
Humiliation Experienced by Somali Refugees in Norway

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Abstract: Life as a refugee attempting to create a new life in an unfamiliar country is filled with uncertainties. Due to a lack of language and cultural knowledge misunderstandings occur. People in these circumstances are vulnerable to experiences of humiliation. The majority population's prejudices against strangers also contribute to newly-arrived refugees experiencing more humiliating situations than do others. This paper attempts to analyze experiences of humiliation among refugees, using Somali refugees as a case. The principal research question here is why and how refugees experience humiliation in exile? What kinds of situations trigger feelings of humiliation in refugees and why are these situations experienced as humiliating?

This paper attempts to develop a theory of humiliating experiences among exiles, based on interviews with 27 Somalis and 20 Norwegians, as well as participatory observations and meetings with a focus group. Refugees in a society vastly different from that of their home country might be vulnerable to intimidation, and might also be met in hurtful ways. Humiliation occurring in the home country might continue in the new country, and new types of humiliating situations might develop between individuals from the home country in the new setting. The theory set forth here identifies typical reactions of the refugees to certain humiliating situations, and offers some suggestions for ways to prevent humiliating experiences.

Introduction

Life as a refugee attempting to create a new life in an unfamiliar country is filled with uncertainties. Due to a lack of language and cultural knowledge misunderstandings occur. People in these circumstances are vulnerable to experiences of humiliation. The majority population's prejudices against strangers also contribute to newly-arrived refugees experiencing more humiliating situations than do others.

In many respects, refugees start at the bottom rung of the new social hierarchy. They experience that their competence is not recognized, and they are instead reduced to being only this, a refugee. This diminishment is at the core of the concept of humiliation. The

Latin word *humus* means ground; humiliation thus implies being pushed downwards, kept down, degraded (Miller , Lindner2002:126, 2004:40).

The different kinds of humiliation that refugees might experience, may be categorised into other concepts such as discrimination, exclusion, derision, stigmatisation, etc. The more general concept humiliation is suited to our purposes because all these different categories of experiences have in common the psychological feeling of being put down, of not being acknowledged as equally competent or of equal worth.

The principal research question here is why and how refugees experience humiliation in exile? What kinds of situations trigger humiliation in refugees? Why are these situations experienced as humiliating? How do refugees react to their feelings of being humiliated? What might be done in order to prevent such experiences from occurring?

As a sociologist, my focus is on the socio-cultural basis of humiliation. My starting point for interest in this topic was immigration studies, especially my present postdoctoral study of integration and identity navigation among Somali refugees in Norway. I learned that many Somalis felt intensely humiliated by the way they were portrayed in the media, and by the way they were met by officials.

At the same time, I conducted interviews with Norwegian officials (see appendix). These persons tended to portray Somalis as the worst case of immigrants, proud, strong, but difficult to understand, and often not refusing wanting to become integrated in society. I saw that negative cycles tended to occur where both Somalis and various Norwegian officials often misinterpreted each other resulting in unintended situations of humiliation. I also heard of many episodes of humiliation among Somali refugees themselves. Clan tendencies lead to the stigmatisation of Somalis from certain areas or certain minority clans, and gossiping and stigmatisation occurred, especially towards those girls who did not follow the prescribed Islam norms of dress and conduct.

As a university researcher, I could view these different arenas for humiliation from the perspective of an outsider. I was witness to some humiliating situations, and heard about others during interviews and conversations. By focusing on the socio-cultural and structural sources of this humiliation it may be possible to find ways to prevent humiliation in interactions between refugees and different actors from the host country, as well as among refugees themselves during their first period in a new country.

The concept of humiliation is interactional and relational. According to Donald C. Klein (1991) although the *feelings* associated with humiliation are intensely personal, the *process* itself exists in the *relationship* between the person and "the emotionally relevant human environment". The prototypic humiliating experience involves a triangle that includes: 1) *humiliators* - those who inflict disparagement; 2) *victims* - those who experience it as disparagement; 3) *witnesses* - those who observe what happens and agree that it is disparagement.

My aim is to contribute to a theory of the distinct humiliation dynamic (cf. Klein) that becomes activated for many refugees in their host society. While a theory derived from a qualitative study can only be tentative, it might nevertheless be important in stimulating similar qualitative studies in other countries. This paper focuses not so much on the feelings, but rather on the victims who *experience* humiliation, in this case, Somali refugees in Norway. Some of the experiences are centred on meetings with various public officials; other kinds of humiliation stem from interactions with other Norwegians or with fellow Somalis. In many cases, it is probable that neither the humiliator nor eventual witnesses would describe the acts as ones intended to humiliate. Since the Somali refugees nevertheless interpret them as humiliating, the result is an experience of humiliation. Paul Stokes (2004) uses the concept of systemic humiliation to describe situations when 'although none was intended the insult is received, the slight acknowledged, the put-down is felt, the rejection absorbed and the body/mind mobilises its destructive and devious response in cavernous interiors'. A victim may thus feel humiliated in the absence of any deliberately humiliating act, as a result of misunderstandings, or as a result of personal and cultural differences concerning norms about what respectful treatment ought to entail (cf. Lindner 2000a).

Since the humiliation Somalis experience in diaspora is less severe than the humiliation some Somalis experienced during the civil war, it might be useful to distinguish between humiliations of different degrees of severity. The idea of humiliation covers a wide range of experiences, from that of being the object of genocide to being the victim of gossip (Lindner 2001:8). Even though Lindner defines humiliation in general, I will use her definition to point to *severe* humiliation, because it includes the use of force. Thus severe humiliation is 'the *enforced* lowering of a person or a group, a process of

subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honour or dignity' (Lindner 2000a:29). Severe humiliation occurs when you are 'placed, against your will (...) and often in a deeply hurtful way, in a situation that is greatly inferior to what you feel you should expect'. One of the defining characteristics of severe humiliation is that 'the victim is forced into passivity, acted upon or made helpless' (ibid.).

More subtle, but nonetheless hurtful, forms of humiliation are the day-to-day experiences of 'some form of ridicule, scorn, contempt, or other degrading treatment at the hands of others' (Klein 2001). Lazare (1987) suggests that the experience of humiliation among other things involves feeling stigmatized; feeling reduced in size, i.e., feeling belittled, put down, or humbled; being found deficient, i.e., feeling degraded, dishonored, or devalued; being attacked, i.e., experiencing ridicule, scorn, or insult; an avoidant response. Linda Hartling (1999) has developed a long list of typical humiliating experiences such as being teased, bullied, scorned, excluded, laughed at, put down, ridiculed, harassed, discounted, embarrassed, cruelly criticized, treated as invisible, discounted as a person, made to feel small or insignificant, unfairly denied access to some activity, opportunity, or service, called names or referred to in derogatory terms, or viewed by others as inadequate, or incompetent. These different forms of humiliation might serve as a kind of operationalisation of what humiliation entails, and they will be referred to directly in this analysis in order to designate the more concrete ways in which Somali refugees feel they are humiliated in various arenas.

