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THE WELL-BEING OF MIGRANT MEN IN FINLAND: A RESEARCH REVIEW

This report presents a review on the social scientific research on migrant men conducted in Finland. The main aim of the report is to present the key findings in the existing research literature encompassing the well-being of non EU-national, or third country nationals (TCNs), young migrant males living in Finland. Obviously, and simultaneously, it is essential to explicate some shortages in the literature and directions for further explorations. Firstly, we provide a very brief summary of Finnish migration history and research on this phenomenon. Secondly, the actual research review is conducted. Thirdly, the main gaps in research literature and possible future directions are presented.

1 The context: Migration history and research traditions

Historically, Finland was a country of emigration, but since the 1990s the situation has changed. Currently, Finland is a country of migration. Before joining the European Union in 1995, Finland had rather strict policies regarding foreign migrants. In addition, the dismantlement of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European bloc has made state borders more porous and increased the number of immigrants in Finland. Twenty years later, Finland has witnessed a rapid growth in its foreign/migrant population—there has been an eightfold increase since 1991. Nevertheless, Finland still has a relatively small immigrant population compared to Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.

The proportion of foreign-born people is still steadily growing, being approximately five per cent at present. Some of the largest non-EU national groups are Russians, Somalians, Afghans, Iraqis, Iranians and people from the Balkan region. People with Russian or former Soviet Union backgrounds include many 'returnees' (people with Finnish heritage), spouses and workers, while the latter group comprises mostly refugees and asylum-seekers due to prolonged conflicts in their countries of origin. Foreign-born people are, on average, significantly younger than the population as a whole (Statistics Finland 2011).

Like the immigration history, the research tradition on ethnicities, multiculturalism, migration and racism is rather shot-lived as well. In the 1990s, only singular research reports on these issues were published. However, in the new millennium, there has been a rapid increase in studies conducted. The main branches of research have been studies on labour markets, education, discrimination, identities and leisure. Social scientific literature is more or less dominated by sociological and socio-psychological perspectives. For example, political, anthropological or human geographical studies are scant.

Despite the accumulating research literature, there are few studies in Finland focusing exclusively on migrant or ethnic minority men. Most gender-oriented studies focus on females. Overall, the bulk of the research reports deal with multiculturalism, ethnic minorities or people with an immigrant background in general. Thus, the role of gender in the lives of migrant men has been rarely under scrutiny and particularly non-EU national males are implicitly assumed to represent the "other" or the patriarchy. The lack of male-specific research is remarkable, since migration can be considered a highly gendered phenomenon (among all other societal phenomena). It is likely that the causes and effects of migration vary according to gender. Moreover, various forms of discrimination are often highly gendered. Finally, migration from one socio-cultural region to another very likely implies the requirement to adapt to a different system of gender relations.



2 Research on migrant men in Finland

This is the main chapter of this research and it is divided into two sections. In the first section, research in which migrant men are informants is presented. This includes a wide variety of empirical research with different themes and methodological approaches. The second section presents studies scrutinizing representations of and attitudes towards migrant men. In such studies, the empirical data includes questionnaires and interviews conducted among majority representatives, media texts, public documents and professional definitions (e.g. teachers, social and youth workers).

2.1 Migrant men as informants

In the following account, we present empirical studies conducted in Finland in which migrant males are the participants. These studies include both quantitative and qualitative orientations. Studies have been conducted through register data, questionnaires and more qualitative interviews and adopting ethnographic stances. This section is divided into six sub-sections which present research in different spheres of life and well-being.

2.1.1 Formal education and employment

In Finland, formal education is often considered the most important area of societal integration. Formal education transmits cultural capital—the necessary resources for civic inclusion and access to the labour market. In the case of the immigrant population, the role of formal education in improving language skills and compensating for the possible inequalities among children of different backgrounds is considered crucial. Thus, Finland is a society in which post-compulsory education and professional qualifications are increasingly a necessity in integrating to Finnish work life. There is a scarcity of employment opportunities for low-skilled migrants and, due to highly regulated labour markets, for undocumented migrants as well (cf. Fangen et al. 2012).

The Finnish educational system begins with nine years of compulsory education (primary school). After compulsory schooling, pupils turn into students who are expected to enter secondary schooling—either vocational or grammar school. After the secondary schooling, the education system involves academic universities and universities of applied sciences with more vocational orientations. In the following account, the success and transitions of young migrant males in this educational system is briefly explored.¹

Compared to national averages, migrant youth have low educational and employment levels (e.g. Joronen 2013). It has been statistically indicated that the most significant factors behind school success and smooth transitions from primary to secondary schooling for migrant youth are their family backgrounds (socio-economic status) and the age of migration (generational position) (Kilpi 2010; see also Heath et al. 2008). In particular, students with low-educated parents and first-generation migrants are in a vulnerable position. The success of non-EU migrants is lower than other youth with immigrant backgrounds mostly due to the former factor. Moreover, as with majority youth, migrant boys perform worse than girls in humanistic subjects, while gender differences are not significant in mathematics and are skewed in favour of boys in physical education. In a similar vein, satisfaction towards schools is lower among boys. Altogether, when compared with majority youth, the attitudes of migrant youth toward school are rather positive (Kuusela et al. 2008).

