of isolation, discrimination, cultural difference with others, being bullied, living between the cultures, difficulty in finding (good) friends at school, some culturally incompetent, careless, or under-stress teachers, being blamed by some teachers unnecessarily, and strict rules of the schools in small issues. Mahboubeh did not mention that. Once she moved to another city to study.

Mahboubeh was motivated towards higher education in past but lost her enthusiasm. 'Yes. For a few times, I lost my interest about it [university study], [because I expected it to be] too difficult. For example, math, in the beginning [was] easier, but now [it's] much more difficult.' Mahboubeh has a clear idea about the role of parents and education-plan meetings at schools and their influence on a young immigrant's decision about choosing higher education.

No, I think it is each person's individual decision [that matters]. Some make higher plans and some don't. I know two girls in our city, one is a computer engineer and the other is going to study law. I [also] don't think what parents do influence on what children decide to do.

However, she did not have any idea why very rarely young immigrants study at higher education in Finland compared to other Western countries.

## **Present**

Mahboubeh shares her idea about what well-being and happiness are. 'Now [my happiness depends on] Friends around me, studying well, good relation with my parents, and having my own residence.' She is a high school first year student and does not work now. She shares her experiences about her education environment.

[I've] no problem [with my education] now and treated like a Finn. Before, [there was] little problem in primary school. [I was] bullied by classmates. [About the] reasons [there is no] big difference in my language skills but classmates are more mature now.

At one point when explaining about what she can do personally to make positive changes in her education, she says that if she studies slightly more, she has done her role better. However, now she believes she would better make a break, and after that, a new try. She finds no obstacle in the environment to prevent her achieving her educational goals. Instead, she assumes that she herself might be the barrier. Therefore, she does not have any expectation from decision makers and officials about this issue. She evaluates the support she has received by the others including her parents and the school. 'I get support from both parents and schools staff. Youth leader is interested about our plans, gives advices for the plan and encourages us', she continues. She does not have plan for higher education. For study plan she even has lack of interest in vocational trainings which at least provides a proper certificate for a job, Marzieh complains. Now even short-time practical training or course is attractive.

She finds her parents, brother, extended family, especially a relative and his family, and friends, to be the most important people in her life, while she explains her important needs. The worse would be to become *alone*, without family. Her family and the extended family are very important for her. On the other hand, Mahboubeh believes that she has received little support from her parents, and only in forms of advice. They speak Parsi at home, which means her family does not suffer from any major communicational difficulty. Comparatively she is less fluent with Parsi. While her brother experiences considerable cultural differences with her, because she is too Finn, it is not surprising if her parents feel the same, if not even more. However, her mother does not emphasise on that issue. Mahboubeh does not mention *belonging* to Finnish society and if it has accepted her or not. She has some kind of *big family* to belong though there are missing elements in it.

As her main thinking activity, she is struggling for her independence within the home environment and considering moving away from her home, something typical for a modern young Finn as well. This is the newest change, the most important matter in her life, and possibly the moving practically would be the next step. While she talks about the connection between age and well-being she says that '[in] general [there's] no difference [between different ages] but those who *have more age*<sup>101</sup> [are older], live alone [by themselves] but not at home [with their parents] any

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<sup>101</sup> This is an example to show how her Parsi is different from those who grew up in Iran.



more, and have a better life!' Possibly this is one reason that, based on her mother's information, Mahboubeh applied for studying in other cities than where she lives.

Though Mahboubeh is not talkative about her social circle, I noticed her friends who visited her at home, looked multiethnic. Speaking Parsi, Finnish, and English fluently, with little knowledge on three other languages have been useful. Mahboubeh's friends are very important for her, but she does not know many young people from her community. Yet, she has even some Iranian friends in others Finnish cities whom she is going to visit. Those manage well with their lives. Thus, she does not know youngsters with major problems to suggest me for the interviews. She does not mention any connection with her relatives or friends in Iran or in other countries.

For Mahboubeh, positive things about Finland include beautiful landscape, good people, 'if you know how to deal with them', and well availability of services even in small and remote places. She is satisfied with her life in Finland because she believes her Finnish is good, she has no problem with cultural differences, can cope easily with Finns, enjoys equal legal rights, she is economically in good condition, has no experience with racism<sup>102</sup>, and has no difficulty caused by the religious difference. Though she and her family members are Muslims, they are not very strict believers.

She has better Finnish language skill compared to the older young immigrants and there is more similarity between her behaviour and Finns'. Mahboubeh also believes that, since she came to Finland in very small age and has been raised here, she is more Finnish than Iranian, what her parents do not like. Then again, in another occasion she called herself an Iranian-Finn. Marzieh believes that Mahboubeh has confusion about her cultural identity and struggles between Iranian and Finnish cultures. However, it is possible to consider Finland as her fatherland. Mahboubeh has received a very general level of support from Finnish authorities, as much as their duty requires, but nothing remarkable. She has no particular expectations from Finns.

## **Future**

Mahboubeh has a clear attitude about how bright her future will be, though several things concerning her education and career plan are unclear.

[My future will be] Better. Because I will be educated [have a diploma] and maybe start university, having a good job and no worry about them,

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<sup>102</sup> Possibly, she, unintentionally, did not consider other forms of racism beside the physical violence.

living in my own flat, independence and no demands from parents and no need to be concerned about them. It'll happen because it's my dream to become independent. [...] In future, having my own home and already graduated [...].

She clearly has doubts about choosing higher education. Like two years ago, she has no clear plan where she would continue her education in the future.

Yes, I guess so. Possibly, [I] want to continue [my studies]. If [I'll] still like to study hairdressing, [I'll go to] a polytechnic, because I like it now. If not, [I'll go to] a university [and study] computer field there.

Mahboubeh explains two options as her plans for her future career.

If [I'll be] in Finland, certainly [I'll] work in my own hairdressing saloon or [some related jobs]. If [I'll be in] another country, [and there's] a little chance for that, if [it's] computer [field], [I'll be] working for a firm, not [my] own business. [...] I don't know well. [I] haven't thought [about it] enough. Maybe [I'll work as a] program assembler/mechanic [ohjelman asentaja] in computer field. [...] Now I don't know. [Interviewer: Why?] [I want to be in no] hurry and [don't want] to make mistake latter!

Mahboubeh confirms that even the chance for moving abroad (for study) is low, but not forgotten or ignored. She still plans for migration to the USA. Belonging to the self will be the most important integration for her. As she cares about her independence while belonging to her family, Finns could preserve their cultural independence although they accept immigrant youth to be accepted members.

### **Analysis of Mahboubeh's Narrative**

I avoid judging who tells the truth, but when necessary, I decide to choose Mahboubeh or Marzieh's version of reality and their understanding of it. Mostly I attempt to explain the different ideas and their reasons. Mahboubeh does not mention her failures with education openly. Shortcomings of the education system and school had important role in the failures. She was not informative enough about the shortcomings either. She might not notice some, found them unimportant, or did not want to mention them to avoid negative feelings. Due to the failures and shortcomings she is confused about her education plan and most probably she will not choose higher education (*opponent*) and white collar career. Her failures (*opponents*) include

poor performance, dissatisfaction with and interest in interrupting her education and lack of interest in continuation of it, language barrier in past, difficulty to study some subjects<sup>103</sup> that were easy first. She claims she has no problem now. They caused her negative feelings, hiding them, and taking all the responsibilities about failures and problems with her plan to herself. As the result of rejection and her failures she has felt embarrassed, disappointed, confused, sad, weak, and *discouraged*.

The shortcomings of the education system (*opponent*) were intentional and unintended. The negative attitudes and discrimination such as bullying, isolation, and lack of flexibility were caused by her out looking, speaking and behaviour. The unintended shortcomings were easily gained good language grades, negative attitudes and behaviours by adults, mostly caused by shortage of professionalism, and by students due to lack of knowledge. Unplanned isolation was a failure in making her a part of and belonging to school social environment. She needed language support. The important role of the language skill stimulated racism. Bullying was caused by language and behavioural (cultural) differences. Age of the classmates was an important factor determining the degree of their negative attitudes. By aging and maturity, the classmates gained more knowledge. Even she confirmed the experience with bullying in past, she found the cause to be only her mistakes with Finnish. Thus, she ignored or hid the other reasons such as cultural differences.

The first years of school did not provide suitable language skills for a child who came to Finland from pre-school age. However, the later efforts of the school for solution, even not early enough, are significant. Alternatively, one would question the way she received her language grades. Extra flexibility of some teachers in grading could damage student's level of knowledge and performance. Bullying and discrimination made studying difficult. For bullying, she did not receive special attention and support by the school, which minimised her interest and encouragement for education. School disturbed the sense of normality in Mahboubeh's life. Mahboubeh avoids looking at her education from different angles, especially the possible mistakes of the others. Instead, she finds herself as the only responsible.

Mahboubeh has had interest in ending her education several times. She did not want to continue her study at high school and in Finland. The past events partly explain why even a Finnish-Iranian young woman talked about going to the USA

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<sup>103</sup> The easiness of mathematics for her in the earlier stages explains that she might have been gifted enough in that subject to manage well later.

even, for now, plan changed and she stayed. One explanation is that the school society did not accept her cultural identity. Her plan for her future education (*helper*) went through several changes. Thus, she thinks about interrupting her education, has flexible plan but with doubts and confusion about and lack of interest in higher education. Difficulty with some subjects such as mathematics was one reason for losing interest in higher education. It is a significant matter because it happened a few times. It shows that she had some insistence to maintain her wish.

The uncertain spectrum for education plan starts from no education at all and ends with higher education. What she *likes now*, confirms the uncertainty. It would be the result of her doubt about what she is capable of, her change of interest, or else. However, at least she is surer about two alternatives as the study fields and they determine the two other alternatives, the study places. One study subject is modern, historically male dominated, and technical, the other more feminine and traditional. They may explain divisions in her personality too. They are also in two academic levels. That shows she has not completely forgotten the university. For her, what she *wants* is very important. She is not going to choose any subject only because someone expects her to do. This is not similar to the way it has happened in Iran traditionally.

From role of school, parents and her, Mahboubeh found only the last one influential to education plan. This way she ignored the other factors. Though she makes her independence depend on her education, in fact the same urge for independence could stop her from higher education, or completely from studying, to make a quick shortcut to labour force, independent income and residence (*helper*). She may be satisfied with lower degree of education, by a diploma, though the higher education is still in her list of the possibilities. Finally, Mahboubeh's positive attitude towards her studies might be motivated, even partly, by her interest in pleasing me or the readers of this paper, who might have a special respect for education. Mahboubeh received some supports from school (*helper*) such as advice and encouragements on education plan. She has doubts about her plan, has been losing interest in higher education for several times, and has lower capacity for entering higher education. The main influential factors that affected her education plan are her urge for independence from dominative parent(s) and moving to her own flat, being bullies and isolated at school, negative experiences with some teachers, inflexible rules, need for quick access to labour force, and gaining a job and salary.

