

Heli Niemi

University of Lapland, Department of Social Work

Heli.Niemi@ulapland.fi

Belonging and Staying Out **- Social Locations by the Young Immigrants in Finnish Context**

The young immigrants are more and more visible group of the population in Finnish society. Finnish immigration and integration policy emphasize that having the citizenship, education and job as well as learning the Finnish language are the key factors that support the integration of immigrants to society. I would like to raise a question that besides these factors the individual's subjective experiences of belonging to her/his social relations and environments are essential in integration oneself to the society. Thus, the article is strongly connected to the social - the essential theme in the sphere of social work. I define the social as a situationality of individual's life, which means "to be in relations" (Rauhala 2006, 39). I look at the individual in relation to her/his life situation understanding the individual as a social and active actor on her/his environment and its relationships (Pohjola 1996, 73).

The presentation will be based on my article where I have analysed the Finnish studies concerning young immigrants. My research questions in the article are: what are the young immigrants' main social relations, and which kind of experiences of home and homelessness to these relations are connected in the light of the studies. As a method I have used literary analysis that is based on the earlier Finnish studies where young immigrants have been as the target group and active informants. The purpose of analysis has been to produce information about the challenges and threats related to social relations in integration of young immigrants to the society.

According to the analysis the family, friends and school environment are important social networks that support the adaptation of young immigrants to the society. However, there are many challenges related to these social relations for the reason of young people's immigration background. Furthermore, the young immigrants might go through double transitional phases at the same time, which produce both the chances but also the threats for their integration.

The family, friends and school environment create the possibilities for the experiences of belonging and advocate the young immigrants to feel the Finnish society as a home. However, the experiences of staying out in their social relations are also present in many ways, which can make young immigrants to feel themselves socially homeless at its worst.

References:

Pohjola, Anneli 1996: *Ihminen kontekstissaan. Teoksessa Granfelt, Riitta & Jokiranta, Harri & Karvinen, Synnöve & Matthies, Aila-Leena & Pohjola, Anneli (toim.) Monisärmäinen sosiaalityö.* Jyväskylä: Sosiaaliturvan keskusliitto, 73 – 82.

Rauhala, Lauri 2006: *Ihminen kulttuurissa – kulttuuri ihmisessä*. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.