In aforementioned studies, only school success determined by teachers and school institutions is measured. In recent PISA-study (*Programme for International Student Assessment*) knowledge of pupils in mathematics, natural sciences and literacy was measured. The study revealed that particularly first but also second generation youth are trailing behind the majority population in their abilities (Harju-Luukkainen et



al. 2014). Consequently, it can be claimed that Finnish preparatory and compulsory education are not able to guarantee equal learning opportunities for all young people irrespective of national backgrounds.

In addition to school success and learning, it is important to scrutinize the transitions within the educational system and, eventually, from education to the labour market. Firstly, the transition from primary to secondary education differs particularly between majority students and first generation non-EU migrants. Representatives of the latter group are more often selected in vocational training or drop out from the educational system after primary school (Kuusela et al. 2008; see also Teräs et al. 2010). However, Kilpi (2010) has indicated that when family resources and earlier school success are taken into account, non-EU migrant youth choose grammar school relatively often, but they lack the language and learning skills needed for graduation to a certain extent. Gender differences in the transition from primary to secondary schooling are rather similar among majority and migrant youth. Ending up in vocational education is relatively usual, particularly for first-generation migrant boys. However, non-EU migrant girls are more likely to drop out than their counterpart boys. At a general level, finishing secondary education seems to be more unlikely for migrant youth than for majority representatives (Kuusela et al. 2008).

Transitions of migrant youth within the Finnish school system have been presumably studied only between primary and secondary education. Thus, the patterns of further educational transitions (e.g. from secondary schooling to universities) remain unknown. Therefore, and secondly, the transition from the education system to the labour market is briefly explored here. In light of the statistics, it seems evident that first-generation migrants, in particular, struggle in finding work or avenues for further study even with a degree (Kuusela et al. 2008; Myrskylä 2011; Joronen 2013). In particular, non-EU migrant females seem to be excluded from further education and labour markets (partially because they have to take care of children), while men have higher schooling and employment rates (Kuusela et al. 2008; Joronen 2013). Degree and employment are probably highly significant for the well-being of many non-EU migrant males, since housekeeping and childcare are rarely potential long-term options for them.

Therefore, it is not surprising that migrant men have a higher rate of employment than their counterpart women. However, the gap between the employment level of men and women narrows significantly after a few years of residence in Finland (The Finnish Ministry of Employment and Economy 2014). The unemployment is higher among TCNs than European migrants. Further, Somali-, Arab- and Kurdish-speaking men and women have the highest rates of unemployment. The unemployment rates among men of these groups are 40 per cent and above. The high rate is partially explained through recent immigration, causes behind immigration and a lack of cultural capital (low language skills and educational levels) (Statistics Finland 2011; Forsander 2007).

However, there are certain sectors of work where TCNs are able get themselves employed, particularly in the Helsinki Capital Region: service work, transport, cleaning and maintenance, and restaurant work; on the other hand, highly-skilled workers are also more integrated to the Finnish labour markets in medical, technical and tertiary fields (university professions). It is possible to argue of a double standard for foreign workers in Finland, without a significant 'middle' (Forsander 2007).

Immigrants have a higher rate of entrepreneurship than the native population, particularly in starting small service businesses. However, it is debated whether the high prevalence of entrepreneurship is forced as numerous posts are excluded, particularly from TCNs, in Finland (e.g. Joronen 2012). As numerous studies show, discrimination is rife in the labour market and employers have attitudes that favour native Finns instead of giving immigrant individuals a chance (Jaakkola 2005; Ahmad 2010; Larja et al. 2012).

2.1.2 Social ties

Many studies in Finland have touched the topic of social relations of migrant youth, but they are rarely the essential focus of research. Therefore, findings on social ties of migrant men are many times 'byproducts' of research focusing on identities, belonging, education, racism or leisure. This is an important fact since



young people, in general, report that extra-familial peer relations are the most significant factor contributing to their overall well-being (Myllyniemi 2008). The significance of peer relations and the time spent with friends peak during the final years of elementary school (aged 12–16) and slowly decrease towards adulthood. In spite of the decrease, the importance of peer relations remains high throughout the course of life (e.g. Saari 2009). Moreover, research literature on well-being has claimed that close family and communal ties are the most important factors that protect from drawbacks (such as discrimination and unemployment) (Small, Harding & Lamont 2010). Moreover, it has often been indicated in criminal and poverty studies that, in particular, males without a partner or other close ties are in a vulnerable position.

There are no reasons to assume that the case would be radically different for migrant men. However, there is a major lack in systematic studies on family and communal ties of migrant men in Finland. The existing research suggests that fragile family ties are underlying causes of anti-social behaviour among young migrant men. The fragility of these relations stems either from migrant history or from conflicts emerging during life in Finland (Hautaniemi 2004; Honkatukia & Suurpää 2007). Consequently, as proposed by migrant fathers and sons themselves, family relations are the most important factor in providing emotional support and a foundation for well-being (Peltola 2014).