The main alternatives for Mahboubeh's future career are few, but complicated, and relate to others issues; the places to live, the types of work, and the level of independence at work. Those alternatives are unclear and far from each other; Finland or abroad, hairdressing or computer field, self-employed or employee in a low rank. Thus, each time before introducing any possibility she uses the word *if*. Many things are uncertain now. She does not explain the reasons for very different alternatives. Career decision could work as a key to realize the other answers. The situation is not necessarily negative by itself, but it makes her task more challenging. Finally, if she will choose to make a shortcut into the labour force (*helper*), the possibility to remain in Finland will rise. Difficulties of the family business (*sender*) possibly influence her seriousness about financial independence and job.

The rejection at school may have created a strong sense of belonging or/and need for her strong rich multicultural social capital that includes family, relatives and multiethnic friends (*helpers*) who support her, with fear of becoming alone without them. However, her cultural capital is more limited than those who are less assimilated. The importance of friends shows the hardness of inability to find good friends at school. She avoids being alone more than being without family. It is supported by her interest in independence. Change in the level of belonging to home and moving from it affected her education plan by choosing a new school in a distant city. Belonging to her future residence, as a new home, is becoming stronger.

Leaving Iran and living in Finland since childhood, speaking Finnish well, being culturally comfortable with Finns, well adjusted and educated mother who works, holding Finnish citizenship, no racist experiences anymore, and limited transnational activities with Iran made Mahboubeh an *assimilated-integrated Finnish-Iranian* woman, as her acculturation choice (*sender*). She has confusion about her cultural identity, an independent and strong personality, with no interest in discussing marriage. Considering that her first three years of identity formation were in Iran, and in Finland she grew up in a family with Iranian culture (*opponent*), some of the reasons for her satisfaction could be signs of her assimilation. She might be giving up too much of her Iranian identity for being accepted by Finns.

The rejection at school based on her language and cultural differences provided her an insight on her cultural identity and the level she belongs to school and Finnish society, despite strong interest to belong. By supporting and taking side of Finns, she intensifies her acculturation choice. Her Western cloths support the Finnish

part. Like a young Finn she is very eager to move away from home and live alone. However, the significance of her autonomy does not reduce the value of her parents. She may hide her lack of belonging to Finland and Finns. There is no evidence if and how Mahboubeh's acculturation choice would change in future since it has its basis in a long time living in Finland and being influenced by Finnish culture (*sender*). This creates a more stable cultural identity compared to others whose choices are more dependent on their present life circumstances that could change any time. Thus, more possibly, she will continue belonging to the Finnish society.

Due to her assimilation, Mahboubeh's transnational activities are limited to speaking Parsi, contact with relatives and Iranian friends in Finland, the uncertain plan for migration to the USA that is the important one because it relates to her future education and job and to some extent to her negative experiences in Finland.

Interpretation of the narrative suggests the story is example of a *tragedy* that might end up to a victory, a *triumphant tragedy*. For the victory she has to win the challenge with internal and external conflicts. The terms Mahboubeh often used include independence, *own flat/home (helper)*, family (parents), friends, good job and salary, good relationship, and study. They are the most important elements in her life. Internally she has to find a balance between the two cultural identities and level of independence. The *hearth* of Mahboubeh's story is her crucial urge for *independence* especially from home. Furthermore, Mahboubeh experienced rejection and racism at school by both Finnish and immigrant pupils. The consequences were interest in belonging to the stronger group (Finns) by assimilation, and complicated education plan. However, she will distance herself from that group too by plan to emigrating from Finland. Simultaneously she experienced (culturally) extra rules and limitations at home (*opponents*) and decided to live independently while keeping a tight contact with her family because she needs them. Mahboubeh has a positive attitude towards future with an already well-thought four-phase-plan, starting with education, followed by a job and salary, own flat, and ending by independence. Study (*helper*) is important for Mahboubeh. However, she does not have enough interest in education itself but its consequences such as good job opportunity and salary (*helpers*), and making a good independent life. The independence is more important.

Narrative analysis of Mahboubeh's story shows that how and why things have happened the way they have happened and may happen later. The main *states* of her life are being dependent of her family (*opponent*) now and waiting for independence

in future. Except the material *process* of studying, the rest are mental processes of planning and hoping for better future. Mahboubeh's *subject position* is more a *patient*, as a type of *logical recipient*, because she holds a passive role and directly experiences the changes that she did not wish for. She has not achieved yet what she asked for either. She shifts between a fighter hero and victim. Her second important *semantic role* is *experiencer* since her internal state changed by the school experiences and the control at home. While she has not lost hope for her independence, she is doubtful about how it will happen. Mahboubeh's *narrative form* is closest to the *subjugation of self* (Daiute et al. 2004), where there are doubts about many issues.

The only major *accomplishment* is studying for number of years. Especially because of her age, Mahboubeh's *achievements* are so rare. Immigration to Finland is noticeable one. Mahboubeh's story corresponds to a *psychological novel* due to high number of states, her passive role as an *undergoer*, and too many mental processes. *Evaluation* of her narrative is primarily *comparison* of the dissatisfactory present versus a beautiful independent future at own residence compared to the undesirable parents home. She is selective in use of in/direct speech or silence depends on her interest and topic. *Temporality* of her story shows the central time in her story is the future since the past holds uninteresting memories at school and present involves the unpleasant dependency at parents' home. *Indefinite* times, especially the states, are dominant. Continually occurring rejection, racism, and control explain the degree of avoidance to think about the past and urge for independence. The unique moments of her life are when she came to Finland, decided to move away from home and Finland, and when she moved to another city for studying. *Expectation analysis* shows that Mahboubeh expected acceptance by Finns, immigrant students, and more freedom at home because she is a Finn too. She is disappointed because she was challenged in all. That is why she did not use particular devices to show that since she cannot criticise all, she needs them, and there are positive sides in them. She used future tense to show how life would be better somewhere else independently in Finland and with other people in abroad. She applied *repetition* for confirmation of it.

*Actant model* showed higher education was not important enough for Mahboubeh (*subject* and *receiver*) because her *object* is her independence, and the education experiences acted as opponent and helper. Compared with the other participants, Mahboubeh as the youngest is the least informative and suffers less from

cultural differences with Finnish people. She hides her failures and shortcomings of the education system the most. Her education plan is the most uncertain one.

Marzieh discusses what Mahboubeh leaves unsaid, by challenging the limitations of the education system, while Mahboubeh finds herself the only barrier to her educational advancement. The reasons are extra experience of Marzieh and Mahboubeh's lack of interest to face the sad facts about school and her study failures. Marzieh is disappointed because Mahboubeh, not only by her education (plan) has missed some material benefits, but also because of the knowledge she has missed. Marzieh found authorities, parents, and the students responsible. The shortcomings comprise of missing the use of (ethnic) supervisors and native workers, cultural incompetence and lack of cultural training for the teachers, no proper use of social workers at schools, inflexible rules in detailed issues, especially in punishment, negative attitudes towards immigrant parents and students, carelessness irresponsible uninspired stereotyping teachers blaming Mahboubeh because of their own problems such as the stress from the work, terminology of subjects as a major barrier, and lack of respect for the culture of the immigrant students. The parents, the students, and the school employees missed knowledge partly because there was no proper collaboration between them. This prevented positive attitudes towards each other. The employees missed knowledge on Mahboubeh, immigrant and refugee students. There was not enough information for Mahboubeh about her education plan, partly because a sufficient closeness between her and the teachers was missing. As her own role, Marzieh expected too much from her children, she confesses.

## **Discussion: From Higher Education and Career to Belonging**

At this part I introduce the common patterns that were noticeable in the participants' narratives in order to support my answers to the research questions and analyse them more. This study started with paying attention to the importance of higher education in the lives of the informants and a special focus on the role of their education experiences on that. In practice, it became more involved with the role of belonging to school and Finnish society, in relation to their education achievements and plans.

### **Education and Education Plan**



Among many factors that shape the education accomplishments, achievements, and plans, I decided to focus on the role of the education system due to its powerful influential position. Indeed, the extent of the education system's role varies depending on the informant, his/her unique life, including the social circle, the school etc. The results confirmed the hypothesis. There were significant failures and underachievement in the education of the participants. The shortcomings of the Finnish education system played a major role in them though it turned out to be less influential as I anticipated. They affected participants' education experiences, their sense of belonging to schools and Finnish society, and lack of role models *there*. The system directly and indirectly, in addition to the other factors, made them (except one) choosing education plans that involve no higher education. Some experienced freedom, rights, and equality at schools. However, the equality sometimes prevented them from receiving proper response to their especial or extra needs. School produced lack of hope for achieving prosperous and stable jobs. Thus, they planed accordingly.

The informant's recommendations supported the results, which was especially useful when one did not directly discuss the shortcomings. Some had no major problem with the education system. One reason is, if they claimed they had, their own weaknesses and education failures would have been revealed. However, parents dared to talk about them. A quantitative research is vital to test if the result is representative of the target group and immigrant youth in Finland. However, this study theoretically confirms that, because the major influential factors are common between all of them.

The interviewees initially expected to belong, especially at school. Originally, with one exception, they were interested in higher education since it was appreciated by Finnish society, Iranian culture, and their parents. Though the participants had unlike education experiences, owing to different number of study years in dissimilar countries and schools, and the age at the beginning the schooling in Finland, they had some comparable experiences in Finnish schools that unite them. The Finnish schools are relatively homogeneous (Ellonen, 2008). Due to intentional and unplanned shortcomings of the schools, the participants had negative education experiences and failures. Informants explained them with different degrees of openness.

The negative experiences were the results of cultural difference, lack of knowledge, improper interactions, and shortage of professionalism that were involuntary. The school environment was not peaceful enough. Intentional negative attitudes were transformed into rejection, lack of respect, and discrimination. Dislike

or hatred towards immigrant pupils already existed in some individuals. After the encounter, the feelings may have become reinforced and included anger. The unprofessional qualities were cultural incompetence, missing knowledge on immigrant and refugee students, strict rules, improper information provision, lack of encouragement, missing the role model at school, inappropriate language teaching, and inflexibility with students who have had harsh experiences and miss the support and knowledge that mainstream students gain from their wider and more powerful social network. The school was unable or unwilling to tackle the isolation, rejection and lack of belonging. There were intentional and unintentional contact avoidances, dissatisfactory relations, or even negative interactions at school. They show a malfunction in making immigrant students a part of school social environment. Thus, providing an environment where social capital and social control is not enough or not distributed equally (Ellonen, 2008), was detected.

