Abstract

Title: WE ARE INTERNATIONAL, A study of everyday life among immigrant women in cross pressure between subordination and liberation

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This thesis aims at increasing the knowledge and understanding of a group of ethnical minority women in Norway. The approach to the problem deals with which factors hamper and which factors advance the women's possibilities for recognition in relation to various fields of life. Further, the thesis discusses the women's identity and self-respect and what opportunities they have to develop in their own terms. The approach to the problem also deals with organising everyday life in a way to make it meaningful, and how the women can maintain bonds and obligations to the family in the native country.

The empirical basis is based on participating observation of a group consisting of ethnical minority women in a suburban satellite town in Oslo. More than 50 women with different cultural and ethnical background participated in a self-help-group - the international women's group - over a period of 4 years. The aim of the group was social gatherings with Norwegian as the common language and activities such as needlework and cooking. Some of these women have been followed with greater attention, by participating observation of their family lives in Norway as well as in their native countries.

In the international women's group, the women exchanged joint experiences, gave each other support and help as well as challenges. The women shared the feeling of isolation in relation to the majority of the population, rejection and lack of approval. Further, they missed the extended family in their native countries; in particular they missed the female community with the basis in sisters and mothers.

Some of the main finds of this study include the women's development based on the mullet-ethnic community, of functional ways of gathering and communicating. In a perspective of integration, the multi-ethnical organising can be understood on a middle-level between internal and external integration. It's concluded that this form of organising may strengthen the integration processes.

The challenge mainly consisted of the lack of approval of the women's identities, which in turn created distrust and suspicion. The women's needs and obligations towards the family in the native country reinforced the contrasts between the women and the majority-population. This became evident when social workers as representatives of the authorities, to a lesser extent were willing to enter into negotiations on equal terms with the women about their needs.
The study concludes that the women can be seen as both the results of and the reasons for this modernity, as is evident through the globalising processes. The women move relatively freely between two different societies and cultures, and develop competence in relation to both societies. The movement encourages reflexivity and strategies to live with ambivalences and contrasts, resulting in the development of the unpredictable. The women pass on knowledge and experience from the global to the local society, and thus contribute to develop two societies.