There is more research on extra-familial relationships of particularly migrant boys in the context of youth studies. The notion of “communities of difference” (see Vestel 2004) has been used to describe the peer relations of migrant youth. This refers to the fact that peer affiliations of migrant youth (and boys) are often ethnically and culturally determined. The peer networks of migrant boys often include an ethnically and culturally heterogeneous crowd of young people. However, Finnish majority representatives constitute a negligible portion of such peer circles (e.g. Kivijärvi & Harinen 2009; Aaltonen et al. 2011; Haikkola 2012). Furthermore, some research results indicate that the bulk of the informal ties particularly between migrant and majority boys remain rather distant. The closest friendships are often formed with other migrant males and romantic relationships with migrant females. These types of ethnic boundaries can function as a hindrance when considering the overall integration in the receiving society (Kivijärvi 2015. cf. Blockland & Noordhoff 2008; Spaaij 2012.) The fragility of informal ties between migrant men and Finnish majority representatives has repercussions in more formal spheres of life as well. The lack of social networks leads to regression in language skills and decreases the likelihood of finding work (see e.g. Juntunen 2012, 192).

In addition to social ties in local or national frameworks, transnational ties also evidently contribute to the welfare of migrant men. Certain studies claim that Finnish authorities and educators are often unable to recognize the significance of transnational relationships or communities (e.g. in decision-making, schooling trajectories and emotional well-being) for migrant men (e.g. Hautaniemi 2004; Juntunen 2012). In any case, for many migrant youth, diasporic sociability and communication is an important part of their everyday lives and a lot of time is invested in it (e.g. Honkasalo & Harinen & Anttila 2007; Haikkola 2012). According to Marko Juntunen (2012, 185), it is common for migrant adult males to be active in maintaining political transnational networks, while females are prone to maintaining family communities in more private spheres.

2.1.3 Health

The physical and mental health of immigrant population has been under more systematic scrutiny in Finland only in recent years. The National Institute for Health and Welfare conducted an extensive survey during 2010–2012 on the health situation of immigrants. The data was compiled from three major immigrant and TCN groups in Finland. The groups were of Russian (n = 702), Somali (n = 512) and Kurdish (n = 632) origin. The Somali segment had the largest disparity between perceived health and measured ability to function. Russians and Kurds perceived their health to be worse than Somalis, but their ability to function measured better (Castaneda et al. 2012).



Recently, migrated individuals, on average, are in better physical condition when compared to the entire population. This is explained by their young age when migrating to a new country and having the necessary physical and mental resources to cope with the rigors of the actual immigration process. However, it has been noted that after a period of staying in their new surroundings, the majority of immigrants experience a decline in their health compared to the entire population (Castaneda et al. 2012, 11, 46.)

The study on migrant health raised a concern about the high levels of mental problems within immigrant population and how the Finnish healthcare system is not designed to reach a majority of the immigrants who suffer from various mental problems. When comparing the three immigrant groups the Kurds by far had the highest prevalence of mental problems. In general, women suffered more from mental problems than men, but Kurdish men still had more mental problems, with 24.9% experiencing them as compared to Russian (8.6 %) and Somali (5.3 %) men (Castaneda et al. 2012, 146-148).

In an earlier study, the mental health of migrant youth, in particular, was explored (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000a). The study concluded that immigrant boys reported their anti-social behaviour more (e.g. bullying and vandalism), while their counterpart girls reported acculturation-related stress, anxieties, and psychosomatic symptoms. According to the same study, boys in general and boys of Somalian backgrounds, in particular, seldom reported mental problems.

Finally, there is some recent research evidence on the sexuality of immigrant boys. The Family Federation of Finland runs a service line for young men, where they can discuss their worries with an adult. Based on a sample of calls made to the service, young first-generation immigrant men have a lack of knowledge regarding an individual's sexual autonomy, the boundaries of sexual harassment and what is considered legal in Finland in sexual matters. In addition, young immigrant men have stronger views against homosexuality than their native Finnish peers; however, it must be noted that young Finnish males in their teens also have strict attitudes towards homosexuality. Well over half of the calls (60.7%) made by first-generation immigrants were about sexual issues and dating. Further, the proportion of calls (38%) regarding sexual issues was significantly lower among foreign adoptees and young second-generation immigrant men (Kekkonen 2012).

2.1.4 Encounters in bureaus and public spaces

There are only few studies that explore the experiences of migrant men with Finnish authorities. However, singular studies focus on the experiences of migrant men in the fields of schooling, youth work, social work and police. Overall, the experiences of migrant young men in general are fairly good. The lack of explicit corruption, safety and reliability are appreciated features of Finnish service provision (Honkatukia & Suurpää 2012, 136; Kerckänen & Saastamoinen 2013). However, according to migrant men, there are many shortcomings as well. It may be that the main (even though not easily articulated) problem for ethnic minority people in general is the universalistic tendency of the Finnish public sector. For example, it appears that it is difficult in schools to recognise and respect cultures or perspectives other than Nordic or 'Western' ones. Moreover, even the ethnic discrimination remains unrecognized in numerous cases (Souto 2011.) The same applies to youth and social work as well (Harinen et al. 2012; Törrönen et al. 2013). Concretely, many migrant males (and females) express the desire to have access to more accurate, articulate, targeted and face-to-face information on Finnish welfare services, as well as more systematic intervention in discrimination.