Unaware or intentional negative contacts included oral or physical bullying, discrimination, and misuse of power. The participants spent major hours of their daily active time at the school that caused continuation of those situations. Their extra knowledge of Finnish language and culture, and maturity of the Finnish classmates were important factors for the decrease of bullying<sup>104</sup>. Nancy Foner (in Levitt et al.2002) found immigrant children in the USA commonly learned the American way of living through being the victim of bullying by other students, because of their food, clothing, their English accents, and ignoring the American children's ways and games, and much less from their teachers. Another shortcoming, which made participants dislike the studying itself and the school environment, was unequal distribution of belonging. Moreover, often Finnish students and their parents distance themselves from immigrant students and their parents, hidden or openly. 'The schools filled by the immigrants do not suit the Finns.' (Helsingin Sanomat, 19.10.2009) Furthermore, the school staff did not respond enough to the especial needs of the immigrant pupils.

Shortcoming in knowledge and information provision took place by missing the information, shortage of it<sup>105</sup>, and misinformation. Sometimes misdirecting replaced the misinformation. There were failures in provision of special attention, and placement of suitable age groups in a classroom, and possible lack of balance between

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<sup>104</sup> In 2008 a Finnish radio announced a discussion on use of surveillance cameras at Finnish schools.

<sup>105</sup> There was not enough knowledge about the difference between spoken and written Finnish in relation to the quality of education.

the hours spent in ordinary and special classes. The schools were culturally unprepared for teaching general knowledge and *educating* as a result of minimal experience in teaching children of foreign origin. They did not encouraged well to have a knowledge seeker and solution oriented mind. Occasionally, there were discouragements. There was some unintentional unprofessional behaviour such as expecting less from some participants' performances that prevented a normal progression. The schools did not encourage enough the informants to have interest in, hope, and plan properly for applying to university. It did not provide sufficient knowledge about the clear function of a university and how to apply to one correctly.

Other factors combined with education experiences determined the education plans. They comprise lack of role model outside school, extreme shortage of job opportunities for the immigrants, refugee experience, individual's personality and identity that influence their way of understanding (higher) education (e.g. expectations), age, and missing enough understanding and support from the closer social environment, including the family. Missing a well educated role model<sup>106</sup> was a strong factor. It exists partly because Finland has not attracted well-educated immigrants. It is not compensated by higher education for those who are already in the country either. However, educational success of Iranian immigrants in Sweden, a country which shares several elements with Finland, makes one to consider the other additional factors including the level of *facilities* and *encouragement* that host society offers. The school did not compensate the role model.

Even strong motivations to make a good life for own child was not enough to choose higher education, if the participant did not believe enough in the role of the higher education as a strong provider. Generally, having doubts worked as a powerful common barrier. The participants reinforced the situation without questioning or criticising a deeper hidden fact, that there has been a decidedly unequal affair which looked equal in the first place and only later was contradicted. It was taken-for-granted, as an unchangeable fact, that immigrants have had poor educational and career situation in Finland which is going to continue. But the isolated informant who suffered physically and emotionally more than the others, dared to challenge that idea.

Identity and personality provided the participants unlike education experiences and plans. Each individual responded differently to similar stimuli of the school. Thus,

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<sup>106</sup> Parents of a young university student, who was not motivated to be interviewed, both are not highly educated. However, one had already studied at university in Iran but never graduated.

even the most pluralistic education service ultimately produces dissimilar outcomes to some degree. While the age difference can make people dissimilar, to some extent it produces diverse versions of the same person during the life course. Age at the arrival and the interview time are two more important examples. The age difference provided much dissimilarity especially regarding the answers to the interview questions and points of view. Parents' disagreements with their children, or the older participants' ideas about the education experiences and results, that contradicted the younger ones', supported that idea. For older interviewees, age brought extra maturity, they could notice the shortcomings of the education services and their own failures more, dared to mention them openly, and made more realistic study plans. Generally, the gender variation did not directly cause a major difference in the choices. Yet, the similar gender of some participants raised the possibility of common education and career plans. The occupational choices of female interviewees are female dominated in Finland. Additionally, even Finland supports gender equality in professions; the participants may still carry dissimilar idea of gender equality from Iran.

The interviewees had common significant failures in their education accomplishments and achievements, beside disinterest and shortage of motivation to study. There were poor education performances, learning minimum knowledge and low grades, language barrier and lack of knowledge about how to deal with it, lack of confidence, and difficulty to study. At present they have dissatisfactory education level, do not study, and failed to choose and study their initial subject of interest. Communication is 'the means and end for adaptation' (Kim in Korhonen, 2004: 40). The participants who exceptionally had poorer Finnish language skill suffered from more complications in their adaptation. Younger informants claimed to have good Finnish language skill, though the parents and the older participant believe that it is not enough for studying well. Interviewees had difficulties with general subjects such as math. Other consequences were the lack of belonging to the school social environment and suffering from lack of feeling secure and comfortable. As another consequence, despite one person, others do not study at the moment. The informants were examples of overall low educational level of immigrant and refugee children in Finland that is an exceptional within the Western countries.

The experiences and consequences, as the shortcoming of the education system, affected the informants' higher education plans. Vocational and lower level education that basically produces blue collar professions became more favourable.

They commonly did not show interest in the study subjects, which involve high school and higher education. The participants have thought about their education plan enough and for most of them there seems to be no major confusion about their decision at this point, even it existed in past. The lack of interest in higher education was connected to the high unemployment of immigrants in Finland. Additionally, the role and importance of university and the application process are not clear for all participants. The results show that informants' plans for their future education and career have not changed radically since the first interview.

### **Career and Career Plan**

The participants are aware that employment is a central tool to ease their integration and positively affects their relation with Finns. Additionally, it is the key to achieve other goals that relate to their financial conditions. Thus, they consider their (future) job seriously, even more than education and higher education while they expect good quality from it and its salary. However, they have different attitudes towards *career* (plan) and its type even those jobs belong to similar class. The less mature and independent informants have not done any practical action for their career yet. The school in addition to home environment and broader society indirectly have discouraged them to aim for white collar jobs. Moreover, instead of holding a neutral position, school encouraged them to plan for blue collar jobs. It happened intentionally and accidentally. Those reasons minimised the importance of and interest in higher education by most of the informants.

Economic adaptation (Berry, 2003) is more related to the parents, due to their perception of relative deprivation, they were not motivated to migrate, and the status loss in the new country's labour market. However, even younger participants who have no memory of family's better economic status in past, are aware of that deprivation. The informants' labour choices are related to the economic adaptation. They have dissimilar optimism about job opportunities and white collar jobs.

The employers' avoidance in hiring immigrants, marginality of immigrants in white collar jobs, and high level of unemployment, support the ideas of the pessimist interviewees. It raises the interest in lower level education. The negative attitudes of employers are partly the reflection of the negative historical experiences with other nations. The new political trend by disfavouring the presence of immigrants, the new

economical problems, the social changes such as widening the class divisions, and cultural differences with people of East and South, maximise those attitudes. This study is an example of Fait's conclusion (in Castles & Davidson, 2000) that in/direct discrimination in a strong welfare country, transforms immigrant school-leavers into stigmatised minority, foreigners. Responsibles are the structural discrimination, mechanism of exclusion plus the unofficial networks that shape the employment patterns (unfair private employers). The low quality and dead-end training programmes of the labour office (Wahlbeck, 2002) were confirmed.

The urge to have a job and achieving their goals soon, dissociated the interviewees to try higher education. Thus, they partly follow a sub-cultural trend, or a cultural change of some young Finns. The government partly favours that since it is easier to provide temporal blue collar jobs. Additionally, it is more favourable to have students than many unemployed, especially in difficult economic condition. *Underclass formation* (Castles and Davidson, 2000) of our participants was supported by their social exclusion and disadvantages, even with Finnish citizenship. Participants were frustrated with unemployment, marginalisation, and discrimination.

### **Lack of Belonging**

Human in nature has interest to belong and one of the activities after immigration to a new environment is searching for new sources for belonging. In diverse degrees participants chose different kinds of belonging; to a place (Iran), a society (Iranian), a group of people, a person, an activity (religion, higher education, work), a condition (independence), or combinations. There were variations from belonging to nowhere to one social location (Finland, Iran, the USA), or to several places. Except one, informants did not call Finland as their home or feel belonging to it. Additionally, with one uncertain exception, they did not express belonging enough to Iran, because of growing up in Finland and the difficulties of life in Iran<sup>107</sup>. Thus, they favour leaving to a third country. However, to some extent, they are influenced by Iranian and Finnish society's culture, history, and politics.

It is not only the place that is important, but the people there too. They give extra meaning and value to the place. In my paper, one focus is *people* or *groups* to which we belong and its relation to the quality of education experiences,

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<sup>107</sup> It includes relative lack of freedom, security, equality etc.

performances, and plans. Belonging to the human being varied from one individual, that is the self or other person (own child), to the whole humanity. Family, relatives, friends, ethnic and national fellows, and Finnish society categorise groups that one had to continuously compromise for belonging depend on the context and time. First, they had their nuclear and extended family, their friends and fellow Iranians in Iran. After they fled, usually, only the nuclear family was present. They have contacted the rest in Iran by telephone, letters, internet (recently), and by actual visit.

Two important groups to belong in this paper are family and *big family*. The family includes nuclear and extended families. The big family contains nuclear family, relatives, friends, fellow Iranians, and in Finland, some Finns. In the compulsory negotiation process, new relatives through new marriages and some Finnish and non-Finnish friends have entered the internationalised scene. Thus, there are new groups to belong now. The informants are united by their interest in and the importance of the family. Although changes of environment and time have transformed the meaning and importance of the family and the big family, however, the change has occurred differently for each participant. Although the entire participants showed belonging to family in general, the emphases were towards different kinds of it. It varies between not belong to even a *small family* now, and belong to a big family.

The shape and meaning of family have become more nuclear and the ties looser (divorce), though in some ways stronger, and we rarely witness multicultural marriages. The type of significant family differs from parents' nuclear family to their own made present or future nuclear family. The first type delayed the physical distance from home. Own made family, through marriage at young age, might have been used to cover some weakening elements of or to replace the parents' broken families. Although the significance of family is high, the individual mobility of the interviewees is stronger than Sikhs in America (Levitt et al. 2002); where by individual success at school they found a way to bring honour and success to their families. Role of and belonging to parents' family varied from minimal to very significant. Even the similar importance was in different shapes. The cultural difference, as a result of generational distinction with the parents, limited the degree of that belonging. The older informants belong to family more.

Living in Finland and having regular contact with Finns even in different degrees unites the participants. Experiences with Finns determine the well-being and satisfaction of the informants to high extent. They have had different kinds of

experiences and encounters with Finns depend on their qualities and luck. It is no surprise when the participant who has Finnish citizenship, works for a Finnish company, and is married to a Finn, is more satisfied than an unemployed refugee, though not always. Rejection, lack of belonging to the Finnish society, and negative feeling towards it are commonly experienced by the participants. Additionally, the sense of belonging to Iranian society and the Iranian community in Finland were not very strong. Indirectly they expressed experiencing a certain kind of belonging to a smaller social group, the Iranian community in the USA.

