From refugee to citizen: 'standing on my own two feet' a research report on integration, 'Britishness' and citizenship

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Aims

To explore what integration and ‘Britishness’ means to refugees and factors that aided or hindered integration.

Methodology

Life history research was conducted with 30 people who are refugees who had been in the UK for varying lengths of time up to 50 years, from Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, male and female, aged 20 to 64, in London, the South East, the South

West and Sheffield [5 interviewees]. This included biographical interviews and a visual questionnaire.

Key issues

The report presents findings on pre-arrival factors, arrival, institutional integration, social interactions, political and community participation, acculturation, identity and belonging, and the Britishness debate. This includes rich and detailed data on the factors that have aided or impeded integration, both institutional/functional [employment, education, housing] and social/citizenship [friendships, leisure activities, volunteering, political engagement]. The report investigates feelings of belonging and identity, in terms of British or local identity, being a refugee and Britishness.

Conclusions

Refugees experienced a ‘discongruity of belonging’. Britishness was not fostered by local integration in the workplace and neighbourhood, but was experienced nationally through appreciation of freedom and space. Based on data from interviewees and literature, the research suggests six facets of integration: contentment, interaction, participation, equality, respect and rights.

Migrant Group
Refugees
Topic
Community and society

Community cohesion
Integration
Unemployment
Place
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
UK - inc. Yorkshire & Humber element
Year
2007
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Report
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London

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