In addition to the aforementioned welfare services, police and other controlling authorities such as migration officials face more fundamental critique. The long processes associated with asylum-seeking applications, residence permits and family reunifications are criticized. This waiting, not knowing and inability to influence one's own living conditions probably hamper the well-being of many migrant males. Furthermore, boys and young men of Somalian background have accused Finnish police of ethnic profiling



and unwarranted detentions and arrests (Hautaniemi 2004; see also Honkatukia & Suurpää 2012, 144.) Consequently, the trust in the justness of the Finnish legal system may be low among distinguishable minorities. This is particularly the case when migrants' experiences with controlling authorities are negative in prior countries of residence (see Tanner, 2008.)

Encounters with police and security guards have a strong impact on how public or semi-public spaces are experienced by migrant males. According to Hautaniemi (2004), many Somali boys avoided the city centre of Helsinki because of the expected harassment by security officials. Other studies have noted that migrant youth avoid certain places, areas or suburbs because of the fear of racist confrontations (e.g. Honkatukia & Suurpää 2007; Souto 2013; cf. Back 2007). Hautaniemi (2004, 101) notes that 'Somali boys have learned to know city centrum of Helsinki as a place in which insults based on their ethnicity is common. Being in there feels to the boys as being in the wrong place at the wrong time'.

2.1.5 Leisure and participation

In recent years in Finland, more attention has been paid to the equality of leisure from the perspective of ethnicity. Some studies have scrutinised youth work and participation in civil society organisations (e.g. Harinen et al. 2012) while some have aimed to encompass sports (e.g. Zacheus et al. 2012). Obviously, these studies include manifold perspectives, methodologies and results, but some commonalities can also be summarized.

Probably the most important finding is that participation rates in organised leisure activities are significantly lower among people of an immigrant background than with Finnish majority representatives. This seems to be due to many factors. Many migrant men (females as well) are excluded from leisure pursuits because of discrimination, inadequate information, competitiveness of sporting and lack of social networks and money (Harinen et al. 2012; Huhta 2013). When considering unorganised, 'self-made' leisure, young migrant men seem to be quite active (e.g. playing football with friends or socialising in certain public spaces), but participation in organised pursuits remains at a relatively modest level (Zacheus et al. 2012). However, certain organised and free activities in particular, such as youth clubs maintained by municipal youth services, attract many migrant boys. It has been claimed that youth clubs are often the first leisure spaces for migrant boys to be able to come into contact with majority representatives (Harinen 2005). Since most youth clubs are open for only minors, many young migrant males over 18 may be excluded from the spheres of organised leisure.

2.1.6 Identities, feelings of belonging and racism

A rather consistent result in studies on multiculturalism, ethnicity and immigration in Finland is that people with migrant or ethnic minority background have to balance between available identities of their parentage and Finnish youth cultures (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2003). Migrant youth face a rather strong demand of becoming Finnish in schools, peer networks and different official settings. However, simultaneously, the actual possibility of attaining the status of 'Finnishness' is limited in many ways (Lepola 2000; Harinen et al. 2005; Honkasalo & Harinen & Anttila 2007; Varjonen 2013.) People with migrant backgrounds are usually defined by their assumed nationality, place of origin or most commonly are categorised as immigrants. In other words short, this implies that different counter and more flexible identities have been constructed among the people who are not accepted as Finnish. Moreover, it should also be noted that many migrant people do not want to identify with the narrow ethnic category of 'Finnishness'.

In the case of young people, it has been indicated that the identity of 'foreignness' has become widely harnessed (e.g. Haikkola 2012). Foreign identity unites people who feel and are categorized as ethnically different in Finland. However, foreignness does not signal outcast positions in Finnish society, but refers to open-minded people with multicultural networks and cosmopolitan attitudes. In a similar vein,



many migrant youth and young adults are critical of exclusive or nationalistic identity categories and prefer more complex and flexible identities (Harinen & Ronkainen 2010).

Despite the new and more open identities constructed by migrant men and young people in general, they depict the exclusiveness of 'Finnishness'. Thus, it is common for migrant persons not to feel a strong sense of belongingness in Finland, and with Finnish culture and people. Obviously, racism and experiences of discrimination are significant factors contributing to the feelings of not belonging to the Finnish 'landscape' (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. 2006). Many people with a migrant background, particularly TCN males, report on experiences of racism in their everyday lives (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000b; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. 2002; Rastas 2007; Souto 2011). It has been indicated that immigrants who moved to Finland at a younger age report experiences of discrimination more often than those who migrated recently or at an older age (Castaneda et al. 2012). The racism faced is occasionally explicit conflicts with masculine white-supremacist sub-cultures (Puuronen 2001; Perho 2010). Thus, it is often claimed that young males suffer the most from explicit racism (e.g. Hautaniemi 2004). However, overall, experiences of racism are more often about implicit hints of exclusion or cultural demarcations (e.g. Kivijärvi & Honkasalo 2010).