The Finnish society did not replace the fellow Iranians in Iran because of the cultural differences, discrimination, rejection etc. It offered no (Finnish) friend in a long period, a few tolerated Finns, non-Finnish friends, or multicultural combination. Concern about *all immigrants* in Finland shows a sense of solidarity partly caused by the common limitations. Close Finnish people make a small number in the social circle of the participants. The new society did not replace the extended family either, especially because the intercultural marriages are rare. The problem is not only feeling an outsider, but it seems the participants feel it too much in Finland. They experienced lacking a sense of *belonging* to Finnish society in different levels. Therefore, the emotional, and possibly later, physical ties to Finland become looser.

The interviewees had extra barriers in the beginning years of arrival. The experiences with Finns and Finland (cold climate) were mostly negative. It involved discrimination, and produced subordinate position in different degrees. However, it is not only the attitudes of the Finns which cause such a wrong position; but also some immigrants reinforce it by internalising the wrong ideas. Experiences at school are part of experiences at society. Unequal distribution of belonging to Finnish schools reflects the situation of a bigger picture, the whole Finnish society. Lack of belonging to Finland is felt by many young immigrants. The kind of relationship in individual or collective level depends a lot on the dissimilar attitudes, which produce different outcomes such as education experiences and education plans. It is positively important that the informants initially before school encounters had positive attitude towards Finnish people and wanted to be a part of their society. The change of attitude shows not only their internal thoughts but also reflect the others'. Due to distancing and rejection they showed negative attitudes towards Finns.

There exists a difference in similarities of the attitudes. Some had it stronger and talked about it more. Some have at least one close Finnish friend. Those attitudes



caused failures in and avoiding education, and interest in lower level education. The negative stances reinforce the situation. As a process of continual change, not only the participants are being influenced by Finnish society and adapting to it in order to be accepted, but also simultaneously they are *changing* and *shaping* that society minimally. Indeed, it is happening in a small scale now, but it is growing. This study itself is one example of their indirect influence. To conclude, lack of belonging to the school, Finnish society, and to some degree to their families in some cases, were the reasons that participants did not have positive experiences at school, were not motivated to study, did not perform well, and did not plan for higher education.

### **Acculturation Choices**

I found clear difference in the integration of the participants. Each one has different acculturation choice and cultural identity. Even the common factors of refugee background, appearance, also reminded by Berry (2003), nationality, and young age did not prevent the variation. Acculturation process occurred in different orders. Only one story corresponds to the model that starts with admiration, dislike, opposition, adaptation, and balance. The acculturation choices could adjust depends on the changes in time and context. Sometimes there is a difference between the *attitudes* and *behaviours*, in acculturation preferences and the actual outcomes (Berry, 2003) as the separated participant who is very Finnish in some aspect of her life, even she has chosen to be Iranian, and feels unsatisfied about the result.

Next, the factors that have influenced the result are introduced in order of individual<sup>108</sup> and national levels. In the individual level, as the education services and experiences shaped the informants' acculturation choices, in return, the choices affected the education experiences and plans negatively. For immigrants, one recent way to respond the racism in Europe has been a return to traditional values (Castles & Davidson, 2000). Separation was a respond to rejection by Finns after an initial assimilation. Those results also, as a chain reaction, continued reinforcing each other. However, the influences of some factors, especially the role model, were so strong that even the isolated person planed for higher education.

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<sup>108</sup> For information about the ethnic community's level please refer to the chapter on Iranians in Finland.

I approach the *psychological acculturation*. Informants generally experienced the *behavioural shifts* smoothly. We observe language change. All have learnt spoken Finnish; even it is not enough for further education. *Acculturative stress*, as uncertainties, anxiety and depression, when the experiences were more problematic and stronger levels of clash built up, was observed more in the alienated participant. It is not easy to judge if starting school with negative experiences was more painful turning point for one than for the other because we do not know the difference between their natures and cannot evaluate or compare the degree of the suffering. However, it is possible to estimate the number of such negative events and complaints became more with the rise of alienation. Initially, the coping mechanism with those challenges was *problem-focused* for all, as *active coping*, while the integrated participant additionally used more *emotion-focused* and the least integrated ones preferred *avoidance-oriented* tactic. With another approach, we notice that the assimilated, and in second degree the integrated interviewees, both used the *passive coping*, which is reflected in self-modification and patience in the highest level.

Negative *socio-cultural adaptation* was observed in educational failures, unemployment, and negative daily intercultural encounters with Finns. The cultural knowledge and the degree of contact with locals, that predict a good socio-cultural adaptation (Berry, 2003), were more limited for those who have been living in Finland for shorter time and especially those who had contact avoidance. The eventual *psychological adaptation* hit the isolated person in the most negative way, though others who suffered less, tried to show it in a minimised manner through the hiding technique. The lower total social support was another factor predicting the negative psychological level in the alienated participant. Separated and alienated informants showed struggle, tried to change the environment, and intended to move away from it. Such people had more challenging personalities than the others did.

Home could partly reveal acculturation choice. As influence of Iranian culture, participants stayed with their parents longer than Finnish youth usually do. Nevertheless, Finnish culture has motivated them to leave sooner than if they were in Iran. Some have own residence. Others wish to have it. Staying with the parents raised the possibility of parents' influence on the children's study plan. Cultural identity is in close connection with ethnic, national and religious identities. None of the informants directly emphasised on his/her ethnicity. National identities varied from extreme nationalist to cosmopolitan. Nevertheless, this and Korhonen's (2004) study detected

a smaller degree of nationalistic emphasis among the Iranian participants compared to Finns. Generally, religious identity was weak or trivial. They have experienced change in their cultural identity. These show they had more motivations to be a part of the Finnish society compared to immigrants who strongly identify themselves with their original culture. Partly they identify themselves with people of other nationalities and ethnicities who share the experience of immigration and similar social class.

The individual's integration is based on an assumption that they have freedom of choice, when the dominant group has friendly receptive orientation about cultural diversity. Thus, we need to evaluate the acculturation strategies of Finnish society. The important factors are national policies, positive or negative multicultural ideology, vitality of one's cultural group, and general attitudes of the mainstream members (Berry, 2003). In Finland, even the integrationist perspective is legislated in the general official national policy, in addition to the ideology of multiculturalism, there exist many practical obstacles. The Finnish society often favours more homogeneous standards and programs based on their own cultural views in central institutions such as education and labour. Some policies and many unofficial practices suffer significantly from fulfilling the general official policy because they are not pluralist.

It is not realistic to say Finland has already reached the level of *practically* becoming a multicultural society. However, it is possible to make estimations about how the four social level acculturation alternatives are distributed in *separate aspects* of immigrants' life in Finland. They include education, labour, political activities, general social inclusion, marriage, accommodation, cultural and religious choices, health care etc. I added to the theory a possibility that the four choices of host society could coexist. For instance, in terms of possibilities for practicing own religion, comparatively Finland exercises multiculturalism by allowing integration. The immigrants could retain their religions, change it, or even renounce it. The right to basic education and social/health care are the other examples. Melting pot is seen mostly in control of government on family affairs such as child custody. Segregation happens in *indirect* exclusion of the young immigrant from higher education and holding white collar positions. Lack of *enough* interest in motivating and educating the immigrant students in their mother tongue and Finnish language are examples of exclusion. The result, the youth's weak skills of both languages, proves the inappropriateness of the services.

There is a need for widespread public support of multiculturalism otherwise the laws are useless. Since more democratic governments reflect their nations' views, it is possible to assume that presently, Finnish society is not more or even not as much prepared for multiculturalism as its government is, because the government is more under the external pressures for developments. The social constraints on behaviours could be easily visualised in shape of negative norms, lack of opportunities, and discriminations that are out of government's control. It is a paradox that integration of immigrants is required for their acceptance by the host society, while the mainstream does not allow the integration indirectly or openly. There are also the physical and communicative distances. For example, intercultural marriages in Finland are still less frequent compared to the other Western European nations.

Acculturation choices such as separation, assimilation, and isolation are considered as unbalanced and extreme, and consequently, problematic. Acculturation choices of the participants are connected to the responses from the host country, and they differ from each other. However, the interviewees urged for being accepted by Finnish people and chose to be partly Finnish, as their expectations. That has been challenged by Finnish people with rejection. Consequently, they do not feel *belonging* to Finland. Some firstly hid the rejection and later revealed it. Alienated and separated informants discussed their negative encounter with Finns more openly and in depth. However, there were dissimilarities in the negative encounters such as discrimination.

The acculturation theory did not provide a complete picture of participants' adjustment choice, because most of the interviewees who had different choices expressed the problem of not *belonging* to the Finnish society openly or indirectly. However, this should not support abandoning the theory but using it as one tool to complete the whole picture better. In conclusion, this study suggests that the acculturation choice of the dominant group, in general and at school level, could be more influential in the education experiences and plans of an immigrant pupil than the individual immigrant's acculturation choice. Ultimately, this paper did not contradict any ideas related to acculturation theory. Instead it developed the theory.

### **Transnational Life Stories**

The transnational thoughts and behaviours of the informants strengthen their ties to Iran, Iranians in Finland, and the next country for immigration, while loosening links

to Finland. Secondly, they affect their education and the education plans. Transnational practices exist among all the participants in different degrees and forms, and within an individual in different times. They include plan to emigrate from Finland, travelling, language skill/loss, marriage choice, and contact with other Iranians in Iran or elsewhere. The participants intend to leave, especially because of not belonging to the school and Finnish society enough in different degrees. The possibility of emigration confirms Moore et al.'s idea (1999) that as a usual individual solution, people choose another society when the host society faces difficulties in accepting them, motivating them to be a part of it, and managing the tensions. It also supports Huttunen's (2002) point that the meaning of a (good) home is not stable and depends on time and situation. My study confirms Robert C. Smith's view (in Levitt et al. 2002); the social location and racialisation of the participants in Finnish schools worked as a push factor for their transnationalisation. However, our informants had the motivation but not the means to develop such strong transnational performances. Instead, they consider other environment where those practices are possible.

As the education services and experiences shaped the informants' transnational plans and activities, the activities and plans affected the education experiences and plans. School encounters reinforced emigration plan, which preconditioned interest in lower education that shortens their stay. For emigrating sooner, higher education was not reasonable. Emigration plan is not exceptional to our participants. 'Many young immigrants would be eager to leave Finland.' (Helsingin Sanomat, 13.10.2009) 'Young immigrants: If you do not appreciate our skills, we will leave elsewhere.' (Nyrhinen, 2010) The consequences could be mainly positive for the informants since those are the means to fulfil their expectations. But, this could damage Finland by losing a labour source that it has invested money, energy, and time for. Even if some respondents will stay, the interest in emigration matters a lot and the problem is not solved. Jones-Correa (in Levitt et al. 2002) describes, even never taken but availability of transnationalism as alternative social networks of social ties, affects the identity and choices of individuals significantly. Because of developments in modern technology and ease in air travelling, the participants are generally more involved in transnational activities now compared to early 1990s. Therefore, it is also easier to immigrate to other countries. Indirect contact with Iranian community around the world through internet and mobile phones, and the use of Iranian satellite TV channels acted as pulling factors. Their interest in moving to a

third country, a phenomenon ignored by Levitt et al. (2002), suggests how differently and independently the new generation acts within different contexts.