Prior Experience of Humiliation in Somalia

The refugees' experiences of subtle humiliation must be understood in relation to the more severe humiliation many of them experienced during dictatorship and war. In the beginning of Siyad Barre's dictatorship (1969-1991), he promised to eliminate corruption and clannism, and indeed he managed to establish several social reforms. But later his regime more and more tended to be based on clan politics and manipulation. This led to tensions in the population, and therefore he revived the pan-Somali vision of uniting all Somali people (Gundel 2002:257). Thus his army attacked Ethiopia in 1978 in order to conquer the Ogaden region. However, the Soviet Union shifted its allegiance to Ethiopia, and the Somali army was defeated. This was experienced as a major humiliation by many

Somalis. According to Lindner (2000:56), Barre survived national humiliation and secured his position because he was vigilant of coup attempts and by finding scapegoats. He put the blame upon the Somalis in Northern Somalia (especially those from the Isaaq and Majerteen clans). He destroyed their villages and wells, and made people from the Isaaq potential suspects everywhere; they lost their jobs, they were detained and some were executed (ibid.).

In this way, the military defeat in 1978 marked the beginning of an evolving crisis throughout the 1980s (Gundel 2002:257). The internal conflict culminated in full-scale war in 1988 as the Somali National Movement (SNM), representing the Isaaq clans of North-Western Somalia launched an all-out offensive against government forces in the towns Hargeysa and Burco (ibid.). The government responded by destroying these major cities by aerial bombings, the estimated numbers of killed people from these attacks range from more than 50,000 people (Gundel 2002) to 100.000 (Suleiman 1997). Because of the atrocities being committed against them, many people fled and became exiled abroad or became refugees in camps in the neighbouring countries (Lindner 2000).

In January 1991, the USC (United Somali Congress) pushed Siyad Barre out of Mogadishu, overthrowing his regime, and the State of the Republic of Somalia collapsed totally and has not been resurrected since (Gundel 2002:257). By the end of 1992, Operation Restore Hope was launched by the US in order to establish a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian relief (Lindner 2000:63). In 1993, 18 US soldiers were killed, and later dragged through the streets by Somali civilians. This episode was followed by TV broadcasts, and eventually led to the withdrawal of the American contingent of the UNOSOM operation. In 1995 the last UN soldiers left the country. This event had a strong negative impact on the American public and almost certainly on how Somalis consequently are treated in the Western world.

According to several Somalis, the UNOSOM operation was a tremendous humiliation (Lindner 2000:23). Predating the killing of the 18 soldiers, a house full of Somali elders was bombed by the Americans, without any warning (Murphy 2003:93). Killing elders is seen as a deep humiliation in Somali society. Lindner (2000:23) shows how Somali warlords, as did wide circles of civilian Somalis, thought in terms of

humiliation and counter-humiliation around this event, and indeed around this war in general.

After the UN forces left Somalia, the civil war drew to a close, but insecurity, lack of central government, and localised wars, have still marked the area. Bitter faction fighting has continued between clans and resulted in bloodshed and suffering for the civilian population; atrocities were carried out on all sides (Lindner 2000a:60). For many Somali refugees the severe humiliation they experienced in Somalia was an important factor in their decision to leave Somalia. After 1992, Somalis could only find safety within their clans' historical and traditional territories. That is why i.e. Isaaq intellectuals who had lived all their life in Mogadishu fled to Somaliland, where they contributed to fostering peace and creating universities there etc.¹ But, in general, most Somalis do not think they can move back to their clan area unless it is safe, and possible to establish a livelihood there. Other reasons why repatriation is difficult is the lack of job opportunities in Somalia, as well as scarcity of food (Gundel 2002:264-265). The difficulties of returning imply that Somali refugees are living in exile because they feel they have little choice. They might therefore be vulnerable even to limited exposure to humiliation in the host community.

Background information about Somalia and Somalis in diaspora

Contrary to England, which had Somali migrants long before the civil war (because of british colonisation of the Northern part of Somalia (since 1991 established as Somaliland)), only a few Somalis came to Norway before 1987 (cf. Lie 2004). But after Siyad Barre's aerial bombings of Hargeisa and Burao in 1988, the first major movement from Somalia to Norway occurred. More than 600,000 people fled to Ethiopia because of the conflict between Siyad Barre and the SNM. The escalation of the conflict in 1991 produced further refugee flows (Gundel 2002:264). According to Griffiths (2002:78) the increased conflict lead to "a dramatic increase in war victims, the traumatised and large numbers of young single mothers and children". In 1991 it was estimated that more than 1 million people fled from the fighting in southern Somalia to countries in the region and

¹ Thanks to Joakim Gundel (personal communication) for this point.

outside Africa. The better-off refugees went further abroad to Western countries such as Canada, US, UK, Italy, Holland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Australia (Gundel 2002:264). The poorest fled to Kenya and Ethiopia, or elsewhere within Somalia as internally displaced persons (ibid.).

Even though the main waves of refugees from Somalia came before 1995, the number of Somalis seeking asylum in Western Europe has in fact been increasing since 1996. According to Gundel (2002:266), it is 'difficult to assess whether this is due to continued or new instability or hardship in Somalia, or due to "unsuccessful" asylum seekers "trekking" to other countries. (...) While some Somalis still seek to leave the country, they do so mainly as migrant workers or as part of family reunification programs. In Norway 55% of the Somalis have come during the last five years (Statistics Norway 2005). By January 2005, 16.765 Somalis lived in Norway, if we include those born in Norway of Somali parents (ibid.). Most of those who have immigrated to Norway from Somalia have status as refugees. Even though the majority of Somalis living in Norway have arrived recently, Somalis represent the sixth largest immigrant group from non-Western countries (Lie 2004.). The Somali population in Norway is very young compared to other immigrant populations. Of all Somalis in Norway, 48% are under 20 years of age (ibid.).