The more or less hidden nature of experienced racism makes it a severe threat to the well-being of migrant males. Majority representatives and institutions are poor in recognizing and intervening in cases of racism (Souto 2011). Thus, experiences of racism are often addressed in peer groups—among other migrant or ethnic minority youth (Rastas 2007). In other words, there appears to be little room for dealing with the issue of racism in schools, social work and organized leisure pursuits. Consequently, experiences of being bullied are more common among migrant youth than majority youth (Kuusela et al. 2008, 115; Matikka et al. 2014). The inability to deal with experiences of racism in a reciprocal way manner lead to strengthened ethnic boundaries (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000b) or, in its extreme form, violent conflicts (Honkatukia & Suurpää 2007).

2.2 Research on attitudes and representations

This section presents research exploring the perspectives of Finnish majority members on migrant males. The section is divided into three sub-sections. Firstly, the results of mostly social-psychological and sociological studies on the attitudes of majority members are summarised. Secondly, a brief review of media studies on migrant representations is presented. Thirdly, the essential research on migrant males from the perspectives of professional discourses and practices is discussed.

2.2.1 Majority attitudes

There is a solid foundation of quantitative social-psychological literature on the attitudes of majority members towards ethnic minorities in Finland (Jaakkola 2005; Mähönen 2011). In congruence with international literature, Finnish studies indicate that the attitudes of majority members depend on their educational level, gender and 'outgroup' contacts of the respondents. Highly educated women with many outgroup contacts are most likely anti-racist in their attitudes. Moreover, as expected, majority attitudes are most strained toward certain TCNs such as Somalians, Russians and people from the Middle-East. Attitudes are more positive toward people from EU countries and other 'white' and 'western' regions.

The results of more qualitative and sociological studies are rather similar: the 'hierarchy of difference' is more or less the same (e.g. Suurpää 2002). In particular, boys of African and Russian origin are considered dangerous. Both these groups are considered violent and a danger to the moral and civic order of the Finnish society. For example, a group of young Somalian males occupying public spaces seem to provoke negative responses among the Finnish majority. Furthermore, black and Muslim males are often connected with excessive sexuality and repressiveness toward women (Hautaniemi 2004; Honkasalo 2011). In youth studies, it has been noted that romantic relationships between black/migrant boys and



white/Finnish girls are often condemned or controlled by peers, parents and educators (Aaltonen 2008). In contrast to assumed African and Middle-Eastern threat, men from Southeast Asia may be desexualized and are often seen sporting feminine features (cf. Näre 2010).

The hierarchy is not so simple though. Evidently, negative attitudes towards people of Russian origin are to a certain extent peculiar in Finland because of the unique history and the relations between the two countries. Moreover, having an African background or being black does not necessarily indicate a position at the bottom of the hierarchy. In certain occasions and in certain youth cultural milieus, being black can be a positively valued feature and imply being 'cool'. Of course, this does not change the fact that being black is often considered exotic and appreciated only within certain limits (Suurpää 2002; Rastas 2007).

2.2.2 Media discourses

As with studies on attitudes, there is also a constant stream in research on media discourse and multiculturalism. Specifically, newspaper discourses have been studied abundantly (Pietikäinen 2000; Raittila 2002; 2005; Horsti 2005). One of the most systematic results of these studies is that migrant people or ethnic minorities are rather invisible and silent in media texts. Finnish authorities, politicians and journalists often determine the perspectives of media coverage on immigrant population. On one hand, this leads to problem-oriented perspectives, and on the other hand, in aims toward objectivity and neutrality. At a general level, most usual topics in media coverage are related to relations between ethnic majorities and minorities, legal issues concerning migration or residency and law enforcement of different authorities. Moreover, problem oriented-perspectives are commonly related to terrorism (Muslims), criminality and 'clashes between cultures'. Moreover, it has been claimed that in recent years explicitly derogatory speech against minorities has increased in the media, particularly on the Internet (Pöyhtäri et al. 2013).

In addition to the above studies and rather general perspectives, there are certain media studies on migrant representations in which gender has been taken into account. According to Kaarina Nikunen (2012), media representations of migrant people are highly gendered. Many non-European immigrants are portrayed as 'others', carriers of non-western traditionalist and patriarchal culture. In this representation, migrant males are threats to Nordic gender equality and defined as targets of equality education. Moreover, media representation of Russian (and other nationals under communist regime during Cold War) immigrants is gendered as well. Nikunen claims that Russian males are often connected to organized crime and to the threat of violence while women are connected to prostitution.