Transnationalism emerged within the participants partly as a result of the double processes of assimilation and settlement, and related processes such as their engagement with social locationing in racial status hierarchies, and the common transnationalisation of adolescent. The social location of the informants within Finnish society has not changed much since the arrival. They have participated in transnational life because of their failed assimilation and/or because of a respond to the over assimilation forced to them by Finns. Informants did not show interest in migrating back to Iran. Dissimilarity of destinations for parents' and children's emigration plan means each one should count on its own for the new life in a new and different country. It demands a short lasting education and quick access to labour force. Smith (in *ibid.*) discusses a desire to keep *immigrant bargain* by new generation with their parents and the fellow Mexicans at homeland to show that they have not forgotten their roots. Good education and holding links to homeland and its culture are important part of that bargain, which was much looser in our Iranian informants.

Our participants' Parsi and Finnish skills determine the quality and the extent of their education, integration, and social life. Those who know Parsi better can communicate with their parents, relatives, and Iranian friends easier. This keeps their belonging and intimacy strong (Haghsersht, 1995). It also provides a powerful base for learning Finnish, better education, belonging to school and Finland, and finding work easier. Language loss is something negative for the participants, their family, and Finland. It is caused by less mother tongue use at home and with other Iranians plus poor quality of teaching it at school. Although, as members of 1.5 generation informants partly showed oral language loss, it was minimal and it happened in dissimilar degrees. However, some could not write in it. The language shift is not towards standard Finnish but more slang and hybrid version of that. Because only the spoken Parsi was good, it did not help the development of written Finnish in relation to their education. Poorer Finnish language skill empowered alienation.

The possibility of leaving Finland would rise if the partner is not Finnish. Thus, it increases the likelihood of lower education by shortening the time before leaving. The results show those who are married chose partners from both Iranian and Finnish communities. However, statistics demonstrate that majority of the first generation selected their partners from Iran. As Smith (in Levitt et al. 2002) traced a reduction in

his participants' transnational activities by *life course*, our older participant became more preoccupied by own upward mobility and settlement process, and resolved many issues of adolescent identity. To conclude, part of the reasons for development of transnational thoughts and behaviours among the interviewees, especially the interest in emigrating from Finland, were the assimilative, disfavoured social location, and racialisation that occurred at school environment.

### **The Narratives**

We looked at the narratives in several ways; the dynamic, the interactive process (social-relational), and the individuals' relationships to master narratives that historically and culturally have emerged and influence us continuously. The last one partly made them *counter narratives*. I found stories of marginalised, excluded or silenced, sometimes alongside and sometimes against the mainstream discourses or narratives. The stories were not only the narratives of individuals but also race, nationality, class, age, and gender. Because of the values and pressures of the wider society, it should not be surprising if the participants performed personal experiences in ways that obeyed the context (Daiute et al. 2004) to some degree. Broader reasons such as social, political, cultural, and historical were behind their comments. These provide a background to answer why interviewees talked the way they talked. However, these did not prevent them from expressing their complaints and demands.

The narratives generally show similar amount of *states*, *processes*, *accomplishments*, and *achievements*. Basically they represent *psychological novel* owing to the dominance of states. Second leading are mental activities of feeling, planning, and remembering but fewer physical activities. Accomplishments and achievements are rare. The *semantic role* usually is *recipient* (receiver). Consequently, their *subject position* is *undergoer*. That explains their weak positions and failures plus why and how they had little control on their lives, education, and original education plan. They relatively hold the role of a *patient* and *experiencer* of the unwanted changes. However, there is variation in it. That, in addition to the lack of belonging, was the result of school's shortcomings. They produced particular study plans out of compulsion, when there was no imagination and lack of hope for better choice. Temporal focus of all stories is future for fulfilling many dreams. It is a sign of hope, meaning that Finnish society still can help. Comments of older ones are even

more future-oriented. Except the youngest, others wished and planned for issues that relate to far future. The younger ones concentrate on the present. While personalities of the youngest were taking shape, and they were experiencing the initial steps of independence and studying, already the oldest were involved with their marriage lives and work experiences. This partly explains the different education plans.

Despite the similarities, I found differences in the extent or degree of similarities. There were common means that participants used in order to identify themselves with the others. The word selections were intentional or unintended. In contrast to Huttunen's participants (2002), our informants, even talking personally, at the same time often did not show interest in emphasising their individuality. They preferred to identify themselves with a larger group such as Iranian, Finn, immigrant, or especially global citizens. Especially the separated and alienated interviewees did so. That partly justifies their plan to go to the USA. Their age and stage of integration are two explanations. However, their individuality was essential to them.

The common topics, themes, and terms included; belief, independence, immigration, refugee life, Finns, Finland, language/cultural differences, economic survival, struggle, family, emigration, solidarity, immigrant, foreigner, resist etc. They show stories' attentions. Additionally, the terms not used are important. While identifying the intentions and the focuses on communication style, I noticed narrators without thinking carefully, showed interest in avoiding the usage of the word *refugee* and *immigrant* while talking about them. Instead, they used the term *foreigner*. This might be simply a lingual mistake, or alternatively, a reflection to their position in the society as people who do not belong to the Finnish environment, but to a bigger non-Finnish group. If the later is true, this would be because they do not feel being accepted or do not want to belong, or both. A term could be a way to categorise some people who are representatives of a group (Huttunen, 2002).

Foreigner was sometimes continuously used to distinguish a particular group they associated with, also when discussing the immigrants. Foreigner is even more outsider than immigrant. Even those who identified themselves as Iranian-Finn or Finnish-Iranian internalised using the term without questioning it. It shows not only the position of *outsider*, imposed to them by others is what unites them, but also the term foreigner they used. Finnish media often intensifies the wrong internalised ideas of immigrants about themselves. For some, that term described the attitudinal and behavioural responses, by focusing on the negative attitudes towards Finns and



positive position regarding non-Finnish. The participants commonly brought up the conflicting logics between them and the Finns. That caused a differentiation between them and the Finns on one hand, and a connection with the others on the other.

These narratives are progressive, showing the coming of age. The participants have *goal plans*, as their reactions to the events. They had *goal paths*, followed by some outcomes, and new goal paths. Episodes in their stories are connected in *outcome-embedded* manner. They follow a plan order starting with independence, followed by education, work, family, and emigration. Depends on what they have already achieved, they chose the next goal. Although the ending in none of the stories is clear, it is possible to claim that the future of most narratives is less clear than the story of integrated person. The stories are about development, hope for a change, a better future, positive plans, while compensation is the main source of motivation.

I found a *model narrative*, a shared story of the participants within which the individual stories emerged. It contains a chain of happenings, starting with disequilibrium, an action, equilibrium, a complication and another action repeatedly. The first disequilibrium is the difficult situation of the family in Iran. As an action, they flee to Finland. The equilibrium is the end of danger in a safer place and in a more stable condition. The informants entered a new environment with some positive goals, expectations, and hopes including acceptance by the new society. In the complication, the new social environment, as an opponent, did not respond accordingly through discrimination, lack of acceptance and experience (at school), limited labour possibilities and unemployment etc. In action two the young immigrant chose an opposite aim by rejecting that society and planning to distance oneself from it. It involved lack of interest in (higher) education, a shortcut to the labour market, insignificance of belonging to the society, a plan to emigrate, increased significance of family, participating in this study to share their suffer, demands, dreams, hopes etc. The helpers, such as family members, are helpless themselves. The final equilibrium is the unclear future and only predictions.

The stories correspond to the evolution theory (Czarniawska 2004) in which a hero (participant), who *departs* on a journey (leaves Iran), receives essential *aid* or *equipment* (Finland, a place of refuge) from a donor figure (Finns). Then s/he goes through *tests* (adjustment to Finland), and finally arrives in a higher state (a more mature person). The ending is open, a happy or disastrous closing stage. While remembering, within their comments on their personal past, informants provided

some historically collective past (Huttunen, 2002) concerning the Iranian and immigrant community, Finland, and Finnish people.

Participants provided four *types of narratives* including *satire*, describing the absurdity of all that occurs in Finland, which contains change of values and critique of irrationality through religious and cultural identity conversions. *Tragedy* discusses humankind as subjected to a number of laws of fact (an emotional crisis), with some elements of satire, containing many complains about school, complications and unsuccessfulness of life. *Romance* or hero story, is about regaining what was lost in Finland and the success through hard work and patience. *Tragedy* might end up into a *triumphant tragedy*, which would be a victory. One cause of such dissimilarity is rooted in the reasons for telling them, their *evaluations*. One was clearly complaining about the education system. Although they use several methods for their evaluations, one is more dominant. They use *comparison*, by taking side between good and bad situations, places, people, and times, *explanation* about own identity and faith, *intensifying* own accomplishments and achievements, and *rejection* of rules. The different past experiences is the basic element that distinguishes the interviewees' stories. Some have experienced important events more than others, while for some the variety of happenings were more plentiful. For others, the severity of the incidents was stronger. Those diversities produced different starting in Finland and at school.

Some stories were more informative because of participant's extra (negative) experiences or/and interest and ability to talk about it more (openly). Some had a deeper look at similar issues. These show partly that recalling the experiences depend on many factors, rooted in both individual characteristics and the outside world. There are differences between major activities that are partly the result of unlike plans, accomplishments, and achievements. For older participants who have more experiences, there is less need for planning since they have achieved more. The variations of well-being, influenced by education environment and affecting the quality of education, include; not well enough, well enough with or without exaggeration, or avoidance to discuss the topic.

Sometimes they changed their answers to a question. Change of circumstances, increasing the maturity of the informants and their verbal competency from the first to the last interview caused it. Even it happened during the same interview, when they expected an unwanted reaction from me, to defend a particular form of identity, to sound more convincing or owing to uncertainties. It partly or greatly changed the

nature of their stories. A few social encounters made them undertake new meanings of their past. However, they did so in different situations and for different purposes. Sometimes changes were contradicting. When interviewees disagreed with me, they showed it openly. Sometimes they might have completely avoided expressing it. They also changed their study plans between the interviews due to becoming more realistic or less hopeful. Other issues commonly showed some uncertainties of the participants, in different levels, concerning their cultural identity, choosing higher education, emigration, and their feelings. I also detected confidence in hopes about a better future.

