7 Welfare chauvinism at the margins of whiteness

Young unemployed Russian-speakers' negotiations of worker-citizenship in Finland[1]

Daria Krivonos

Introduction

Within the neoliberal restructuring of the welfare state, a selective logic that distinguishes between 'desired' and 'undesired' migrants, as well as 'deserving' and 'undeserving' social groups in relation to welfare provisions, has become more dominant. In the ideology of economic productivity and competitiveness, unemployment has become a terrain of "failed citizenship"—in particular, in relation to migrants and racialised populations (Anderson 2015). With public concern growing in regard to the burden of migration on the welfare state, it has become more legitimate to argue that welfare benefits should only be reserved for those considered 'natives', who hold a self-evident right to belong to the nation (Keskinen et al. 2016). These notions of deservingness have been shown to be constructed around racialising criteria and othering (Harrell et al. 2014; Keskinen et al. 2016; Lens and Cary 2010).

While the concept of welfare chauvinism has been theorised in relation to ideas around migrants' access to welfare benefits, in this chapter I analyse how Russian-speaking migrants positioned as unemployed draw on a racial grammar to legitimise their place in the Finnish welfare system. The analysis is based on multi-sited ethnographic research into young Russian-speaking migrants' employment in Helsinki, Finland; this is the largest migrant and minority group in Finland, which is disadvantaged in the Finnish labour market, and is strongly affected by unemployment (Statistics Finland 2013). Drawing on ethnographic data and interviews with young unemployed Russian-speaking[2] migrants in Finland, I demonstrate that the use of transnational racialising discourses—which depict non-white groups as essentially having a poor work ethic—allows my research participants to construct themselves as deserving welfare recipients with a strong commitment to work. I show how the boundaries of deservingness and entitlement for welfare benefits are racialised and interconnected with the idea of whiteness. The analysis suggests that through the reproduction of the non-white work-shy Other, young unemployed Russian-speaking migrants not only construct their

whiteness, but also their belonging to a form of neoliberal citizenship which has stigmatised unemployment.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, I discuss the position of young unemployed Russian-speaking migrants in the context of welfare chauvinism, the neoliberal restructuring of citizenship, and normative whiteness in Finland. I show how the organisation of labour has been central for how whiteness operates, and how unemployment is constructed as a loss of whiteness, respectability, and worker identity. I start the analysis with a description of how Russian-speakers experience their precarious labour market position in Finland, which acts as a backdrop for the analysis of their racialising discourses against other migrants. Finally, I show how their use of transnational racialised hierarchies helps Russian-speakers reinscribe themselves into whiteness and respectable worker-citizenship. I conclude by discussing how colonial depictions of non-white populations as lazy converge with contemporary neoliberal capitalist ideologies of deservingness and productivity.

Welfare chauvinism, whiteness and Russian-speakers in Finland

This chapter aims to analyse how meanings of whiteness work in a neoliberal capitalist ideology of 'deservingness' unfolding in Finland, in particular, in relation to groups that have lost their white privilege after migration. Russian-speaking migrants' racialised and precarious position in Finland needs to be elaborated upon in a context characterised by normative whiteness, welfare chauvinism, and the recrafting of citizenship and state under neoliberalism. The concept of welfare chauvinism has been adapted to research the views and policies on whether migrants should have rights to receive benefits, and under what conditions (Keskinen et al. 2016). This political agenda has centred around questions of deservingness and entitlement in relation to welfare benefits. Discourses around the welfare state have been used to draw distinctions between 'us' and 'them', and it has become increasingly more legitimate to argue that welfare benefits should be reserved only for 'natives', or for a part of those who live and work in the country, that is, not for all residence permit holders. The notions of deservingness and entitlement have centred around exclusionary ethno-nationalist and racialising criteria, with non-Western Others portrayed as 'undeserving' and abusers of the system (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016; Keskinen 2016).

This has taken place against the backdrop of the dismantling of the welfare state itself, which has increased income disparities and the stigmatisation of a racialised underclass (Mäkinen 2017). In Finland, neoliberal policies have increasingly targeted the unemployed via the introduction of labour activation policies that also target young migrant and racialised groups presumably having problems with 'employability' (Krivonos 2019). Finland has experienced a slow but steady transition from a welfare state towards a workfare state, which means shifting from universal needs-based entitlement for welfare support, towards contractual relations between the state, market, and citizens

(Kananen 2012). This restructuring has reconfigured discourses around unemployment—it is no longer a structural problem, but predicated on an individual's responsibility, lack of work ethic, and moral failure. This has strengthened the idea that the norm of employment functions as a key 'integration' criterion for migrants (Keskinen 2016, p. 6; Jokinen et al. 2011).