2.2.3 Professional discourses and practices

Due to large state and migrant services organized by public bodies, examining the encounters between migrant people and authorities is essential in Finland. It has been claimed that recently immigrants have to spend a major part of their time interacting with various officials (Keskinen & Vuori 2012, 27-28).

While studying the discourses of Social workers, police and representatives of civil society organizations, Keskinen (2012) makes a useful distinction between universalistic and culturalist approaches (see also Kivijärvi 2013). In the universalistic discourse and approach every person is treated the same. The principles of Finnish welfare state—equal treatment to every individual irrespective of conflicts, differences or inequalities—supersede all other possible perspectives (Keskinen & Vuori 2012). This type of approach is rather common among professionals throughout the Finnish service sector (Anis 2008; Honkasalo, Souto & Suurpää 2007), but is not without problems. The capacity to recognising differences and inequalities based on ethnicity, gender and other social categories remains limited in the universalistic perspective. Moreover, and probably more importantly, through the universalistic approach, the possible exclusiveness and gendered nature of professional practices often go unnoticed.



As opposed to universalistic discourse, the culturalist (or particularist) approach focuses on differences between normative majority culture and deviant minority cultures (Anis 2005). The assumed features of minority cultures are often either celebrated (e.g. food and music) or problematized from extremist perspectives (e.g. repression of women). In any case, in culturalist discourse, the differences between majority and some (particularly non-western) minority cultures are considered fundamental and, in certain cases, insurmountable. Moreover, ethnic minorities are often considered homogenous collectives, which implies that many social, political, regional and linguistic differences within these groups remain unrecognized (Juntunen 2012). The primary task of culturalist practices is to strengthen the assumed positive and eliminate the negative cultural attributes of migrant people. Gender is evidently at the core of these concerns (Hautaniemi 2004; Honkasalo 2011). In culturalist professional practice, migrant females become passive victims who are in need of emancipation and, as with media discourse, males become aggressive, noisy, prone to anti-social behaviour and active repressors of the sexuality of women.

The distinction between the universalistic and culturalist approaches is obviously simplistic and does not capture the reality of professional practice in its entirety. At least in the practice of social work, youth work and civil society organizations approach migrant people from more dialogical and intersectional perspectives. A dialogical perspective implies that professionals aim to listen and work with their migrant clients instead of for them, while simultaneously aiming to recognize possible discriminatory conditions (e.g. Kivijärvi 2013). In the intersectionalist approach, professionals define migrants as a heterogeneous group that is fragmented due to gender, regional, class and individual differences (Keskinen 2012; Vuori 2012). This approach requires that each client is dealt with as a unique individual, while being sensitive to the circumstances of the migrants and their positions in a diasporic community.

3 Conclusions: gaps and future directions

Even though there is an increasing cluster of research literature encompassing issues revolving around multiculturalism and immigration in general, studies focusing exclusively on migrant males are rare in Finland. Thus, problematizing male gender and masculinity is unusual in Finnish research literature, with only a few exceptions (Hautaniemi 2004; Honkatukia & Suurpää 2007). Moreover, it can be concluded that the research literature provides a rather sombre picture of the situation of TCN males living in Finland (e.g. reports on discrimination, stigmatisation, poor school success, unemployment and lack of social networks and participation). The domination of problem-oriented approaches might imply that many resources and elements of well-being remain unrecognised. Thus, it is presumable that studying well-being, particularly from subjective perspectives (in addition to objective indicators), opens up new perspectives on the lives of migrant men.

In addition to the general tendencies mentioned above, some more elaborate shortages in the research literature can be identified as well. From the perspective of well-being, it is remarkable that emotional bonds (such as parenthood, intimate relationships and other close ties) of migrant men have been at the core of very few studies (however, see Anis 2012). For example, in contrast to some public discourse, relations between migrant youth and their parents are not full of inter-generational conflicts and controlling aspirations; on the contrary, they offer support and loving care (Peltola 2014). According to one study, the relationship with fathers is particularly important for many migrant boys and young males (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000a). With regard to emotional bonds and intimate life, the homes and homelessness of migrants in general and males in particular have been studied only scarcely. Existing literature claims that most homeless migrants in Finland are young TCN males (Katisko 2013, 125-126). Furthermore, the role of language in the well-being of migrant men has not been focused on in research. In one study (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000a), it was concluded that proficiency in Finnish language promotes self-esteem and feelings of control, but not the overall satisfaction with life.



In addition to more or less neglected research themes, there are also certain omitted target groups and methodological orientations in Finnish research literature. Firstly, young migrant adults are rarely recognised as a distinct group with distinct challenges (e.g. coupling, raising children and transitions to independent housing, higher education or the labour market). It would be beneficial to approach young adults beyond the age of primary or even secondary schooling. The knowledge-base on this age-group is rather weak since they are not the essential focus group of any research institute and they can rarely be contacted through schools or other institutions. Secondly, males with Russian (and former Soviet Union) backgrounds have been scarcely studied, considering their relatively large proportion in Finland. Thirdly, since Finland has compulsory military or civilian service for all men, it is remarkable that migrant conscripts have not been studied. Fourthly, migrant male workers and men with Finnish partners have also been somewhat neglected in the literature. Consequently, there seems to be a dominance of migrant men with refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds in the research literature. It might be that it is easier to reach the latter groups, since they are the targets of many projects and measures executed in the public or third sector.