The results of this study are mainly based on young participants' views. Thus, parents' opinions and the comparisons of the views are brief. I explain in what issues they differ, and make assumptions about why they provided dissimilar results. Parents' opinions differed from their children in many ways. They acknowledged openly their children's failures in education and education plan, and were more critical of the Finnish education system. They thought school played an important role in the failures. They discussed its shortcomings, what their children avoided or did not mention enough. They emphasised on lack of demand, responsibilities, and at the same time flexibility to foreign students who feel uncomfortable and rejected.

Children, owing to feeling ashamed of their failures, avoided mentioning (openly) the shortcomings. They also experienced extra pressures from the host societies' norms. Furthermore, they were mostly mistreated because of their minority language status and their ethnicity. Parents suffered from those too. However, parents' approach might be the consequence of oppression owing to their social class and refugee status, which was less concern for their children. Either they noticed what their children did not, or/and they found some shortcomings more important, or/and they felt more confident to mention them. Additionally, parents were more experienced to notice, were not afraid to discuss, and it was easier to explain them to me owing to their developed skill of communication. The parents faced less demands because they were motivated to be accepted by Finnish people less than their children.

At the end, little stories that seemed to be simple innocent comments of the participants on their school experiences ended up being their messages about their lives' important elements, and criticism. Four texts (talks) turned into four types of messages typical for immigrants who have integrated differently into a host society. However, they share a common message about *outsiders* who have considered going *outside*. Additionally, the four life stories made by the researcher, intended to report

on the education experiences of their main characters, ended up being four ways of seeing people's lives. This tells us more about their narrator too. Finally, the narrative analysis helped me to understand better the *vulnerable* position of the informants and their parents. That provides extra justification for focusing more on the Finnish education system and Finnish society, as stronger actants, for the positive changes.

### **Concluding Points**

In order to conclude and finalise my support of the findings, I use social, historical, political, and cultural explanations. In a narrower focus, we need to pay enough attention to the people, cultural beliefs, political systems, population sizes, levels of multiculturalism, roles of the laws etc. They provide deeper explanations for the function of the education system too. The non-privileged viewpoints of the participants oppose, or at least stand in as alternatives to the traditional images of refugee youth, as they provide dramatic examples of *counter stories*. While reading them, it is crucial to judge the situation of narrative production instead of mistakenly judging the participants as persons or their cultural backgrounds (Daiute et al. 2004), if it is not possible to only pay attention to and learn from them.

My study confirmed some previous results regarding the shortcomings of Finnish education system in education of (immigrant) young students, causing underachievement, higher drop-out, and depression, plus some of the reasons for them. For instance, multiplicity of influential factors and their complex relation could produce both productive and preventive results. Perceived discrimination, power and inequality, cultural assimilation that reproduce the hierarchy of power and maintains it through spreading the common norms, providing a *false consciousness* about intelligence causing the acceptance of *lowly paid* works, unequal distribution of social support at Finnish schools, cultural identity of the student, and parental support are factors determining the school adjustment of the participants. The class conflict may have affected the school dropouts within the informants more than their talent did.

The narratives show that the nature of Finnish school and education system is not fundamentally different from the whole Finnish society. School environment reflects the society, as a part of it. Particularly, the rejection of immigrants also exists at schools and causes damage. A place seemed to be an innocent environment, ended up being a place of isolation and discrimination. However, there are constructive

qualities in the education services in Finland that need be appreciated. One is the comparatively high level of equal rights such as free admission and services.

The ideological and *power* dilemma of a teacher and a student is part of the roles of immigrant students and their teachers, conflicting themes of obedience and autonomy, and the institutional powers of schools, which are supported by the government. The power relationship between the informants in one hand, and their teachers and the education system on the other, reflects the power relation between the immigrants, especially the refugees, with the government. The analysis of these examples partly points to the possible *acting* and *hiding* of power within the relations between the immigrant student and the education system. ‘One of the functions of ideology is to soften or conceal the operations of power’ (Daiute et al. 2004: 172). That may explain the education system’s inescapability from the influence of ideology.

## 6. Conclusion

The topic of this study is about the role of Finnish education system in education experiences, achievements, and plans of some young Iranians with refugee background in Finland. I found this topic important because participants share many influential factors and experiences with the whole immigrant youth in Finland that affect their education plan. Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004) has emphasised the common challenges of most immigrant children at Finnish schools. The future well-being of over 47000 young immigrants as fresh labour force that is rooted in Finland, speaks Finnish, knows the Finnish culture and has adapted it as its cultural identity is important for Finnish society. It is significant especially if future researches confirm the news that many of the immigrant youth intend to leave Finland. If they stay, they might not have a good relationship with Finnish society. This matter is vital for maintaining a better coexistence of the immigrant community and the host society.

The aim of this study was to explore further the reasons for lack of interest in higher education by young Iranians in Finland with focus on role of the education system. I planned to evaluate the well-being of my participants through examining their education history plus their present and future education and career (plan). For that, I decided to use theories on education of immigrants, acculturation, transnationalism etc. By use of qualitative research methodology and methods such as face to face interview and participant observation, I made their life narratives that focused on their education experiences and plans. The research frame contains the next themes starting with the most (number 1) and ending with the least studied matter: 1) Education and career of the participants; 2) Education and career of young Iranians in Finland; 3) (young) Iranians in Finland; 4) Finnish education system; 5) Finnish people and Finland; 7) Finnish immigration; 8) Globalisation in general, and seen through transnational activities in particular.

The hypothesis was confirmed only in connection to the other factors. The results proved participants' significant education failures. The Finnish education system played an important role in them. The experiences, performances, and missing achievements affected their education plans and discouraged them from trying higher education. The education system did not motivate by providing essential information and guidance on the important role of higher education, and prepare them to apply. This caused career plans that do not involve higher education. The

significant failures were missing motivation to study, learning minimum knowledge, poor performances and low grades, language barrier, difficulty to study, shortages of accomplishments (dissatisfactory education level), high drop-out, rare achievements (degree and graduation), and failing to choose and study their initial subject of interest.

The important factors to explain the results could be categorised into people, states, aims, activities, experiences, accomplishments, and achievements. Within people, unique qualities of the informants such as personality and (cultural) identity, made them outstanding, took attention of the mainstream students and motivated them to bully or/and the teachers to have challenge in doing their job appropriately. The lack of feeling secure, comfortable, and belonging to the school environment, as disadvantages caused the failures. The best education methods cannot motivate a student if belonging to school is missing by rejection that affects the whole well-being.

The social explanations, especially social capital, family relationships, lack of role model, and inability of parents to help their children with education, were significant. The important states were refugee life, divorced family, being an outsider, and negative emotional situation. The other aims, including interest in emigration, religious ambitions, work and development at it (just in-service training), and independence (quick study and rush to labour force), plus religious activity, hobbies, or studying, left no room for higher education. Additionally, significant failures of the participants were partly the result of the limitations in the education services.

Education system was not able to motivate the interviewees to learn because it could not provide a suitable environment free of negative and unpleasant experiences. They existed in form of rejection, unequal distribution of social support and control, bullying (activity), isolation (state), and racist behaviours. The negative stances about immigrant students at Finnish schools are major problems affecting the child protection in Finland negatively (Anis 2008). The negative education experiences were poor language (teaching), lack of support, attention, cultural competence, and flexibility for their especial needs, shortage of (especial) teachers, especially those who are efficient and care enough, missing encouragement, and improper expectations, sometimes too much and sometimes too little. Decision makers have not considered enough the (especial) needs of immigrant students in laws.

The study reconfirmed that exclusion, lack of belonging, and alienation, as some of the most important factors, also explain the (young) immigrants' labour situation and labour plan, and lack of job opportunities in Finland. Moreover, these

young immigrants are most likely to seek for *lowly paid* jobs because the education system may have presented them a *false consciousness*, that the cause of their failures is their *low intelligence*. Consequently, they do not aim for higher education. In relation to the whole Finnish society, the lack of belonging and acceptance were visible and made the situation worse. The direct and indirect discrimination transformed the participants into stigmatised minority, foreigners. These raise the possibility of underclass formation among the participants because of the social exclusion and disadvantages, which undermines even the power of Finnish citizenship. Finally, *missing the sense of belonging*, as a threat to their well-being and the well-being of Finland, directed my mind from *higher education* to *higher belonging*.

The fundamental explanations are cultural, political, social, biological, and economical. The biological description, especially the different out-looking, and cultural differences in behaviours and language use made participants more noticeable at school. It caused extra attention and opposition. The political description including colonised history of Finland by Sweden and Russia and wars with Russia provided bitter social memories with outsiders and was transferred to some students and school staff. As a social clarification, short immigration history of Finland caused lack of experience and preparedness at schools. The economical depression of 1990s and the present one, plus changes in the social security expenses, explain the negative attitudes and shortages at education expenses partly. The lack of acceptance, support, attention, and flexibility overlap in both school and broader environment because, as part of it, the nature of the Finnish schools should not differ fundamentally from the whole Finnish society. After all, it should reproduce the values of its society.

I found Ylijoki's (1998) four criteria for evaluating her research useful. They include the level of truth, morality, relevancy and rhetoric. Three basic areas of education, career, and immigration, found in all the standard introductory sociology books, prove the relevance of my study's topic to the contemporary sociology. Additionally, the experience with education system is relevant to education plan. At this period of Finnish immigration when there is strong need for foreign labour force, and at the same time the second generation of the immigrants from early 1990s are ready to join the labour market, this topic is important enough.

Different parts of the research frame carefully and logically cover the main elements of the topic. They include the *target group*, mentioned in the narratives and partly in combination with chapter two, and the *Finnish education system*, inside the



narratives. It was not possible to approach the Finnish education system out of the narrative data in such a small scale study. Since Finnish school is a part of *Finnish society*, it was proper to provide information on the society within the narratives and in the part on Finnish immigration. Finally, the nature of immigration and transnational activity of the participants brought the issue of the *globalisation* into the picture. The research questions were challenging and went through changes, due to the limitations in methods of collecting, analysing, and presenting.

Acculturation theory was relevant and useful since it provided a broad picture of an immigrant's (cultural) identity and personality that affects many decisions such as the reaction to education experiences, and education and career plan. The interest in emigrating demanded to use theory of transnationalism. Employing the theories on education, labour, and refugees were limited. The qualitative methodology was found suitable for providing the real voice of the participants and producing the vital questions and valuable knowledge that explain the reasons for the education plans.

A richness of this paper relates to its methods, such as the well combinations of different sources of data collection. Face to face recorded interview made it possible to interact with the participant and were valuable tool to bring new issues into the data and checking the body language that would not have been possible by the use of sent questionnaire. The second interview helped to follow up the changes over time. Using the data from interviewing a Parsi language teacher in a former study by me provided the chance to approach the topic from a new angle, ignored by many researches. The interview questions, separated into different types, were generally well-designed since there were many open-ended questions allowing the participants to bring out what were significant for them. I could have asked about the political and cultural activities, and more about their transnational life.