According to most indicators of living standards, Somalis is the refugee group that has poorest ratings. They are more often unemployed than any other groups of first-generation immigrants in Norway (Statistics Norway 2002). 25.8 % of Somalis in Norway in 2001 had employment, whereas 38.3% of first-generation Pakistanis had employment while 64.8% of persons without immigrant background were employed (cf. Lie 2004). 19% of Somali women had work, whereas 31.1% of the men were working. The total income for Somali households in Norway is very low compared to that of other immigrant groups (ibid.). Many Somalis have great difficulty in finding accommodation (people who rent out their houses often do not want to rent their apartments to Somali families with many children). In a study of living conditions among immigrants in 1996, half of the Somalis reported that they definitely had been discriminated against when trying to rent or buy an apartment (Blom 1998: 55). 76 % of the Somalis in Norway rent their houses, only the remaining 24 % own their own property (cf. Lie 2004).

Indicators of mental health also point to a worse position for Somalis. In a study of different immigrant groups in Norway, more Somalis than most other refugee groups reported that they had nervous symptoms (Djuve and Hagen 1995:88; Djuve and Kavli 2000:71). As many as 54% of Somalis in Norway report that they feel lonely (cf. Blom 1998: 48). Of different non-Western immigrant groups only Iraqis more frequently report that they feel lonely than do Somalis. This is linked to the high percentage, 26.5%, of Somalis in Norway who live in households of only one person (cf. Lie 2004).

Literature from other Western countries, such as Australia, England, Canada and Finland, reveal very much the same picture of the situation for Somali refugees. Even though Somali settlement in England, because of the British colonisation of North-Somalia, goes back to the early 1900s, the picture of those lowest in the hierarchy is used as a description by Griffiths (2002:80-81), who has studied Somalis in London. Similar to the Somali situation in Norway, surveys show that the majority of Somalis in London are under 20 years of age, and similar to Norway (cf. Lie 2004), there is a high proportion of female-headed households, while the average household is significantly larger than in the mainstream population. Chronic unemployment, poor housing, illiteracy and consequent problems in accessing mainstream social and educational services are typical for Somalis both in England and in Norway (Engebrigtsen 2004, Griffiths 2002:81). The greatest difference in the situation of Somalis in England and in Norway is that Somalis in England have access to long-standing Somali communities including second and third generation Somalis, and that for many Somalis Britain means home. Recently-arrived refugees often have family links with Somalis settled in Britain, whereas this is seldom the case for Somalis arriving in Norway. England seems to be the main destination for Somalis leaving Norway, despite less generous welfare benefits. It seems that the attraction of joining a more established Somali immigrant community is given more weight than economical benefit.

A study of Somali refugees in Canada shows that they encounter considerable difficulties during the initial stages of resettlement (Danso 2001). They face social exclusion and multiple forms of disadvantages including high unemployment, underemployment, and overcrowding, as well as frustrations and despair that sometimes result in suicidal behaviors, particularly among the young males. Host language

incompetence and recent immigration are some explanatory factors, but the study concludes that systems of institutional and everyday racism also have created formidable barriers for Somalis as they integrate into their new country (ibid.). In a Finnish study, Somalis faced more negative attitudes and experienced more racist crimes than any other immigrant groups (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004).

The point with presenting these figures of Somalis living standard is to provide a context for understanding the vulnerability many Somalis feel in exile and the resulting over-exposure to feeling humiliated. Many Somalis had higher social status in Somalia than they achieve in Norwegian society, even though their living standard increases. In Somalia most people lived in houses with no water or electricity. In Norway they have more space in their apartments, and many more facilities. Although most Somali people are in a better economic situation in Norway than in Somalia, they are placed low on the social ranking scale, and they experience many problems that they had not foreseen. Many state that they had expected to achieve a higher standard of living when coming to Norway than they actually achieved. They experience an increase in social standards, but a decrease in social position and hierarchy. In Norway, they are put in the position of those who receive, and who should (according to an informal norm) show gratitude. There might also be a clash between the egalitarian “you shall not be better than us” attitude in Norway (known as the Jante-loven) and the Somalis who are just as egalitarian, but in reverse (cf. Gundel personal communication). This also reflects the attitude of the Somali ‘spoilers’ - those who migrated to Europe were those who had the necessary finances, and often they had better education than those left behind.. They were elites, or felt as such and could not align themselves with the fact that now they suddenly ranked lowest. They were upper-classes becoming lower-class (ibid.).

Before the war Somalia did not have a social welfare system similar to the Scandinavian model. The responsibility for poor people or those people who needed various forms of help was the duty of the clan. The clan is expected to provide both money and help when needed. Somalis travelled from a country in ruins to a thoroughly-organized society. In Somalia, money goes from hand to hand; appointments go from mouth to mouth (Klepp 2003:80). One has to know who one can trust and who one can count on (ibid.)

Somalia's inability to 'preserve even a minimal figleaf of central administration' during the last 15 years 'puts it in a class by itself among the world's failed states' as pointed out by Menkhaus (2003:407). According to Haakonsen (2004) it is the only country in the world that has not had any centralised administration for the last 15 years. Somaliland, on the other hand, has had a government since 1993 and a central administration (albeit weak) since 1997. Except for the Somalilanders, Somalis have thus had little experience with a centralised state system for many years. During Barre's regime, however, they had on the contrary the traumatic experience of the repressive and manipulating powers of a centralised state system (Gundel, personal communication). These two contrasting experiences, no central administration and a too repressive central administration, make up the baggage with which many Somalis meet Norway –one of the states of the world with most official institutions. This might be one important reason why the interaction between Somali refugees and Norwegian institutions often tends to be marked by distrust and miscommunication. In addition the Somalis' egalitarian attitude, which many researchers link to many somalis nomadic traditions (Lewis 1961, 1983, Lindner 2000b, Griffiths 2002, Scruggs 2004:7) – must be taken into account. This egalitarian habitus is referred to as a contrast to being polite and showing thankfulness (Lindner 2000a:276). Also Somali respondents describe their own cultural habitus as egalitarian, direct, not bowing or creeping or showing too much politeness, not wanting to be told things, and not wanting to offer anything. Norwegian research reports on Somali refugees conclude that 'Somali pride' might be one reason why refugee workers report more difficult interaction with Somalis than with many other immigrant groups (Klepp 2003, Engebriksen 2004). The main problem in relation to humiliation seems to be that Somalis are met in a way they did not expect, a way that threatens their pride in being Somali.

Somalis in Norway have been stigmatized by both media and by officials as the worst case group of refugees. A negative cycle might thus occur, where Somalis literally turn their backs on the Norwegian society while the Norwegian society turns its back on Somalis.

Norwegian – Somali Humiliation

Humiliation in Meetings with Various Authorities

Newly-arrived refugees find themselves in a position where they time and again must find their way to different kinds of state or municipal offices, such as the police station, Directorate of Immigration, a welfare office, employment office, national insurance office, child health centre, local refugee office and adult education school. Dependency on the help of officials is a new situation for Somalis when coming to Norway (except for the dependency on food aid etc. from international help organisations). Public offices do not share the intimacy and warmth which other people of the same clan offer each other. Humiliating experiences in meeting with public authorities might occur among all refugees coming to a new country, but according to several of the officials I have interviewed, Somali refugees are more prone to experience different situations as insulting than do other refugees.