Besides the neoliberalisation present in unemployment and welfare chauvinist discourses, the context of Finland is characterised by normative whiteness, from which Russians have been excluded. Like other Nordic countries (e.g. Habel 2012), Finland has defined itself as innocent of colonialism and racism, while describing itself in racialised terms as a 'white' nation (Keskinen et al. 2009). In Finland, the term 'immigrant' is itself a highly racialised and class-based category (Haikkola 2011; Rastas 2005). The politics of invisibility is an important mechanism for labelling foreigners as 'immigrants' in Finland, and one's belonging to ethnic Finnishness can be contested on the basis of an individual's physical appearance (Leinonen 2012).

Russian-speakers' ostensible whiteness has not protected them from being racialised as the Eastern Other in Finland (see also Helakorpi's Chapter 5 about whiteness and the racialisation of Roma people in Finland, and Siivikko's Chapter 4 about the racialisation of Sámi people in Finland). Clearly, whiteness does not just refer to skin pigmentation, but is also associated with factors such as history, class, clothing, citizenship, gender, and accent, which can be constructed through racialised discourses (McDowell 2008). The politics of whiteness are deeply implicated in the politics of domination, which establish hierarchies of whiteness. Rather than being a white/non-white binary, whiteness is theorised as a geographically contextual phenomenon, a contingent social hierarchy granting differential access to economic and cultural capital, intersecting with, and overlaying, class and ethnicity (Garner 2012; Loftsdóttir 2017). Whiteness has been historically constructed in relation to non-whiteness, which in turn has excluded non-European forms of whiteness (Bonnett 2008). Finnish whiteness has itself been constructed in opposition to, and subjugation of Sámi people (see Siivikko in Chapter 4).

The contexts of work and organised labour have been long constructed to enable the working of whiteness (Leonard 2010). W.E.B. Du Bois' (1935) "wages of whiteness" denotes how white labourers in the US embraced an identity of a dominant white group, rather than unite with recently freed enslaved people through class solidarity. Through organising along racial lines, white workers received a material and psychological "wages of whiteness". The processes through which the meaning of whiteness was established through work is also demonstrated through Irish workers, who distanced and pushed non-white groups from their workplaces, subsequently becoming "white" through this labour (Ignatiev 1995). Nowadays, ordinary whiteness is associated with the respectable, intellectual middle classes, as opposed to physical labourers (Leonard 2010).

While their embodied white capital can sometimes allow them to pass as white Finns in Finland (Krivonos 2015), Russian-speakers do not occupy a

structural position of privilege, and their ostensible whiteness does not translate into social mobility in Finland. The legacy of the historical past relationships between the Soviet Union and Finland makes the position of Russian-speakers highly visible in the public discourse of migration in Finland (Leinonen 2012) and is reflected in predominantly negative attitudes towards Russian-speakers (Tanttu 2009). Russian-speaking migrants in Finland are over-represented in low-skilled jobs, with the most common occupations being cleaning, shop sales assistance, construction, and storage labouring (Statistics Finland 2014), which often do not correspond to their educational qualifications (Krivonos 2017). In addition, Russian-speaking migrants in Finland are heavily affected by unemployment (Statistics Finland 2013). Thus, their precarious position in the manual labour market excludes many Russian-speaking migrants from the norm of respectable, intellectual, middle-class whiteness.

However, it is important to pinpoint that Russian-speakers do not only cross national borders through which their whiteness as a structural position becomes misrecognised, but they also move between different sets of classification systems that are tied to local, national, and transnational hierarchies (see also Lundström 2017). Conceptual insights offered by transnationalism have shown how migrants draw upon multiple nations and communities in the construction of their identities (Schiller 2010; Nowicka 2017). Although Russian-speakers are racialised as not 'properly' white in Finland, racial structures in Russia have positioned dominant Russians as white. Russia has constituted itself as an empire through the colonisation and racialisation of its own subaltern Others (Tlostanova 2003). Although Russia is a multinational imperial state comprising more than 185 ethnic groups (Census 2010), Russianness in Russia is constructed through being white and looking Slavic, and colour-based terms are used in everyday language in relation to migrants and Russian citizens alike (Sotkasiira 2016). In addition, the Russian mediascape importantly works as a transnational mediator of racialised hierarchies and knowledge (Davydova-Minguet 2017). Dominant Russian media has been producing moral panics around whiteness and representations of Europe as being flooded by uncontrolled flows of non-white migrants. This has reinforced that dominant Russianness is white and superior.