With regard to the omitted research orientations and methodologies, it is rather obvious that intersectional approaches towards studying migrant men are rarely utilised. For example, class statuses, locations (urban/rural), sexual orientations or disabilities remain in the margins of research reports (however, see Tolonen 2010; Juntunen 2012; Peltola 2014). An intersectional approach very often implies studying migrant females. Furthermore, male-specific quantitative studies have not been conducted in Finland. This implies that quantitative data on migrant males is scant and rarely analysed thoroughly. Finally, as is usual and as far as the authors are aware, longitudinal and follow-up studies on migrant men have not been conducted in Finland.

Notes

¹ Since the 1990s, preparatory schooling and language tuition for migrant children in particular and young people in general have been organized as a part of the Finnish educational system (see policy review below). However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, there are no social scientific studies in Finland that explore these preparatory or supplementary tuitions. Moreover, studies on preschool education are rare as well (however, see Lappalainen 2006).

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PUBLIC POLICY REGARDING IMMIGRANT MEN IN FINLAND

In many public and academic discussions, Finland is characterised as a Nordic country with a strong welfare state. For example, according to Esping-Andersen's (1990) regime state typology, Finland can be included in the category of Social Democratic Welfare Regimes with other Nordic Countries. The common features of the Nordic model are risk covering, income distribution, high level of taxes, regulated markets and universalist and egalitarian ideologies. The model has stood out for its high degree of state-provided welfare supply and low reliance on the private market. Compared to Esping-Andersen's other Welfare Regimes, the dominant locus on the social democratic model is on the individual and not family (Central Europe) or markets (Anglo-Saxon). However, there are tendencies in the Nordic countries that are shifting towards private welfare production systems—in essence, a more liberal way of providing welfare to its citizens (Fangen et al. 2012, 13–14).

In the following account, we review Finnish migration policies as presented by Saukkonen (2013). The first part concentrates on migration policies, that is, how laws control border crossings and residence permits. In the second part, a short review on Finnish Integration policies is presented. In the third and final part, diversity policies in the Finnish society are reviewed.

Migration policies

In the Finnish public discourse regarding foreigners and immigrants, the amount and significance of refugees and asylum-seekers are often overemphasised. As the statistics from the Finnish Immigration Service show, the number of actual humanitarian immigrants is rather low as compared to the other migrant/foreign-born population of Finland (Kerkkäinen & Saastamoinen 2013, 24–25). Moreover, there is a lot of variation in the underlying reasons for moving to Finland. As an example, work and Finnish-born spouses are the most common reasons for Third Country Nationals (TCNs) to migrate to Finland.

The admittance of TCNs is governed by EU norms and directives. As such, Finland ratified and joined the Schengen agreement. The amended Foreign Law came in to place in 2004 (Foreign Law 301/2004). The Finnish Immigration Service is the authority that deals with TCNs (as such EU citizens do not have to deal with this 'gate of entry'). Overall, the old Foreign Law was more straightforward, and with the new EU treaty more chapters and special clauses were added (e.g. about how special interest groups, such as researchers and undocumented migrants are being treated). Residence permits for TCNs are mainly dealt with by the Foreign Immigration Service; in contrast, EU citizens have to register their stay in Finland after three months with the police. In the case of young men, they are all treated as adults; in uncertain circumstances, the age can be determined on a voluntary basis (Foreign Law 2004). For refugees and asylum-seekers, the Finnish Immigration Service coordinates a nationwide network of reception centres. Finland has a long frontier with Russia and this serves as a point of entry for some TCNs hoping to get to Finland or other EU countries (The Finnish Migration Services 2012).

Men are proportionally over-represented in terms of TCNs from African and Arabic countries (as in many other European countries). With regard to women, proportional over-representation can be traced to South-East Asia and ex-Soviet countries. In the case of coupling with a foreigner, Finnish women find their partners less concentrated geographically than Finnish men. For Finnish men, South-East Asian and Eastern European spouses are common, while women find partners more often from the regions of Western Europe, Africa and Arabic-speaking countries. Latin Americans are 'equally' distributed, although they are small in number (Statistics Finland 2011; Martikainen & Haikkola 2010).



Further, family reunion policies are probably affecting the well-being of many TCNs living in Finland. These policies have systematically been strained in recent years. In the legislation, the notion of family has become more restricted to the idea of 'nuclear family'. Moreover, certain income levels and employment statuses have been presented as a requirement for possible family reunions.