Somali respondents narrate that they feel controlled by officials, they do not like being told things and they feel intimidated because they experience that various public officials lecture them. Similar experiences of course might be typical of all people who during a period of time have been social clients or who have had other client roles in the social system. But in the narrations from Norwegian officers, this trend seems to be even more prevalent in the interaction between Somali clients and the Norwegian system, as they report that Somalis tend to be more easily intimidated by the officials' attempts to serve or instruct them. There thus seems to be a clash between the desire of social workers, refugee workers etc. to help or guide newly-arrived refugees, and the way some Somali refugees interpret these efforts. Somalis report that they feel strong negative emotions when they have to bow and scrape because of such lectures. When officials try to give information about 'how things are done in Norway', the result might be that a Somali walks away. The ways in which things are said are important.

Even though some of the lectures from the officials are probably well-meant, the result might nevertheless be that the recipient feels humiliated. Refugee-workers in the municipalities tend to describe Somalis as 'the most difficult immigrants to integrate', but simultaneously as strong, proud and even elegant or aristocratic. Officials who work with

Somali refugees often seem to view them partly with frustration and partly with admiration.

The first phase of settlement seems to be a critical phase regarding feelings of humiliation. A great majority of Somali refugees are illiterate (cf. Somali conference 1998). The Somali school system has not functioned since before the war. The class room education of newly-arrived refugees might trigger a sense of failure and thus also feelings of humiliation, in the sense of being *made to feel small or incompetent*. Sometimes Somalis also feel more directly *discriminated* in these situations:

I am attending a Norwegian course. In my country, we can pray whenever we want to. That is what I call the freedom of belief. But not in Norway. I think it is difficult to accept the fact that I cannot pray during the course. To pray is half of my life! I heard that there is freedom of belief in Norway, but that is not true. This is very hard for me, so I am considering quitting the course. I get 5,000 Norwegian kroner if I complete the course, but if I must choose between praying and 5,000 kroner, I will choose to pray. (Somali woman in her 30s).

It becomes evident how heartfelt this was for this woman, because a few months later she emigrated with her children. She couldn't bear to live in a country where she was denied the right to live and practice in the same way she had done in Somalia. Similar statements regarding Norway's lack of freedom of religion are related by many Somalis. Not being allowed to pray in various settings, such as language courses, schools or at work, is experienced as humiliating. Seen from a majority perspective, there is perhaps little ground for feeling humiliated because you cannot break up a lecture in order to pray. There would be a lot of disturbance if Muslim participants in the language courses every now and then should leave the lecture. On the other hand, praying is done five times a day, which would mostly mean only once during the daily school period, and takes only five minutes. Many Muslims know how to discretely stand up and go to a corner of the room to pray, and then sit down again without making much disturbance.

Several respondents feel humiliated by the way the politicians talk about Somalis. One man was angry at the way politicians reacted to the problems in the Somali population, and felt humiliated by the authorities' trust of Somali resource persons who were critical to their own people:

The politics they have conducted against Somalis has had the form of ready-made solutions. Somalis have never been included in planning these solutions. Somalis feel that Somalis as a group are suppressed by the state. I am a Somali resource person, and I also feel humiliated by the fact that

when Norwegian authorities seek advice from a Somali person, they choose persons who are critical of Somalis. I think these persons spread lies about the Somali people, out of an interest in being accepted by the Norwegian system. They have suffered under an undemocratic state in Somalia [the dictatorship under Siad Barre], and thus think they must be strict with Somalis. But they struggle with their identity, as they distance themselves from their own. My position is to give constructive criticism, by not using labels that stigmatise other Somalis (male Somali in his 30s).

Some respondents report feeling humiliated by being *falsely suspected* of committing criminal acts, not receiving the benefits they think they rightfully deserve or being poorly treated, by being *looked down at* by the officials:

I have experienced it very stressful to meet all the different authorities. Once I was falsely suspected by the police in a case where some Somalis fought in the street. My meeting with the social welfare office was also a disappointment. I had expected to have a much higher standard of living when coming to Norway than what I in fact had, and I felt humiliated by the strict way I was met when I was trying to increase the size of my grant [which is given only once to all refugees in Norway] for buying furniture, clothing etc. (Somali male in his 40s)

Expectations of the greener pasture, and the disappointment when it turns out to be dry is probably where it 'goes wrong' in the meeting between the expectant Somali who is ever attempting to increase his opportunities and the official who becomes appalled by what he sees as an appalling and ungrateful attempt to exploit the social welfare system (Gundel, personal communication). Humiliation in this case is very relative. Similar stories appear among a majority of the Somali respondents. They tend to view the authorities as rigid, suspicious and lacking in understanding or empathy. On the one hand, some surely experience that they *are unfairly denied access to services*, on the other hand, many situations experienced as humiliating are probably more due to unrealistic expectations of what or how much they rightfully should receive.

Humiliation in the Labor Market

Many respondents use the metaphor of being met by closed doors, in relation to the labour and the housing market. One respondent reflected on negative media images having an impact on exclusion of Somalis in the job market:

In Somalia, the war is the problem. Here in Norway, we are free from war, but then it is difficult to find employment. In Somalia, there are also many who are unemployed, but they can do other things instead. There no one thinks that other people hinder them from getting a job, but here they experience discrimination. Here, eighty percent of Somalis do not have a job. Then there must be

factors other than competition that hinder them in having a job. The media writes that Somalis are so and so. An employer will notice this and will exclude Somalis when he is hiring new people. If refugees do not have a job they become a burden to the society. But if they have a job they become a resource. It is important to be a good example for others (male Somali in his 40s).

One might add to this quotation that Somalis also in Somalia might be suspicious about the reasons for not getting a particular job or another. In Somalia tribalism and nepotism are often reasons a disgruntled job-seeker may give as an explanation for not obtaining a position.² But the reasons why they experience discrimination in exile is quite different from such intra-clan discrimination in Somalia. In Norway, employers tend to not employ Somalis because they are Somalis with all the stigma that contains in the Norwegian setting, regardless of which clan the individual belongs to (Norwegians have no knowledge of these clan differences). Those resourceful Somalis who have a stable job seem to be satisfied with their work-life. Another study of living conditions among immigrants shows that less than 10% of all employed Somalis feel that they are bullied at work (Blom 1996). However only 10% of the Somalis interviewed were employed. There is thus reason to assume that the very few employed must be reckoned as the most resourceful Somalis and those most integrated in relation to Norwegians. In the same study, no other immigrant groups had so little contact with Norwegians as the Somalis (ibid.: 44).