Against these racial structures in Russia—which equate Russianness with whiteness and privilege—upon arrival in Finland, many Russian migrants lose some of their white privilege and, as a result, take a racialised position as low-skilled workers and unemployed migrants. I suggest that through the use of transnational racial knowledge—which grants them privileged whiteness in Russia vis-à-vis other groups—they symbolically re-inscribe themselves into respectable citizenship in Finland through racialising non-white Others. Through racialising other migrants as non-white and undeserving, they "make their contested whiteness work" (Leonard 2013), which grants access to respectable citizenship.

It is precisely the context of neoliberalised citizenship, unemployment, and transnational whiteness (Lundström 2014) that guides my analysis of young

Russian-speakers' racialisation of Others. In the analysis, I explore how the neoliberal notions of welfare entitlement, deservingness, and the norm of worker-citizenship are intertwined with, and constituted by, the construction of transnational whiteness.

Methodology and ethical concerns

Empirical data was collected as part of a larger research project—'Migrant Youth Employment: Politics of Recognition and Boundaries of Belonging' (2014-2017, funded by the University of Helsinki, Kone Foundation and Emil Aaltonen Foundation). Within the project, I conducted a multi-sited ethnographic study of young Russian-speakers' employment in the Helsinki metropolitan area in 2014 to 2016, during which I interviewed a total of 53 young Russian-speakers (20 to 32 years old). Through my ethnographic fieldwork, I did observations in the contexts of integration, language, and CV courses, as well as youth career counselling services, to better understand their efforts to find work in Finland. My interviewees came from Russia, Estonia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Armenia, however a majority of participants came from Russia and Estonia, and it is their narratives that I refer to in this chapter. All but one were born outside Finland, and had obtained vocational or higher education in their home countries. Only those born outside Finland are mentioned in the analysis. Despite coming from different countries and ethnic self-identifications, young people were often identified as Russians in Finland due to their mother tongue. It is important to mention that most of the research participants come from majority backgrounds in Russia and ethnic minority backgrounds in Estonia, however as I show, they position themselves as white in Finland, and sometimes more 'European' than Russians from Russia. After migrating to Finland, many experience a status discord, and downward social mobility when their education and work experience from their home countries are not recognised in Finland, which forces them to move to less skilled occupations, or become unemployed.

The interviews were conducted in Russian, lasted on average 80 minutes, and were structured around young people's biographies—their lives before and after moving to Finland, and in particular, their experiences of unemployment and work. The interviews were transcribed. The interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis, which means organising interview materials around key themes that emerged from the data. Although whiteness did not inform my research questions in the beginning of my fieldwork, whiteness as a theme emerged through references to other migrants in Finland, and young Russian-speakers' visions of themselves within Finland's racialised hierarchies.

A relative experience of commonality and an atmosphere of informality—which I developed with some of my participants due to my Russian background—created challenging situations from an ethical point of view. As I show below, my research participants sometimes tended to express racist views towards other migrants in Helsinki. Such situations reminded me of

Catrin Lundström's (2010) "white spaces of privilege" in ethnographic fieldwork, with the only difference being that Russian-speakers themselves are largely disadvantaged against majority Finns. On the one hand, I wanted to hear more about my participants' feelings and experiences, while on the other, I did not want to confirm and reproduce their racist views with silence. The solution was that I tried to intervene in their assumptions about 'race', stating that I disagree with their ideas, and offering different interpretations of other migrants' unemployment.

"You dream of success but then you become unemployed"

The absence of work, and subsequent social downgrading, provoked strong emotional responses, indicating the importance of decent work for young Russian-speakers' perceptions of self-worth in Finland. As one of my participants Alexey[3] summarised, "you dream you will become wealthy and successful, and then you move to Finland, become unemployed, and receive unemployment benefits". Similarly to others, Alexey expressed his frustration with being positioned in a stigmatised category of dependency. Their inability to find decent work, and their resulting lower social status—especially for those who obtained higher education degrees—left my participants feeling frustrated, tired, and disappointed. They not only suffered from the loss or absence of a secure work-based identity, but also from the loss of their white privilege, which those coming from a majority background experienced. My research participants found themselves in long-term periods of unemployment rotating with short-term work contracts and felt trapped in unpaid work trials or labour activation courses. Some, like Maria, mentioned cases of discrimination when applying for jobs in Finland:

MARIA: The woman said straight to my face: "Yes, you would be fit for this job, but how can we employ you if you are an Estonian national?"
DARIA: So you think it matters that you are not a Finn when trying to get a job here?
MARIA: Totally, it does.