Integration policies

After receiving a residence permit in Finland, TCNs are subjected to an individual assessment, if they are not employed or studying. The aim is to create an individual integration plan that is based on the individual's skills and needs. The time-span of the integration process depends on the individual's capabilities. It usually takes three years, and maximum extension for two years is possible. Subsistence is offered during the integration process; however, it differs from the rest of the population. Nationwide, the integration process is overseen by the Ministry of Employment and Economy. Locally, the responsibilities are divided between municipalities and centres for economic development, transport and the environment (Law on Integration and Reception of Asylum-Seekers 439/1999.) From the perspective of employment of immigrants, it has been recently estimated that these measures have been successful (Government Institute for Economic Research 2014).

After the integration process, TCNs are eligible for other forms of subsidies, just as the rest of the population. Apart from economic aid, municipalities offer a wide range of educational, health and social services to its populations. In many instances, targeted services are being offered to migrants with TCN backgrounds. However, there is a lack of gender-based services for men and the majority of social workers are women. This may, at worst, deter men from immigrant backgrounds; moreover, the help available does not reach the individual that it is supposed to (Anis 2008; Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2014).

In general, it can be said that Finland has a multicultural approach to its integration policies: language tuition is provided, EU-based parity laws are in place and the public sector is allowed to adopt positive discrimination policies. The emphasis is on supporting an individual in being an active member of society, particularly in the fields of education and employment. Moreover, cultural integration in the form of many different courses on the Finnish language and culture is supported.

Diversity policies

Finland declares itself as a multicultural state. This implies that, at the formal level, as a distinction from segregationist and assimilationist regimes, different cultural traditions, languages and religions are fostered in the country. In the multicultural state model, distinct ways of life are recognised and citizenship as a political status is separated from ethnicity. Before more significant immigration in the 1990s, some ethnic minorities (Swedish-speaking minority and, to a certain extent, Sami people) were institutionally recognised and some not (Roma people). In addition to multiculturalist policies, Finland has a long tradition of politics aiming to enhance gender equality. However, it is crucial to notice that gender and multiculturalist policies have been developed separately in Finnish legislation.

In this paper, politics of diversity refers to measures through which ethnic and gender differences are regulated in Finland. Contrary to immigration and integration policies, politics of diversity do not concern only minority groups or immigrants but majority representatives as well. At the legislative level, diversity in Finland is regulated in the Finnish Constitution (731/1999), Law on Integration and Reception of Asylum Seekers (439/1999), The Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986), The Equality Act (21/2004) and in criminal legislation. The two main implications of these acts are recognition of cultural differences and prohibition of discrimination on the basis of actual or assumed group memberships.



Even though recognition of cultural difference is not directly regulated in the legislation, the spirit of the Law on Integration and Reception of Asylum Seekers (439/1999) and particularly the clause about 'reciprocal integration' steers many policies. In practice, recognition of cultural difference is implemented at least in two levels. Firstly, it is possible to obtain tuition in one's native language and religion in elementary schools. Secondly, many public institutions (state and different regional authorities) financially support civil society organizations which aim to foster different minority cultures (e.g. immigrant associations) and to promote interethnic dialogue (cf. Pyykkönen 2007).

Prohibition of discrimination is regulated in Finnish criminal law at individual and group levels. At the individual level, racism as motivation for defamation or illegal threats may function as grounds for more severe punishments. At the group level, Finnish criminal law prohibits ethnic agitation. Any person who distributes information or opinions in which a group is threatened, slandered or abused because of their ethnicity will be convicted.

Furthermore, Finnish Constitution and Equality acts regulate prohibitions of discrimination outside the spheres of criminal law. In the Equality act, direct or indirect discrimination, the command to discriminate and harassment on the basis of gender, ethnicity, age, ability, health condition, religion, conviction and sexual orientation is prohibited. In addition, the Equality act includes a clause on the justification of differential treatment. This implies that underprivileged groups may be 'positively discriminated' when aiming to, for example, secure their equal employment possibilities.

Ultimately, concrete practices promoting recognition of cultural differences, anti-discrimination and multiethnic dialogue in general are often implemented in the spheres of the third sector or in 'soft' sections of public bodies (e.g. municipal youth departments). In particular, policies in which both gender and ethnicity are taken into account are practically absent in the public sector. In the third sector, there are a few project-based measures that target migrant men or boys. Many of these practices are related to sports, organizing peer support groups or groups enhancing interethnic interaction and prevention of (domestic) violence.

Conclusion

Finland is an example of a lesser known and 'new' migration context in Europe. Migration, integration and diversity policies have been established rather rapidly from the beginning of the 1990s. Moreover, all these policies have been created in addition to universalistic welfare foundations in which the recognition of different ethnicities, cultures and discrimination is not self-evident. It can be claimed that a lot has been done but there are many things that are not considered very thoroughly in public policies. The intersection of ethnic minority or immigrant status and gender (particularly male) is obviously one of them. Male- and minority-specific measures are rare and they are executed in the fragmented fields of the project-based third sector. Gender-sensitivity often entails supporting and working with girls and women.

At the formal political-normative level, Finland is represented as a multicultural and international state which invests in "fair" migration policies, reciprocal integration and recognises different ethnic groups. However, as evident in the research review above, the situation in informal and everyday spheres of life is often different. It seems evident that the well-being of TCNs is threatened at many levels.

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