However, many Somalis have experienced discrimination from employers. In a study of living conditions among refugees in Norway, the Somali population was the one of the six studied refugee groups who most often reported that Norwegians who rent out their houses prefer to rent to Norwegians and that 'foreigners are treated worse than Norwegians at the work place' (Djuve and Hagen 1995:101). One mother says she has no belief in education, after seeing so many well-educated Somalis who cannot even get a job as a cleaner. One woman was disillusioned after being fired from her job because she refused to take off her Muslim veil. One Somali doctor had been working hard to get the extra formal education needed in order to work as a doctor in Norway, but did not get any jobs because he did not speak Norwegian well enough. He has more or less given up, so

² I owe thanks to an anonymous referee for this point.

that instead of working hard to improve his Norwegian, or instead of trying to get jobs within the health system, he now works with refugees who have just come to Norway, and tells them about the need to remain active. By talking all day with newly-arrived refugees, he is not in the best position to improve his Norwegian language. And he has little confidence in his ability to get the type of professional job that suits his long education.

For those Somalis who wish to integrate into the host society, their will to do so might be seriously impaired by such experiences. Resignation and anger become for many possible reactions to long periods where they have done everything to attain success, in the educational system and/or the labour market, without finding any open doors.

Humiliation at School and between the System and the Family

Some Somali children not born in Norway experience being *teased* or *bullied* at school. Because they do not yet speak fluently, and cannot explain what happened to the teacher afterwards, they often experience that blame is put on them, even when other children started the fight. One mother states that she feels humiliated when her children are punched by other children at school, and she as parent is not allowed to hit back. She cannot behave in the ways she is accustomed to in Somalia:

I wonder how you raise your kids here in Norway, alone, without relatives who help you, and when someone hassles your kids, what do you do then? At school one of the other kids hit my child. I wanted to hit this kid back, but I have learned that you do not do that here. But I wanted to take revenge. When I use all my time and effort on my children, and then somebody else hits them, what shall I do then? (Somali female in her 30s).

She knew of no other way to deal with such harassment of her children, and this resulted in a feeling of powerlessness.

Many Somalis feel humiliated by the way their children are treated in school. Norwegian respondents state that measures in order to help Somali children who do not manage well at school, are met with anger and refusal from Somali parents. Such measures might be the offer of extra study lessons with an assistant in order to manage school work, or guidance from the pedagogic-psychiatric service (*PPT*) at school in how

to help their children adapt better. Klepp (2003:81) describes the same pattern of Somali parents who experience such offers as incomprehensible and frightening.

Somali respondents state that they doubt that Norwegians know best what a Somali family needs. They would therefore rather seek help or guidance from elder Somalis from the same clan. They experience the public officials as someone saying they want to help, but who nevertheless do not understand what sort of help is needed. One Somali social worker, who has a job helping Somali families find accommodation, said the following about one of the families that he helped:

I try to help them understand the system. The family has heard rumours about kindergarten that are not in accordance with reality. When their little boy got sick, the parents took him to the doctor in order to get a confirmation of the child being so sick that the mother could not participate in the Norwegian course. The doctor, however, thinks the child is healthy enough to go to the kindergarten, so that the mother has no reason to stay at home. The family has a 'hidden agenda': keeping the cash-for-care benefit [a benefit for those who stay at home with the children instead of sending them to the kindergarten]. The family argues like this: The child has a good time with its mother. It is important that mother stays at home and makes food for the family. One creates unnecessary chaos when the mother is out 8 hours daily. Mother is not used to this. The system is brutal. Norwegians do not understand anything about family life etc. The family is thus in collision with Norwegian authorities, that want the children to go to kindergarten in order to learn Norwegian etc. and want the women to enter the labour market, in order to achieve integration and equality between man and woman. (Somali male in his 50s)

This description accurately points out how positive purposes of the welfare system are experienced as controlling, humiliating, uncomprehending etc. by Somali families. Not being allowed to make their own choices regarding what is best for their own family is experienced as intimidation.

Humiliated by being Defined by a Sense of 'Otherness'

Many Somalis in Norway, as in many other Western countries (cf. Ali 1995, Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004:88), have a hard time handling the 'Otherness' attributed to their ethnic group by the media, by politicians and by the majority population in general. This is also an experience they share with many other immigrant groups. Klepp (2002:7) has analysed presentations of Somalis in the media, and has found that from the beginning of the 1990s and up to 1998, there was a change in the way Somalis were represented by the media. There was an increasing negative focus on them as 'difficult and conflict-

producing', both in Norway and in other countries (ibid., Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004:93). Of the total number of reports about Somalis in the net versions of the newspapers, 88% had a negative focus (Klepp 2002).

Many Somalis feel humiliated by the public image of the dangerous, the criminal or the non-integrated Somali – they are reduced to a negative or exotic stereotype, rather than being presented as unique individuals. Some Somali women feel that Norwegians relate to them only as victims because they wear a veil and have been circumcised. A male student in his 30s stated that he was afraid that his daughters might not have any pride in being a Somali. One woman who had taken a bachelor degree in Norway, and was thinking of proceeding with a master degree, was told by a Norwegian colleague that he would not advise her to do so, she should rather continue playing drums, because that was what she was best at. This woman was indeed good at playing drums, but she also had a rewarding job where she was appreciated. Reducing her to merely the exotic African is only one example of the Somalis' experience of being reduced to a stereotype instead of being recognised for all their individual qualities.

Several Somalis felt humiliated when asked how they define themselves in national terms:

I do not like being asked why I do not feel that I am a Norwegian, and then after that I hear somebody else say that I am a foreigner. No matter what choice I make it is not accepted. I try to adapt, but even so, I am viewed as a foreigner, because I do not have blond hair, and my skin is not light-coloured (Somali female in her 20s).

Yes, you are reminded of this constantly. Where are you from? People always ask. My daughter was asked in the kindergarten 'where do you come from?' She said the name of the city in Norway where she was born. But now she says "I am from Somalia, because my skin is brown" (Somali female in her 20s).

Some young Somali women feel pushed by Norwegians in the direction of acting and dressing like them on the one hand, and on the other hand, they sense that others will always see them as non-belonging foreigners no matter how hard they try not to be:

Last year, on the Norwegian Constitution Day, I was interviewed, and was asked why I did not wear a Norwegian national costume (*bunad*). I said I do not wear it because I am not a Norwegian. I cannot force myself to be accepted! I will always be a foreigner! (Somali female in her 20s)

As dark-skinned refugees they are continuously reminded of their minority position in relation to the white majority, and the underlying message that they might sense in the

question 'where do you come from?' is 'you do not belong here'. The question of national or ethnic identity might thus have the effect of placing the other in a context of non-belonging, even though the person who is asking perhaps only thinks of him or herself as curious and positively interested.