Maria has lived in Finland since she was 12 years old and has extensive work experience in the Finnish cleaning and customer service sectors. After finishing school in Finland, Maria obtained short-term work contracts that rotated with periods of unemployment. This struggle to secure a better and more permanent job left her thinking about migrating elsewhere, which I discuss later.

I was also told stories about when Russian-speaking migrants had to quit heavy physical work such as cleaning, due to injuries and health problems. After quitting cleaning work, many had problems finding work in other sectors. Olga, a young woman with higher education living in Finland, told me how she had to take painkillers every day in order to be able to do cleaning work. She told me that when she visited a doctor, he told her: "If you have

education in a different field, you would best quit cleaning, it is bad for your health". Olga told me she decided to leave her job knowing that she might have few chances finding work elsewhere.

Egor—a Lithuanian national who moved to Finland from Russia—also told me how he worked in a warehouse for ten hours a day to compete with others for a permanent work contract, in order to provide his wife with a family reunification residence permit. Once his wife moved to Finland, he quit his job and became unemployed, subsequently facing difficulties finding a better job in other sectors. Besides difficulties with employment, my interviewees would also frequently mention how they try to avoid speaking Russian in public places in their everyday lives. For example, Egor mentioned how he was once assaulted in the street once the perpetrators heard him speaking Russian:

> I was walking on the street, and two girls started looking at me. They first looked very friendly and smiled at me. But when I passed by, they heard that I was speaking Russian on the phone, so they threw a chocolate wrapper at me and said: "Yuck, smelly Russian!"

In this case, his audible visibility (Toivanen 2013) as a Russian-speaker in public space made him identifiable as a Russian, resulting in assault. This shows multiple processes of racialisation when language and accents are also at play in the processes of othering.

Even though my interviewees often laughed while presenting these stories as funny and meaningless, these and many other examples from my interview data show that young Russian-speakers do face hostile treatment—what Philomena Essed (1991) has conceptualised as "everyday racism". This means that some Russian-speakers face everyday, mundane, negative attitudes towards them by the Finnish majority. It also shows how they experience their structural position in Finland and the obstacles they face on their ways to employment. Unable to get the jobs they are qualified for, my participants with qualifications have been left without secure work-based identities that challenged their subjectivities as skilled professionals and workers.

It is these power structures—and Russian-speakers' vulnerabilities in Finland—through which I interpret their racialising arguments related to welfare chauvinism against other migrants. Relational identity work and the making of boundaries takes place in the process of defining one group's status against other groups, and is manifested in unequal access to, and unequal distribution of, resources and social opportunities, as Lamont and Molnár (2002, p. 168) have argued. I now move to explain how whiteness produced vis-à-vis other groups allows them to construct respectable worker identities.

Becoming white and deserving welfare claimants

In the interview, Lisa, who grew up in Finland and obtained a Finnish education, told me that she found it difficult to find work in Finland, and how

she was conscious of the fact that employers can hear her Russian accent on the phone and read her Russian name in job applications. However, she added that it is not Russians who are discriminated against, but:

> Muslims are discriminated against, and I can totally understand why. It is their own fault that they don't want to understand Finnish culture. Why do Western countries allow them here? So that they would accept Finnish culture. But they are in their own world, they don't want to achieve anything. They just sit at home, they are given all the welfare, as Finland is a wealthy country, while they just do nothing. Have you seen them working anywhere? I saw only one Somali girl working in a shop.
> Daria: What if they just can't find work, just like you?
> Then you need to go somewhere, do something, be active and not stay at home. Just like me, for example, I am going to get a hygiene pass [*hygieniapassi*, a requirement for working in cafes and restaurants in Finland], it is useful anyway.

