

## **WORKSHOP: African Diaspora in Finland/Europe**

**Chairs: Perpetual Crentsil, University of Helsinki and Anna Rastas, University of Tampere**

African migration has become the primary discourse in the modern diaspora and consequently African diasporas are attracting increasing academic attention. Although the concept of African diaspora is much older and initially meant the movement of Africans and their descendants all over the world mainly in the days of slavery, the concept has come to equally embody the contemporary formulation of Africans living abroad connected to more recent migration.

A number of ideas are expressed about both the older and the contemporary notions of African diaspora. In Finland and other parts of Europe, disparate and heterogeneous processes are associated with African diasporas. More Africans and African descendants live and engender debates about new African diasporic formations in the Finnish and other European societies today. Entrepreneurship among African immigrants in Finland/Europe, investment activities in their countries of origin and settlement, ethnicity and the complexities of shaping and reshaping their cultural identities, gender issues, remittances to relatives back in Africa, and other engagements have become salient.

We invite abstracts in English for papers from academics in a variety of disciplines for an interdisciplinary workshop at the Finnish Anthropological Society's conference. The abstracts may address various aspects relating to the African diaspora in Finland or the other European countries (or elsewhere in the world). We seek analyses of social and cultural, political, religious or economic circumstances that inform the experiences of contemporary African diasporas.

Submissions are encouraged from post-doctoral researchers, doctoral candidates, as well as postgraduate and graduate students.

### **ABSTRACTS**

**1.**

**Christiana Acheampong**

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#### **How do African immigrant women construct their identity in Finland?**

Due to international migration in the past few years, Finnish population has become more heterogeneous now than ever. African immigrants as well as other immigrants have become part of the Finnish society where they construct their way of identity. In a study for my master's thesis, I am mainly interested in gathering information about the lived experiences of my participants in the light of how they construct their female gender identity. That is how African females make use of their knowledge and language to either contest or agree with the dominant discourses on the female gender identity in African societies. Also how does living in an egalitarian society like Finland affect the construction of their identity as African women?

For my data collection, I will be conducting focus groups involving African female immigrants in Finland. After which I will do a discourse analysis with the transcribed text from the recorded focus group sessions. The duration for my field work will be three months, with the actual writing process lasting for approximately eight months. Making the entire length of my study a year and a couple of months, that is the study will be done between June 2009 – April 2010

**2.**

**Perpetual Crentsil**

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**Gambling and remittances by African and Asian immigrants in Finland**

Based on findings that remittance flows from immigrants in Finland, such as Africans, are quite frequent and substantial and that these remittances combine into enormous transfers of money and goods to families back home in immigrants' countries of origin, questions arise on conceptualisations of forms of money-generating activities among immigrants in Finland. A new dimension of research on immigrants in Finland is an inquiry into gambling and remittances by African and Asian immigrants in Finland.

This 12-month (June 2009-May 2010) new study to be based on qualitative methods for data collection raises the questions: What are the motivations for gambling? Are the immigrants attracted to gambling for reasons that are not immediately apparent? What types of gaming do African and Asian immigrants engage in, when, and with whom? Are these practices gendered? Where does this form of income go, and how much of it is sent out as remittances to relatives back in their homelands in Africa and Asia? How is it connected to Finnish economy, culture and society? Are there any drawbacks in these activities?

**3.**

**Maija Nukari**

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**West African Immigrants and Ethnic Dress in Finland**

This ethnographic study is concerned with 1) how West African first generation immigrants negotiate their dress in order to integrate in the Finnish society and culture, and 2) what kind of challenges they encounter doing this in their every day lives. The study includes five open interviews and observational fieldwork. Informants come from different countries of West Africa and represent various ethnic groups and religions.

All informants have their personal ways of self expression by their outfits, influenced by their background, gender, age, religion and positions in life. Most wear western styles on a daily basis, while African dress is mostly used in celebrations among the African community. Although combination styles of African and western looks are frowned upon, hints of ethnic heritage can also be included in western outfits. Sub-cultural references such as hip hop styles are commonly used.

In the cultural context and climate of Finland informants are forced to adapt their dress. Yet African dress is worn at times for a sensation of "being home" in one's dress. African clothes and other dressing necessities are provided through transnational networks.

## 4.

**Heidi Ruohio**

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**The Meaning of Foreign Background in the Cultural Identities of Transnational Adoptees in Finland** (dissertation of social work, University of Turku)

Due to international interaction in the past few decades, Finnish population has become more heterogeneous. One example of globalization is transnational adoption. Finland has started receiving transnational adopted children in the 1970's. Most of the transnational adoptees (altogether about 3300) in Finland are originally from Russia, China, Ethiopia, India and Thailand.

The main interests in my dissertation are the meanings that adoptee, adoptive parents and environment give to the adoptee's foreign background. Transnational adoptees are an interesting subject of a research in the sense of identity, since they many times lack of memories and biological relationships of their native country. Sometimes, it can only be the appearance that differs from the dominant population. This can lead to conflict between own cultural identification and categorization from outside.

The data will be collected by interviewing adult adoptees, their adoptive parents and Finnish adoption agencies. I concentrate on adoptees that are originally from Russia and Ethiopia in order to find out the meaning of difference of appearance in interaction within and beyond the family. In addition, adoption agencies have a crucial influence on adoptive families by organizing pre-adoption training and post-adoption services that also deal with issues of adoptee's identity formation.

Timetable for my dissertation is 2009-2012. My dissertation will consist of 4 articles, *first* dealing adoptees' own cultural identification, *second* dealing adoptees' experiences of difference, *third* dealing adoptive parents' attitude to their child's background and *fourth* dealing the "identity politics" carried out by adoption agencies.

## 5.

**Anna Rastas**

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**Africans in Finnish non-fiction**

Based on the preliminary findings of the three-years (2008-2010) research project 'Africa(ns) in Finnish non-Fiction', I want to raise discussion about the studies on Africans living in Finland. The presence of Africans in Finland is still to be written. Until now, research on Finnish Africans has mainly focused on people who have come from Somalia as refugees while the other groups of people from Africa are notably absent from research in Finland. Our project combines text analyses, ethnography and action research to examine questions related to the ethics and politics of knowledge production in multiethnic societies. In addition to examining representations of Africa and Africans living in Finland, and the effects of those representations on the everyday life of Finnish Africans, we have also taken on a political agenda to broaden the idea of "us", and to make Finnishness a more inclusive category. How to write "their histories here" and how to make their histories here a part of "our history"?