Intra-Minority Humiliation in Exile

Humiliated by other Somalis because of Clan Membership

In the previous section, we saw that Somalis often find questions about where they come from or how they define themselves humiliating. However, also in Somalia, this kind of humiliation occurs. Both in Somalia and among Somalis living in different Western countries, knowing who you are and who the other is in clan terms, is often vitally important. Abusing members of enemy clans took place in Somalia long before the civil war. Severe humiliation against minority groups or castes, such as the Rahanwein and the *Midgan* has always been present, as reflected for example in the poems of the Somali writer Mohamed Abdullah Hassan who died in 1920. According to Asha Samad, to be a *Midgan* means to suffer life-long indignities, to be deemed impure and thus meriting disdain, and the avoidance and abuse of others. *Midgans* in Somalia have been denied food, medical treatment and protection. The only other groups who have been treated in this manner are the Jareer and Bantu descendants of slaves brought from East Africa 1000 years ago (Samad 2002). Somalia's former president, Siyad Barre, actually gave *Midgans* positions in the government. This led to increased harassment and persecution of *Midgans* during the civil war and in diaspora. As Samad underlines, this post-war harassment is not only a continuation of their historical exploitation; it is also a result of the assumptions of some of the large, dominant clans that they have been supporters of their rival and hated ruler, president Barre.

Several Somalis report that *bullying* because of clan occurs also in Norway. People from one clan might say things such as, we are better, and there are many political strategies on the basis of clan. Severe humiliation occurs especially towards members of the minority *Midgan*. The leader of a Somali youth organisation had been involved in helping young Somali girls who had problems. He told about a teenaged girl who had become pregnant with a boy from the *Midgan*. Because of his background her relatives

forced her, by means of *violence*, not to marry the boy. The Somali milieu *excluded* this girl from the community. This is the worst case the organisation has had so far in their aid-work with Somali girls.

A Somali woman had moved to live with her parents in Kenya when she was a child. 18 years ago, she travelled to Norway with her own children. She has been educated in Norway and now has a rewarding job. In Norway she experiences that even other resourceful Somalis bully her for being not really Somali, since she lived in Kenya. They call her *sijui*, meaning ‘I don’t know’.

Another group of Somali women who are excluded in the Somali milieu in Norway, are those who date Norwegian men, whereas dating between Somali men and Norwegian women is accepted.

I have a girlfriend who is together with a Norwegian boy. This is very tough for her, all that she has to go through. Once she went together with her boyfriend to *Grønland* [an area of Oslo dominated by many Pakistani and Turkish shops, and where many Somali men tend to gather in the street]. Her boyfriend held his arm around her. Then some Somali men spit on her and called her “whore”.
(Somali female in her 20s)

To be labelled in such a way is a common form of bullying reported by Somali girls. Even though they experience that they have more freedom than what is usual among female Pakistani class-mates, they must even so adhere to strict moral codes. Wearing of veils among Somali women is a new phenomenon that has followed an increased religious conservatism, following the breakdown of the Somalia state, which, even a dictatorship, was quite secular compared to many other Muslim countries.

Some Somali girls who violate the norms of how they should behave (not drinking alcohol, not going to Norwegian parties or pubs, not having sex before marriage) are sent back to Somalia in order to ‘relearn’ the culture. Some are also *forced* into marriages. Forced marriages are, however, not an extensive problem among Somalis in Norway. Perhaps a reason for this is that even when a girl is forced to marry, divorce is to a large extent accepted among Somalis if the marriage is not successful (cf. Fangen 2002).

Humiliated by being Imposed Strict Moral Norms by other Somalis

Somali girls who attend schools and get to know girls and boys from the white majority encounter situations where they are faced with differing views on gendered assessments

of behaviour <Salmela?>. According to young Somali women, parents are more strict with their daughters than their sons. The young women feel frustrated and somewhat humiliated by parents who isolate them in order to prevent them from having a bad reputation or from experiencing things which might violate the moral rules:

The parents think that, well, she just has to manage herself. But if they hear that their daughter has a boyfriend, then they keep her at home. It is always our mother who rules. Girls are not allowed out, whereas boys are.

Many young women have adopted more Western clothing, which in several ways differs from today's prescribed dress for a Somali girl. Many respondents underline that these predicaments have arisen after the civil war. Before the war, women could even wear trousers, and not many women used the scarf. In Norway, however, young Somali women who wear trousers, and do not wear a veil are constantly exposed to humiliating comments from elder Somalis. In a casual discussion group between five Somali women in their 20s this was intensely discussed:

'When you go to a Somali café, you know that they talk about you'.

'There are many who make a standard picture of what you should be like. If you go out once a week, they say that you are a bad girl. Now I have gone without head-clothing for three years, and then I'm a bad girl?? I think they should see the positive sides of the person instead!'

'Also those our age think like that. If you use the *hijab* you are seemingly better. You should *not* use trousers, and *not* clothes that show your body. I think many use a *hijab* even though they do not want this themselves'

The last speaker's statement reveals the dimension of humiliation in these reactions. The young women who accept dressing in traditional Muslim women's clothes are viewed as higher up on the scale of dignity than those women who choose to wear more modern clothing. In addition, some young women use the scarf as a protest to Western culture, and by emphasizing their culture as a contrast.

Some women regard the aspect of wearing a veil as something solely voluntary, something they choose out of religious conviction only:

When I go to the mosque, I read the *Qu'ran*; it is not my parents who say what I should do. And to wear a *hijab* is my own private choice; I go to the mosque and I wear a *hijab*, and I get irritated if anyone criticizes it.

The dynamics of humiliation are first activated when a young woman violates the rules. In order to avoid condemnation, many young women choose to wear the veil when seen, but drop it when on their own:

‘Many have a double moral standard. They wear the *hijab* when other people see them, but when they are together with friends they take it off’.

‘I do not think this has anything to do with religion. If you do it for God, you must wear it 24 hours a day’.

Some women start wearing a veil a few years before they marry, because they then are regarded as more worthy as a wife, than if they didn’t wear it. Again the scale of worthy woman on the top of the dignity scale and the unworthy, modern woman on the bottom is seen. Even though the young women experience negative reactions from other Somalis because they chose not to wear veils, they did not feel the pressure to be unbearable:

I cannot talk for everyone. Yet there are in fact some who manage no matter what others say. I do not wear a *hijab*, and I must listen to the complaints from Somali neighbours and people I meet accidentally, they comment on the fact that I do not use it.