Although Lisa is concerned that her Russian origin may be an obstacle in Finland, those whose discrimination she justifies and explains are 'them'—"Muslims". Several intertwining discourses are depicted in this narrative. Lisa reproduces racialised discourses of welfare chauvinism, demarcating the boundaries of who is entitled to benefits and who is not. It is constituted through the convergence of racialised and neoliberal discourses of activeness and 'race': deserving, active, white Western 'us', and undeserving, lazy, racialised 'them'. The discourse of welfare chauvinism is mobilised to draw the boundaries between respectable citizens—like her—who are unemployed yet active and get a hygiene pass to prove that they don't simply drain resources, and 'them', who exploit the state at the cost of hard-working citizens. The notions of activeness, merits, and achievement—which are at the heart of neoliberal citizenship—are symbolically loaded with racialised meanings, which grant symbolic access to welfare entitlement to people who belong to the 'West' and 'Western values' of work ethic and achievement—"not sitting at home" and "getting a hygiene pass" even when unemployed. The value of work ethic is further reinscribed through the norm of a full-employment society, which is foundational for the Nordic welfare state project (e.g. Esping-Andersen 1990). In addition, Lisa constructs Finnish culture as part of the 'Western world', which she sees herself as having become part of, as opposed to the racialised 'them', who are essentially unable to integrate, and do not recognise Western values. Although unemployed herself and concerned about being identified as a foreigner, Lisa symbolically aligns herself with Finnish culture and the superior and wealthy 'West' through the exclusion of those who are essentialised as outsiders to the Western project, its work ethic, and entitlements for welfare benefits. By mobilising a Muslim 'them', Lisa tries to make her whiteness derived from Russia's racial hierarchies "work"

(Leonard 2013), claiming a position of belonging through her strong work ethic, and deserving position as a welfare recipient.

The constructions of non-white uncivilised Others, through which Russian-speakers' own whiteness is produced, are highlighted in Lyuba's narrative:

> I am not racist but really, they are so uncultured, they come from some desert with no civilisation. And I am sorry to tell this, they smell of food and spices. And then they can't even behave on the bus stop, always rush and push other people.

Lyuba gave this answer when I asked her if she ever felt any problems in Finland because of being from Russia or being a migrant. Similar to the previous example, she referred to a homogenous racialised non-white 'them'. Lyuba depicts Others through the prism of cultural inferiority, through which her own whiteness is constructed. A couple of instances after, in the interview, Lyuba continued talking in an essentialising way about other migrants as welfare recipients, and how they do not fit in her rather well-off neighbourhood in Helsinki:

> I live in [name of the district in the centre of Helsinki], there used to be no Somalis there, three years ago there were none. Now I see them more and more. This is an expensive district; I would not say that the apartments are cheap there. So the state and the welfare must be helping them. Because after two years there are so many of them.

Lyuba claims that Somalis do not have a place in her wealthy neighbourhood and the only way they could get housing in the district is through welfare. Through reifying Somalis as only being able to achieve things through welfare, she excludes them from belonging to the neighbourhood of "wealthy" and hard-working people. Although Lyuba receives unemployment benefits herself, she does not question her place in her district, which shows she values herself as deserving of living and fitting into the neighbourhood. Beverley Skeggs (2004) has argued how locatedness is a way of speaking about class indirectly. 'Race' and class also constitute each other in the making of who can belong to her district. Such a class-based description of wealth and exclusion—of Somalis "on welfare"—suggests how the meanings of whiteness, wealth, and hard work become conflated in her description of the district. In Lyuba's narration, racialised references to culture and "civilisation" go hand in hand with the construction of the boundaries of deservingness and entitlement for welfare. The bodies of non-white Others become sticky with the lack of culture and work ethic (Ahmed 2004), which is why they essentially are "bodies out of place" (Puwar, 2004) that cannot deserve to live in a "wealthy" neighbourhood, unlike her. Both Lisa and Lyuba embraced norms of activeness, merit, and hard work, which tie into heavily racialised notions of non-white people being ascribed with the traits of laziness and a poor work ethic.

Activeness, work ethic, and entitlement thus become synonyms with whiteness: one cannot be deserving, without being white, according to the logic of my research participants. In her research on Swedish migrant women in the US, Catrin Lundström (2017) has shown how, while white housewives are expected to reproduce the nation through their reproductive labour, non-white women in the same position run the risk of being subject to discourses of welfare abuse. Lisa and Lyuba produce a similar narrative: while constructing themselves as white through transnational racialised hierarchies, they simultaneously create space for becoming deserving and entitled welfare claimants, precisely through reproducing discourses of non-white Others abusing the system. I then suggest that they not only construct their racial whiteness through boundary-making, as previously argued (Fox 2013), but also prove their worker-identities and deservingness as welfare claimants in the context of their precarious labour market position.

After an interview in a café, I walked with Vladimir towards a metro station, and he started sharing his views on migration. Vladimir is a history teacher from one of the former Soviet Union republics, who is unemployed, and whose residence in Finland is based on family reunification. His wife found a job in Helsinki, which allowed him to obtain a residence permit in Finland and become entitled to welfare and integration courses. His inability to find non-manual work made him feel frustrated, and he was currently undergoing an integration course to become a car mechanic. Despite his own difficulties, he expressed his anti-immigrant stance, and became entangled in contradictory constructions of migration and welfare. As we left the café, Vladimir started:

VLADIMIR: You know, I am not a supporter of migration. They are just taking all these lazy asses, asylum seekers, who don't even want to work, and who are not able to work. Do you know the points system in Austria? You can migrate only when you get enough points, when you can work in the country. They should only take those people who can work. Do you know how much unemployment benefits [his home country] pays to its citizens? 20 dollars!