Adding the data from participant observation was useful since some issues did not appear in the interviews. It made it possible to compare my understanding of participants' lives with their own perceptive. Attending conferences, seminars, and several events in and outside Finland, and following the news provided fresh theoretical and practical knowledge on the non-stop changes. Following the activities of and personal discussions with the other researchers<sup>109</sup> increased my knowledge. Narratives were the best possible way for presenting the data, by connecting the

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<sup>109</sup> One example is the discussion with Ms. Alitolppa-Niitamo after we both presented our research outcomes in a seminar for the social service providers in one Finnish district.

interrelated factors in the most natural manner, instead of categorising them first and artificially linking them later. Alternatively, if it was possible, I would have preferred to use participants' own made narratives directly, or edited by me. Although the study was not limited to use only one method for analysis, the narrative analysis was the most suitable method since the data was presented as narratives.

I tried to provide as valid and accurate knowledge as possible by using plenty of quotes. I maximised the reliability of the results by triangulation, asking the same or similar questions from the participants, their siblings and parents, and comparing the answers. Parents were more eager to talk about what their children found unnecessary or hard issues to discuss, and disagreed with their offspring in some important matters. By that, they introduced new dimensions. However, reliability is a more challenging aspect to evaluate in such social topic. Participants under different circumstances produce different answers to the same questions. Additionally, 'it is not the results that are reliable but the researchers – who are confirming to dominant rules. [...] Results are repeated not because the correct methods have repeatedly been applied to the same object of study but because institutionalized research practices tend to produce similar results.' Czarniawska's (2004: 133) Furthermore, the importance of the interviewees' *comments* as a reality by itself, as what truly happened in the interviews, ensures the validity of the data, worthy of analysing, and the results. Secondly, Czarniawska (2004) reminds that the power of a narrative as a story is more determined by the quality of the plot, rather than the falsity or its truth. This logic was another reason for choosing narrative as genre of my text.

By questions or presenting my narratives in a narrative analysis course, a conference and its pre-conference course, and reading books, I was ensured that my results are narratives. The reader is the best judge about the quality of the paper's rhetoric. Nevertheless, my academic writing needs extra development. In relation to the ethical issues, in order to preserve the anonymity of the participants, I used pseudonym and approximate information on dates, ages, education, work, living areas etc. It would have been a richer thesis if the participants could reflect on the results before the submission. However, because of time limitation and difficulty to access the informants, it did not come true. The analysis of the data was challenging too.

A few by-products of my study as its contributions comprise a new insight on the importance of belonging and acceptance to education (plan), a general brief history of Iranians in Finland, the development of acculturation theory and the

influential factors, from only ten factors of culturagram, suggestion about the need for cooperative researches by Finnish and migrant partners, and the possibility of underclass formation in target group. For the first time, an insider member of a community studied this topic in Finland. I chose a neglected group. I approached the importance of immigrant youth from its humanistic aspect and also from the view of its benefit for Finland. They are important labour force because they are rooted in Finland and know the Finnish language and culture well.

I did not find my development of the acculturation theory even in the latest and more advanced versions of the theory. To some extent, many immigrants, if not all, may carry all the acculturation choices, while one is the dominant in general or at least in a particular period. The theory also overlooked the possibility of at least two major choices simultaneously coexist in an immigrant, while one is the dominant. I introduced a mixture of choices, and produced a more sensitive and precise explanation such as *integrated-assimilated*, which shows higher level of integration. Additionally, people choose a dominant alternative in different degrees. For instance, alienation of Saeedeh differs from her brother's. Furthermore, the participants and their community, beside their total acculturation choices, both showed different acculturation selection towards different aspect of life. Thus, one could be assimilated in one aspect and integrated in the other. For instance, one may eagerly learn the new language only for personal success but avoids adapting to the new culture.

Next, I suggested the addition of a hybrid culture which is not culture A, or B, or coexistence of changed culture A and changed culture B. This new one is culture AB and the best example of it is the second generation's culture. The idea of the hybrid culture is not new; however, the theory of acculturation (Berry, 2003: 20) has not benefited from it. Finally, this study has successfully paid attention to the points that Berry (2003) reminds. Instead of broad social categories such as minorities, or Asian, I selected the closest (narrowest) terms; *young Iranian refugees or with refugee background*. I got benefit from ethnographic method in order to make the context more understanding. I researched on the individual level, and in that attempt I tried to *minimise* the other danger that is imposing own beliefs rather than learning about culturally embedded individual differences and preferences.

There is an urgent need for further research about the target group and immigrant youth in Finland by using new focuses, multiple methodologies of quantitative and qualitative, and new/multiple methods. Producing and developing

relevant statistics are necessary. They show how many (Iranian) immigrant/refugee students obtain qualifications and how often the behavioural problems such as non-attendance and official exclusion occur. Fortunately, surveys and further researches have the advantage of witnessing the increase in the available age range of the second-generation, which will provide more answers to the present questions.

Macro-level quantitative approaches by using mailed questionnaires provide statically analysable data that may lead to generalisation of this study's results or the opposite. They could focus on how many of (Iranian) young immigrants study at higher education or intend to do so, and why, what their level of written Finnish language skill is, how many, and partly why, some may not feel belonging to the Finnish society, and how many intend to leave or have already left Finland, general information on Iranian and immigrant youth in Finland, the role of Finnish education system, including the schools, on education results and plans of (Iranian) young Immigrants, and the Finnish labour market possibilities for young immigrants etc. Knowing how differently the Finnish education system functions currently, guides us to locate its developments compared to the time of our participants' experiences.

The qualitative research questions would be how education is socially organised; what the education system's major policies and expenses are; what kinds of consequences all these have. Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004) enquiries are excellent instances of such research. I also suggest investigating how belonging takes shape personally and socially at school. Additionally, autobiographies can provide additional advantages to ethnography. One significant subject to focus is the influence of the social capital, including social support and social control (Ellonen, 2008), on the education of (Iranian) immigrant youth. Emphasis would be on the effects of the changes (extend and degree) in the social capital and belonging for each individual, or measuring the social capital's (unequal) distribution by family, community, school, and society. The education (plan), (cultural sensitivity of) the curriculum, settings and study materials of different schools, education systems for any sign of multicultural adaptation as a policy, and well-being of (Iranian) young immigrants are good topics to focus for comparison studies. They could also compare different schools, cities, and countries. One good focus is the mechanism that connects the education, and transfers the graduates, to the labour force in different countries. Here, I made a very limited comparison between Finland, Germany, and France and looked at the well-being and life of Iranians in Finland, Sweden and the USA.

Many Finnish researchers subconsciously adopt the dominant ideology of their national society, but so does an ethnic researcher as I. In order to avoid their ethnocentrism that motivates them to bring their own ideas to research more than learning about the immigrants, this study suggests a cooperative research method on immigrant issues. Additionally, oral or written narratives and the new narrative studies on the same participants in future, as follow up studies, reveal the transformation of them, since during a research, continuously the phenomenon under study is going through different changes. Other participants include larger member of the target group, especially the second-generation, parents, teachers and other school staff, classmates, authorities and decision makers. Having a focus group and conducting group interviews would be very useful since they provide chances for less talkative informants to participate more, or they present new dimensions. Use of secondary data includes the documentary study of educational data (official reports) and brief immigration/refugee education policy context in Finland since 1990s.

The process of the research made me learn more, that was followed by the change in my ideas, which also caused changing the thesis. The reshaping of the paper simultaneously transformed me. I learned more about myself, as a person and a researcher, my participants, Finnish people, and the topic. I recognised how complicatedly the factors of education experiences, the role models and other motivators, directly and indirectly are interrelated in a complex manner. Some who study in the same education system as others do, apply for higher education and others avoid it. I also understood better the challenges of the teachers who have good intentions but they work under stress, the forces of the limitations, or lack of knowledge. The changes and challenges of conducting the study include the use of new methods of data analysis, avoiding the approach of the Finnish education system out of the narrative data, as well as shortening my text.

Worldwide adult literacy rates show 99% of Finnish people is literate (Giddens, 2006). Manuel Castells (in Giddens 2004: 679) introduces Finland as the most developed information society in the world; 'At the same time, Finland has a well-established and effective welfare state which has been adapted to meet the needs of the new economy.' 'Finland has the best education system in Europe, if not in the whole world.' (Euro News broadcast, 17.03.2007). Even in many countries large portion of different age group students do not continue their education past the compulsory nine years, 80-85% of Finnish eighteen year-olds participate in full-time

secondary education. It is almost the second highest in a European comparison in 1996 (Giddens, 2004). It is unfortunate to follow those and observe the poor education situation of immigrants in Finland. That inequality is a key problem because it strengthens the *underclass* formation and polarisation in Finland. Once it happens to immigrants, we will witness it among the Finns too.

If nothing unexpectedly will occur, Finnish education system, and environment that is a more plural society, will be forced to be a multicultural society in practice, without a well-developed multicultural policy and tolerance to deal with the change. The result will be a huge clash of the interest where Finnish people will not be as powerful as before and it brings disappointments for them. Furthermore, if Finnish school environment does not change its isolating attitudes towards immigrant pupils, and they do not feel belonging to it, they either may leave or not respond to the needs of the society properly. Urgently hired skilled labour immigrants cannot fulfil the needs of the society enough because of lacking language<sup>110</sup> and cultural competence. They also hold a greater potential to migrate away for better job opportunities or joining a larger ethnic community elsewhere. Alternatively, the education environment might make the transition in a less tense manner by making the adjustment on time and the enforcement of a well-planned multicultural policy where there is a balance of power to make a strong Finland. A society based on exclusion cannot flourish democratic citizenship (Castles & Davidson 2000).

Spencer Johnson (1998) divides people based on their attitudes and reactions towards changes. Some sense the changes even before they start, and adjust to them. Some are eager and able to adjust to the changes after occurrence. Others notice they have to change when it is late, but not too late. They are not happy about it but they are realistic. The last type, even when notices the negative circumstances of remaining unchanged, stubbornly holds on the old ways and suffers. One can implement Spencer's ideas within the Finnish education society. I hope that society will accept the reality of the social changes and responds realistically through changing itself before it will be too late. For that, communication is 'the means and end for adaptation' (Kim in Korhonen, 2004: 40). We could easily follow the negative consequences in the countries where they did not pay attention enough to the immigrant youth.

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<sup>110</sup> On January the 8<sup>th</sup> in Finnish TV news there was information on Finnish clients complaining about immigrant doctors' poor Finnish language skill, which has caused complications.