The women experienced such comments as exhausting and limiting, and even humiliating; but even so, this sense of humiliation is not strong enough for them to choose to give up, and start using a veil despite their own wishes.

Reactions to Humiliation

In this paper, I have described several instances of humiliation as experienced by Somalis living in Norway. So how do Somalis who feel strongly humiliated in exile react?

The effects of humiliation are probably universal, whereas the means are culturally dependent (cf. Lindner 2000:374-5). Some common reactions are (a) depression, (b) the use of drugs, (c) flight into religion and (d) aggression (ibid.). All these reactions are seen among Somali refugees in Norway.

(a) Depression and withdrawal is the more self-centred reaction to humiliation. Many respondents report on Somalis who react to humiliating experiences by distancing themselves from everything, and state that this reaction takes the form of a kind of mental disease. According to Klein (2001), the experience of humiliation and the fear of humiliation are implicated in a variety of mental illnesses and engender rage that is manifested in anti-social behavior, murder, and suicide. In a study of living conditions among refugees in Norway, Somalis was the one out of six immigrant groups with highest

frequency of mental problems (20%) (Djuve and Hagen 1995:88). Such mental problems might of course be the long term result of traumatic war experiences or traumatic experiences in refugee camps and in transition. However, many Somalis report that they feel more distressed by humiliating experiences linked to their new situation in Norway.

(b) Many Somalis regard it problematic that Somali men chew so much *qat* (a mild narcotic plant) in exile. However, such chewing of *qat* was customary in Somalia also before the war, even though it was banned by Siad Barre in the early 1980s. With the breakdown of the state in the late 1980s *qat* chewing increased to dramatic proportions, at least among men. New studies show that there is a relationship between regular *qat*-chewing, war-traumas and mental illness, which may explain, in part at least, the higher frequency of mental problems among Somalis. The same over-use of *qat* is seen in London, according to Griffiths (2002:81). Somalis themselves state that this is a reaction to their sense of hopelessness, depression, frustration and anger. They chew *qat* all the evening, and sleep all day.

(c) Many Somalis were not particularly religious in Somalia, or during their first period in Norway, but after a while became extremely rigid and religious, and use religion in order to justify a very negative view of the Norwegian culture. One man was earlier very open to Norwegian culture. He even married a Norwegian woman and had a baby with her. Later they divorced, but he continued dating Norwegian women, and he drank alcohol etc. A Somali social worker did not see him for ten years. Then he met him accidentally when he went out with his Norwegian colleagues, and they took a taxi. The taxi driver was his former client. Later, they met again, and the taxi driver said: 'Why do you hang out with these Norwegians? Their culture is shit! You should rather go to the mosque, you with all your knowledge, we need you there'. The social worker was disappointed in the change in the man.

'It was good that he was no longer a welfare recipient, and that he managed to work within the private business sector, driving for a Pakistani man, another Muslim. The negative thing, however, was that he had adopted an extreme view: that you will come to paradise if you fight the West. He would now marry a woman with a veil, and talked very negatively about Norwegian women'.

This story is only one example of a man who lets religion function as a shelter against the humiliation he feels Norwegian society thrust upon him. He hated his former position as welfare recipient. Nor did he succeed in his marriage with a Norwegian woman. Now he

manages by being part of a Muslim community, driving the car of another Muslim man, and condemning the Norwegian culture that denied him entry. He gets his negative picture confirmed every day, when driving drunken Norwegians late at night. His picture of Norwegian culture would probably have a much better chance of being positive if he worked in another kind of job where he could meet Norwegians in another context.

Also other respondents conclude that many Somalis are much more religious here in Norway than they were in Somalia. More women use the veil than what was usual in Somalia before the war. Some tell of husbands who use religion in order to keep their wives in place, so that they do not feel humiliated by a wife who suddenly goes out, meets other people and learns to know the new society. In a study of Somali women in Australia, the same pattern was found, that Islam had become more important because of their experiences with persecution and violence during war, and the hardships of replacement. War and exile lead to increased importance of religious faith, and Islam sustains them during times of emotional distress (McMichael 2002:172-173).

(d) Feelings of humiliation might lead to acts of humiliation. The dynamics of humiliation play an important part in perpetuating international tensions and violence (cf. Klein 2001). There have been many instances of violence among Somalis in Norway, both domestic violence and street violence. Street violence has mostly occurred among young Somali men who experienced failure in school, and sought comfort in criminal gangs. Domestic violence and abuse is not a new phenomenon in Somali families, but it has, according to Natoschia Scruggs (2004), increased because of the civil war. Women were granted many rights under the 1979 constitution, but all progress was erased by the war. Children were traditionally well protected within the family network. However, Scruggs asserts, societal disintegration has left these two groups particularly vulnerable. Even though violence seems not to be unusual in Somalia families some of the instances of wife battering in Norway seem to have been triggered by a feeling of frustration and anger of not coping with one's own situation in diaspora. Men might feel threatened by the many rights women have in the new country, and by the new economic independence of their women, due to their rights to welfare benefits from the state. This is seen in several cases of wife battering among Somalis in Norway. A Somali woman who worked as a helper for Somali women with problems, reported many instances of Somali women

who were beaten by their husbands, because the husbands felt humiliated by the wives' economical independence because of welfare benefits given by the state. In Somalia the men had a role as breadwinners, often along with their wives, here they feel superfluous. These men try to retain a feeling of being in power by keeping their wives down, not allowing them to go out, or even bullying them for their appearance, saying they are ugly etc.

For some, different experiences of humiliation in exile might lead to a reorientation into their own traditions and culture, and to living a life on the margins of the Norwegian society, by seeking the company of other unemployed Somalis, in organizations or cafés. For others, such negative experiences lead them away from Norway and further on to other countries, where they think that things might be easier. The implication of such uprooting is a failure to find a sense of belonging anywhere.

What is it that Prevents Humiliation among Somalis in Norway?

There are several ways to heal humiliation. The kind of solution depends upon what kind of feeling is triggered, the reaction to this feeling and the current situation between the parties in the aftermath of the humiliating act. On a psychological level, to stop seeing oneself as a victim and focus so much on the humiliators, and instead attempt to build up one's own sense of dignity is the best way to be healed (cf. Lindner 2002:133). In some NGOs Somali as well as Norwegian volunteers (and in some cases employees) work with self-help groups in order to increase empowerment among Somali refugees. In such groups, emphasis can be placed on learning to understand what one rightfully deserves from the system, and what one does not have a right to. Learning to deal with the system seems to be a buffer against feeling humiliated, and also decreases the number of humiliating situations.