DARIA: But how would you then survive in Finland without work yourself?

VLADIMIR: I wouldn't survive! I have a wife who works, and through her I could get the benefits. This is family or work, through which I could migrate here. And they, instead, just come here with no obstacles, they just come so easily while I have a permit based on family reunification and my wife had to work so that I could move here.

Vladimir gets involved in a thinking which contradicts his own interests—why advocate for the reduction of unemployment benefits and stricter control over migration when being a migrant receiving benefits himself? His narrative reveals the convergence of welfare, migration, and whiteness, as well as his

own insecurities about losing his social status. First, by stating that he does not support migration, he does not refer to himself or his wife, but to "lazy asylum seekers". This reference reconstructs an 'immigrant' figure as someone who is not white, does not work, and 'drains' public resources. He then emphasises that although he is without work, his own residence in Finland and welfare benefits were *deserved* through his wife's work, and were not just *granted* to him, unlike asylum seekers. Yet, he feels that these efforts were not fully rewarded, as he moved to Finland only to lose his social status, having to study to become a car mechanic while not being economically active. He then sees "asylum seekers" as having their residence and welfare benefits supposedly granted by the state "with no obstacles", rather than deserving them through hard work. When I asked Vladimir how he would then survive himself in Finland in the system he proposed, he immediately distanced himself from a position of a 'dependent migrant' by stating that he would not, in fact, drain public resources and would rely on his wife's work.

What Vladimir's contradictory narrative reveals is his own insecurity about being positioned as a 'migrant on welfare', similar to those he deems inferior to him through considering himself white. Whiteness then works as a form of distinction, and a resource to disassociate from a 'migrant' figure who is racialised as non-white and on welfare. When failure has become an individual and moral responsibility rather than a result of structural forces, people draw on various resources to prove that they just happened to fail once, and are in fact good workers, rather than those who systematically abuse the system.

A similar construction of belonging and respectability through whiteness and work ethic is demonstrated by Maria's case. Maria—who gave an example of discrimination against her Estonian nationality in the previous section—spoke about her plans to move to Norway, which, according to her, provides a lot more opportunities for workers, and is a destination for people willing to work, rather than receive unemployment benefits:

MARIA: I don't want to stay in Finland. I want to move to Norway. It is not an EU member, it has higher standards of living and better wages. Also, those who want to work move there, and not those who want to receive unemployment benefits, suck money from the state, and wait until it offers something, like asylum seekers do. They are also cutting welfare in Finland, education and health care, nowhere are unemployment benefits so small like in Finland, you can't live on them—even though I have always paid 24 percent of taxes when I worked. Also these asylum seekers coming here …

DARIA: What's wrong with them?

MARIA: Because they just come here to do nothing, they do nothing so they cut from other people in order to maintain all the lazy asylum seekers.

Exactly like in previous cases, Maria is placed in a similar structural position like other migrants who might not have access to desired jobs, and who

instead work in precarious low-paid jobs. However, as Maria says herself, neither hard work nor paying taxes guarantee social security once the work contract is over. She resents that resources are distributed 'unfairly', and that as a taxpayer she was not rewarded with liveable welfare benefits. This is why she aspires to move to a place with better opportunities. Yet, Maria constructs herself as a respectable worker-citizen: as a taxpayer in Finland and a potential worker—rather than a benefits claimant—in Norway. She draws the contours of respectable citizenship by claiming that asylum seekers are instead the ones who take without contributing to the system. While the neoliberal citizenship regime promises success and inclusion for hard workers, these promises are not met, as Maria says, due to austerity and rolling back welfare services (see also Mäkinen 2017). Her insecurity about her life precarity is then channelled towards "asylum seekers", who are depicted as not having the capacity for economic productivity, due to their 'cultural background'.