Additionally, it may become obvious that the welfare of minorities is not very different from the rest in a process of democratisation in post-national societies (Castles & Davidson 2000). Just imagine if for the majority of the immigrants, Finland would be almost as important as it is for those who have inherited Finnishness, what kinds of positive consequences it will bring for Finland. This can come true if Finns considers them as valued and important members who *belong* to Finland. A proper multicultural policy in *practice*, including a well-planned integration that involves proper adjustment is extremely important for Finnish society.

If a child or young immigrant learns the local language well and feels belonging to the school environment, s/he can find it easier to study properly, performs better at school, makes better education and career plans. This can be followed by higher chances of finding a suitable working place easier that affect the total well-being positively. This provides a positive relationship with the society. As a result, whole Finland will be the winner. Finland is a rich country. It does not mean the vast economical capital provided by export of natural resources, or through other means such as products of NOKIA, a high-tech company. It is more about the richness as the outcome of high equality between the *citizens* that involves equality in the distribution of possibilities and wealth. It is a huge misfortunate that young immigrants cannot share adding to and benefiting from this wealth properly.

Carney (in Daiute et al. 2004) reminds us the ways in which our own custom and belief strengthen the unfair power relations and our uneasiness with thinking about the real price of repression. It brings about our whole culture's attraction with any kind of survivors and ignoring the rest. However, paying attention to those who question the mainstream forceful ideas about the ways things should be and work, *nurture* the social system, instead of causing it to fall apart. The four stories of participants in this study do not have an end but an ongoing process into the future. Even *you* may have a small or a big role in shaping the end!

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Interviewees

Informant	gender	age	Years <sup>111</sup>	education	profession	Job	citizen
<b>Mahboubeh</b>	Female	18	15	1st year of high school	non	student	yes
Father		l <sup>112</sup> 40s	15	high school diploma	technician	restaurant owner	yes
Mother		e40s	15	high school diploma	Tailor-youth leader	Teacher- housewife	yes
Brother		24	15	11.5 years	non	at civil service	yes
<b>Kamyar</b>	Male	25	16	9 + security courses	security guard	security guard	yes
Father		e50s	16	9	metal worker	restaurant owner	yes
Mother		m40s	16	Health care	Health provider	Health provider	yes
Brother		19	16	9 <sup>113</sup> + vocational school	non	non	yes
wife		-----	-----	-----	-----	housewife	yes
Child		-----	-----	-----	non	non	yes
<b>Saeedeh</b>	Female	24	7	unclear	non	non	no
Father		l 40s	7+afew	high school diploma	Civil servant	unemployed	no
Mother (in Iran)		e40s	non	9 years	housewife	housewife	no
Brother		20	7	9 + 1 vocational school	non	non	no
<b>Sadaf</b>	Female	18	12	8 years	non	student	no
Father		e40s	12	under diploma	sportsman, sport teacher	sport teacher + pizzeria owner	no
Mother		l 30s	12	under diploma	hairstylist	pizzeria owner	no
Brother		20	12	9 years	sportsman, sport teacher	sport teacher (temporary)	no

<sup>111</sup> Number of years living in Finland

<sup>112</sup> l = Late (e.g. late 40s), e = Early, m = mid

<sup>113</sup> The different numbers or words are based on the different answers siblings provided to the questions!

## **Appendix 2: Interview questions**

### **Questionnaire for the first interview**

#### ***I. Questions about background information on the interviewee and his/her family***

1. How many are your family members, including gender and position in the family?
2. How old is each member of the family?
3. How long have you been in Finland?
4. Which languages each member of the family speaks?
5. What are the education(s) of each member of the family?
6. What profession(s) each member of the family has?
7. What jobs each member of the family has had? Where?
8. To which social class<sup>114</sup> do you think your family belonged in Iran?
9. Are you a religious person? If yes, what religion?
10. Do you have Finnish citizenship?

#### ***II. Questions regarding the interviewee's life experience in Finland***

1. How do you think well being is?
2. How satisfied you are about your life in Finland (language and cultural differences, legal, economical, educational, racism and social/health care issues)? Why?
3. What are the positive sides of life in Finland?
4. What do you think need to be developed or improved in order to change the present situation into better, if necessary? Why?
5. How do you think it is possible to make the developments and improvements?
6. What are your important needs? Why?
7. Is there any difference in these matters regarding the gender and age? Why?
8. What can you do personally to make positive changes?
9. How do you see the future (better, worse, the same)? Why? What will be your situation after 5 years from now? Where will you be realistically? Why?
10. What will be the worse or the ideal cases that could happen in the future?
11. Do you intend to continue staying in Finland?
12. How do you see yourself (Finnish, Iranian, Iranian-Finn, New Finn, or ...)?

#### ***III. Questions concerning the main issue of this study***

1. Are you going to continue your study or not? Why?
2. If not, what would you like to do?
3. Would you like to work?
4. If you are going to continue your education, will you do it in high school, vocational school or another place? Why? What will be your major?
5. Do you plan to continue study after high school or vocational school or other place if you choose one of them?

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<sup>114</sup> If needed, I explained them the meaning of different social classes in my study.

6. If yes, where are you planning to study in higher education (university, polytechnic, college, educational institute or training centre)? Why? What major subject? Why that subject?
7. If no, what would you like to do as a job if you decide to work immediately after high school, vocational school etc.? Why that job?
8. What would you like to do as your job after university, polytechnic, college ..., if you choose to study in one of them?
9. What kinds of support do you get (from Finnish authorities or your parents etc.)?
10. How do you see your educational and career situation in the future?
11. What kinds of obstacle you see in your way in order to get to that?
12. Which kinds of solutions for these obstacles exist?
13. Can you play a personal role in improving the situation? If yes, what can you do?
14. Do you have any expectation from decision makers and officials?
15. Are there any positive matter concerning the above issues that you like to mention?
16. Have you ever wanted to study at university but you changed your mind? Why?

### **Questionnaire for the second interview**

#### ***New Interview Questionnaire for the Youth***

##### **I. Background info on study in past and present**

1. Do you study now?
2. For how many years have you studied?
3. Have you had any difficulties with your studies in Finland?
4. If yes, what kinds of difficulties have you had? Why?
5. Did your teacher ever expect less from you than from Finnish students?
6. If yes, how? Can you mention any example?
7. Have your teachers ever given you easily a good or satisfactory grade, even you think you deserved less?
8. If yes, in which class where you when it happened?
9. How old where you by that time?
10. Did you discuss them with your parents?
11. What was your parent(s) response to your difficulty?
12. Did you discuss them with your siblings?
13. Did you discuss them with the school staff (e.g. teacher)?
14. What was your teacher's response to your difficulty?
15. What would you think could be the solutions to your difficulty?
16. How it would be possible to prevent the difficulty? What about your own role?
17. If you were me, what question or topic you add to this part of the questionnaire?

##### **II. Study plan**

1. Did your teacher, or someone else at school, ever talk with you about your study plan at present and future? How often? Was it useful? Why?
2. Have you ever wanted to study at university level and changed your mind? Why?
3. What about your classmates (Finnish, Iranian, or other ethnic groups)?
4. Where did they get information/misinformation?
5. Do they meet educational advisor properly?
6. Where will you study higher education (university, higher vocational schools etc.)?



7. What kind of concrete plan you have for that?
8. Have you ever lost motivation partly or completely to education in Finland? Why?
9. If yes, how did you feel about it?
10. Who did you find responsible for that?
11. If you were me, what question or topic you add to this part of the questionnaire<sup>115</sup>?

### **III. Health and Feelings**

1. Do you feel happy about your life in Finland? Why?
2. How is general state of your health (physical and emotional)?
3. How do you think and feel about health care services in Finland (at school)?
4. In case of difficulties, what would be the solution(s)?
5. What is your role in the solution?
6. What do you expect from others (parents, relatives, friends, ordinary Finns, authorities) for the solution?
7. How is it possible to prevent these for others?
8. If you were me, what question or topic you add to this part of the questionnaire?

### ***New Interview Questionnaire for the Parents***

1. Do you think that your child has studied well in Finland? Why?
2. Are you satisfied with the quality of the education for your child in Finland? Why?
3. Do you think it has affected your child's study plan for the future? Why?
4. Who are the responsible persons for it? Why?
5. How is it possible to solve it? Why?
6. How is it possible to prevent it? Why?
7. What is your own role in it? Why?
8. Do you think it is important for him/her to study at university level? Why?
9. Does s/he want to study at university level? Why?
10. If you were me, what question or topic you add to this part of the questionnaire?

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<sup>115</sup> One suggested: How school can change into better?

### **Appendix 3: Other information sources**

I also benefited from research reports, published scientific materials, attending and presenting at Finnish and international events, conferences and seminars where I collected useful materials and feedback on my thesis. I used official Web Pages for obtaining statistical data. I participated in courses on ethnicity/race issues in Finland. Since the UK has a longer history of immigrants, I joined a degree program there for one study year. There I attended several research seminars and workshops, worked as a volunteer at a famous charity organisation for asylum seekers in the city of Dover etc. I followed the media through news/programs on TV, internet, newspapers, and magazines in order to be aware of the developments in my topic. I used, life stories, e-mails from ETNO and The Finnish Youth Research Society.

#### **List of some Finnish and international events (e.g. ETNO), conferences, and seminars I attended, made presentations, and collected some useful materials:**

1. 5<sup>th</sup> National Social Work Research Congress in the city of Turku 2003
2. Toinen lähiopetusjakso 5. ja 6. toukokuuta 2004 *Konfliktien globaalit vaikutukset: pakolaisuus ja migraatio*
3. Tampereen kaupunkiseudun seutukehittäjähanke ja Tuumasta toimeen – hankeen järjestämä 22.01.07 *Perhenäkökulmia kotoutumiseen – koulutusta maahanmuuttajalasten, -nuorten ja -perheiden kanssa työskenteleville*
4. Estonian- Finnish- Swedish- French Co-operation Seminar on *Youth in Growing Europe: New Challenges for Youth Policy and Youth Researches* 24-27.04. 2007 in Narva (Estonia) - *Young stranger citizens: the health and well-being of young Iranian refugees in Finland*
5. Nordic Respect seminar -*Enhancing Two-Way Integration in the Youth Field* 28-30.09.2007 in Hanasaari Cultural Centre (city of Espoo in Finland) topic: social participation and integration of the youth with ethnic minority background in Nordic and Baltic countries.
6. *Side on Side* conference in Estonia. Topic: development of quality in youth work for better integration of ethnic minority youth, with particular attention on Russian youth in Estonia and the example of ethnic minority youth integration in others countries.
7. Seminar 'Ethnic Equality in Workplaces – Orientation of Pirkanmaa?' (In Finnish, 'Etninen yhdenvertaisuus työpaikoilla - Pirkanmaan suunta?') held on 9.9.2008 in city of Tampere in Finland
8. 'The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations' (ETNO) in Finnish capital Helsinki. In Finnish, it is called: 'Etnisten Suhteiden Neuvottelukunta'. The meeting was held on 18.09.2008.