Another humiliation-preventing factor is the use of so-called natural helpers, that is, resourceful persons – who might not have formal education – from the Somali community who can function as bridge-builders in meetings with authorities. These might be seen as an *active* form of witnesses, if we return to Klein's model for the humiliation dynamic. Such culturally sensitive intervention involves utilising the resources inherent in the Somali community (cf. Davies and Webb 200:552). In order not to humiliate Somali families, the message from many Somalis is that authorities should avoid arrogance and

'I know best' attitudes, and let the Somalis themselves decide over their own lives. Generally, recognition that gives new self-confidence and hope is the antithesis to humiliation (cf. Lindner 2000a).

On a more structural level, increasing one's living standard might lead to less vulnerability for humiliating experiences. Work, a place to live, marriage/family, after many years perhaps also wealth, are mentioned by Lindner (2000a) as humiliation-preventing factors. According to my observations of Somalis in Norway, one factor especially seems to be important in order to make humiliating experiences seem less important, and that is a good and rewarding network, including both Somali and Norwegian persons.

Many resourceful Somalis in Norway are satisfied with life, and manage well in Norwegian society. These Somalis have a job where they get positive feedback, and many of them have bought their own home. The problem for newly-arrived Somalis is that they have great difficulties even in getting offered a house to rent, and even greater problems in getting a stable job. Better-integrated Somalis have a much more stable living situation than those who are exposed to the uncertainty and discrimination of the labour and house-renting market. Nevertheless, those Somalis who have a stable job are also in a much better position in regard to their economic situation. In itself, better integration triggers more positive reactions from the Norwegian society. Many aspects of being integrated (having a good job and a nice home) also trigger positive reactions from fellow Somalis; however, being assimilated in the sense that one dresses or acts (goes to pubs etc.) like Norwegians might trigger negative reactions. Those Somalis who have found their way into the Norwegian society by having a stable job and home, and by interacting with many Norwegians, seem to be those who least often feel humiliated.

One young Somali woman mitigated the negative reactions from others because she did not wear a veil with this placating thought:

What we all have in common is a need for safety and being loved. It is not wearing or not wearing a *hijab* which determines whether you go to heaven or hell when you die. I am a Muslim, and if I should die today, I think God would look more at what I have done to others.

She felt consoled because even though she was sometimes humiliated by the reactions of other Somalis, God did not agree with these gossiping persons. He pays more attention to

the way she acts than the way she dresses. A personal interpretation of religion might thus also give a certain degree of healing from humiliation.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed several kinds of humiliation-triggering situations, some of which occur in the interaction between the minority and the majority, and others that occur within the minority. The humiliation-triggering situations we have found might fall into the following categories:

Humiliation between majority and minority can be the result of

- 1) - misunderstandings because of language and cultural differences
- 2) - lack of knowledge of rights
- 3) - lacking knowledge concerning routines common in the welcoming of new refugees
- 4) - mismatch between expectations of how to be treated and the extent of different services and benefits
- 5) - stigmatisation, prejudices, racism which might lead to disrespect and disbelief

Intra-minority humiliation can take the form of

- 6) - continuation of conflicts during war period, as well as continuation of traditional discrimination of minorities in home country
- 7) - harassment or humiliating over-protection of girls often as a counter-reaction to girls changing behaviour and environment in new country.

These different kinds of humiliation-triggering situations can best be prevented by:

- 1) communication of rights to newly-arrived refugees in order to adjust expectations
- 2) clearer communication of why things are said and done: be open about motives and the logic behind them
- 3) closer follow-up in order to overcome the first problems related to language and misunderstanding due to cultural differences
- 4) more balanced portrayal of minorities in the media, also write about the well-functioning persons, the ¼ who have a job or are educating themselves
- 5) self-help groups to overcome war-conflicts and clan disputes
- 6) follow-up of families – both girls and parents – when harassment occurs. Make use of Somali resource persons in such cases (cf. Fangen 2002)

In general, more use of clear and informative vocally transmitted welcome information, culturally sensitive follow-up, use of bridge-builders - natural helpers with the same minority background are useful methods in order to decrease humiliation.

Experiences of humiliation will likely be typical of all refugees in their first phase of settlement. Some of the conclusions on how refugees should be met and followed up in a better way, might also prove useful in the work with other refugees. Somalis in certain respects might be more vulnerable to humiliation than many other refugees, because of a poorer standard of living, and because they lack recent experience of a state infrastructure, in contrast to most other refugees. They have less experience with a structured welfare society than many other refugees, and have more experiences of war than many other refugees. Thus they might be more vulnerable to humiliation, although they are not alone in experiencing this. Better information, a more culturally-sensitive welcome and the use of bridge-builders in the follow up work are useful prescriptions for preventing humiliation with all new refugees.

Although my own as well as other studies illustrate that settlement seems to be harder for Somali refugees than for many other refugees in Norway as well in other host countries, it is worth noting that for most Somalis these experiences do not overshadow the fact that they feel more safe in exile than in today's Somalia with its lack of governance, its poverty and its continuing violent conflicts. The main task must be to find ways to better their new lives in exile.

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Appendix

I have conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 27 Somalis: 6 welfare recipients (3 men and 3 women in their 20s, 30s and 40s), 5 female students in their 20s, 1 male student in his 30s, 2 male social workers in their 30s and 50s, 2 female nurses in their 40s, 3 female uneducated helpers in their 30s and 40s, 1 male doctor, working in the introductory program for refugees in his 40s, 1 female in her 40s also working in the introductory program, and 5 school children (2 boys, 3 girls). In addition, I have written down extracts from casual conversations with approx. 20 Somalis of different backgrounds. I have also conducted participant observation in two families and participated in a casual conversation group of young Somalis and repeatedly participated in a focus group for Somali women. The sample includes both deeply religious and more secular persons. After making initial contacts with Somali resource persons, I used snowball sampling to select additional respondents. The interviews were conducted in respondents' homes,

in cafés or in my office, depending on what respondents preferred. I asked about the respondents' situation in Norway today and in the period since their arrival. I asked follow up questions on experiences with Norwegians in general and officials in particular, as well as about relations to other Somalis living in Norway. The issue of humiliation came to the surface both directly - when the experiences are named as humiliation - and indirectly - when the interviewees told about instances when they felt stigmatized or discriminated against either by Norwegians or by fellow Somalis. I have also interviewed about 15 Norwegian officials, including a family therapist, social worker, language teacher, child care worker and several refugee workers. All interviews ranged from 1 to 2 hours. Data was collected in 2003 and 2004. The data was analysed using the methods of coding and comparison outlined by grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1988).