What is common among all these narratives by young Russian-speakers is insecurity about their own social position, and feelings of failure and misrecognition, despite considering themselves to be white hard-working citizens. It feeds their claim that they should be positioned differently in Finnish society and labour markets, and not be considered 'migrants on welfare'. These narratives also show their disillusionment with the promise of success through education, hard work, and a strong work ethic. Their stigmatisation of other migrants should then be read as an attempt to prove that they are not failures, not 'migrants on benefits', but rather are without work temporarily. When unemployment is understood within the domain of "failed citizenship" (Anderson, 2015), then both "racist ideological syntax" (Hall 1997, p. 341) that circulate in public discussions and normative whiteness become mobilised as a resource to create distinctions between 'us' and 'them'. In fact, both would have similar interests in pursuing anti-racist struggles.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I analysed how young unemployed Russian-speaking migrants who receive welfare benefits contour themselves as deserving of respectable citizenship, through re-inscribing themselves into whiteness by racialising Others. Racialising discourses of welfare chauvinism have found a fertile ground among people who themselves carry the stigma of being a racialised Other who has lost a sense of respectable work-based identity. I have argued that their racialisation of Others should be read against the backdrop of neoliberalised citizenship and class relations, as well as the rise of worker-citizenship, from which many Russian-speakers have been excluded through racialisation and unemployment. They have produced the norm of work, activeness, and merit as a grounds for inclusion to the nation—a position from which they have been simultaneously excluded.

Yet, rather than questioning and challenging the neoliberal work-based construction of citizenship that failed them, they have mobilised a racialised

logic of deservingness. Racialised non-white Others were perceived as naturally lacking the culture of work, and thus are essentially unable to become the 'deserving' unemployed. Thus, through depicting non-white Others as lazy, they disassociated themselves from people in a similar structural position and constructed themselves as 'deserving' welfare claimants. My participants' racialisation of Others should then be analysed not just as a racial subjugation of Others, but as an attempt to reinscribe themselves into citizenship to resist a stigmatised subject position of a 'dependent migrant' with no access to respectable jobs.

The stories I have discussed are also the narratives of insecurity of being regarded a failure in worker-citizenship. Their stigmatisation of asylum seekers and racialised migrants should be read as an attempt to dis-identify with those in a similar position to their own (see also Krivonos 2017). Their transnational racial knowledge which positions them as white, and above non-white groups, works as a resource to distance themselves from the racialised undeserving poor and to produce respectability. These contradictory narratives thus indicate a powerful convergence around the norm of whiteness, work ethic, and welfare entitlement; how racism breaks class solidarities has long been studied.

In a similar way, in a neoliberal citizenship regime, the struggle is centred around notions of entitlement and deservingness. Unemployment is not only perceived as individual failure and a lack of work ethic, but as a pathological trait of certain racialised groups. Although as old as colonialism itself (Fanon 1961), racial depictions of non-white others as lazy and lacking discipline easily tie into contemporary neoliberal discourses of activeness, hard work, and merit, as well as stigmatisation through passivity and dependency. According to this logic, while the unemployed whites just happen to fall on hard times, the non-white Others are essentialised as indolent and unable to be part of a competitive nation. Centuries-old colonial depictions of non-white people as lazy and lacking work ethic become an opportunity for contested whites, such as Russian-speakers, to mobilise racial hierarchies to show that they are deserving and failed just by chance—precisely because they consider themselves white. Contemporary neoliberal capitalist ideologies formed around the centrality of a strong work ethic, the rolling-back of welfare, and the impetus for individual responsibility thus tie into the norm of whiteness in a particularly felicitous way.

Notes

1 The chapter develops ideas discussed in Krivonos (2017) on young unemployed Russian-speaking migrants' claims to whiteness in Finland. The chapter discusses the argument in relation to the notions of welfare entitlement and deservingness.

2 Russian-speaking migrants are the largest migrant group in Finland, representing one quarter (66,379 people) of all foreign-born nationals in Finland (Statistics Finland 2017). Besides Russian migrants coming from Russia, Russian-speaking migrants also come from former Soviet Union republics such as Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and the Baltic States. My

participants testified that due to their mother tongue, many of them are actually identified as Russians by Finns; 'mother tongue' is used as a classificatory system to define persons with a foreign background in Finland.

3 All the names are pseudonyms.

References

Ahmed, Sara (2004) 'Collective feelings'. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 21(2): 25–42

Anderson, Bridget (2015) '"Heads I win. Tails you lose". Migration and the worker citizen'. *Current Legal Problems*, 68(1): 1–18

Bonnett, A. (2008) 'White studies revisited'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31 (1): 185–196

Census (2010) Russian Census 2010. Available from http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm

Davydova-Minguet, Olga (2017) 'Suomen venäjänkielinen media ja monietninen julkisuus'. *IDÄNTUTKIMUS*, 3: 3–19

DuBois, W.E.B. (1935) *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880*. New York: Harcourt, Brace

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990) *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Essed, P. (1991) Sage series on race and ethnic relations, Vol. 2. *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications

Essed, Philomena (2006) *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Fanon, Franz (1961) *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press

Fox, Jon E. (2013) 'The uses of racism: Whitewashing new Europeans in the UK'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36 (11): 1871–1889. doi:10.1080/01419870.2012.692802

Garner, Steve (2006) 'The uses of whiteness: What sociologists working on Europe can draw from US research on whiteness'. *Sociology*, 40(2): 257–275

Garner, Steve (2012) 'A moral economy of whiteness: Behaviours, belonging and Britishness'. *Ethnicities*, 12(4): 445–464. doi:10.1177/1468796812448022

Habel, Y. (2012) 'Challenging Swedish Exceptionalism? Teaching While Black', in *Education in the Black Diaspora: Perspectives, Challenges, and Prospects*, edited by Freeman, K. and Johnson, E. Routledge: New York and London

Haikkola, Lotta (2011) 'Transnational and local negotiations of identity. Experiences from second generation young people in Finland'. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 1(3): 156–165. doi:10.2478/v10202–10011–0019–0018

Hall, S. (1997) 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', in *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, edited by King, E. (pp. 41–68). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Harrell, Allison, S. Soroka and K. Ladner. (2014) 'Public opinion, prejudice and the racialization of welfare in Canada'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37(14): 2580–2597. doi:10.1080/01419870.2013.851396

Ignatiev, N. (1995) *How the Irish Became White*. London: Routledge

Jokinen, Eeva, Könönen, J., Venäläinen, J. and Vähämäki, J. (2011) *Yrittäkää edes! Prekarisaatio Pohjois-Karjalassa*. [You'd better try! Precarisation in North-Karelia] Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto

Jørgensen, Martin Bak and Thomsen, Trine Lund (2016) 'Deservingness in the Danish context: Welfare chauvinism in times of crisis'. *Critical Social Policy*, 36(3): 1–22. doi:10.1177/0261018315622012

Kananen, Johannes (2012) 'Nordic paths from welfare to workfare: Danish, Swedish and Finnish labour market reforms in comparison'. *Local Economy: The Journal of the Local Economy Unit*, 27(5–6)

Keskinen, Suvi (2016) 'From welfare nationalism to welfare chauvinism: Economic rhetoric, the welfare state and changing asylum policies in Finland'. *Critical Social Policy*, 36(3): 1–19. doi:10.1177/0261018315624170

Keskinen, Suvi, S. Tuori, S. Irni, and D. Mulinari. eds. (2009) *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate

Keskinen, Suvi, C.O. Norocel and M.B. Jorgnesen. (2016) 'The politics and policies of welfare chauvinism under the economic crisis. Introduction to the Special Issue of welfare chauvinism'. *Critical Social Policy*, 36(3), pp. 1–9

Krivonos, D. (2015). '(Im)mobile lives. Young Russian women's narratives of work and citizenship insecurities in Finland'. *Sosiologia*, 52(4), 350–363

Krivonos, Daria (2017) 'Claims to whiteness: Young unemployed Russian-speakers' declassificatory struggles in Finland'. *The Sociological Review*, 66(6), 1145–1160

Krivonos, Daria (2019) 'The making of gendered "migrant workers" in youth activation: the case of young Russian-speakers in Finland'. *Current Sociology*, 67(3): 401–418

Lamont, Michèle and Molnár, V. (2002) 'The study of boundaries in social sciences'. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28: 167–195

Leinonen, Johanna (2012) 'Invisible immigrants, visible expats? Americans in Finnish discourses on immigration and internationalization'. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 2(3): 213–223. doi:10.2478/v10202–10011–0043–0048

Lens, Vicky and Cary, Collen (2010) 'Negotiating the discourse of race within the United States welfare system'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33(6): 1032–1048. doi:10.1080/01419870903259538

Leonard, Pauline (2010) *Expatriate Identities in Postcolonial Organisations*. Surrey: Routledge

Leonard, Pauline (2013) 'Making whiteness work in South Africa: A translabour approach'. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 36 (Jan–Feb): 75–83. doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2012.08.003

Loftsdóttir, Kristin (2017) '"Being the damned foreigner": Affective national sentiments and racialisation of Lithuanians in Iceland'. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 7(2): 70–78

Lundström, Catrin (2010) 'White ethnography: (Un)comfortable conveniences and shared privileges in field-work with Swedish migrant women'. *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 18(2): 70–87.doi:10.1080/08038741003755467

Lundström, Catrin (2014) *White Migrations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave

Lundström, Catrin (2017) 'The White side of migration: Reflections on race, citizenship and belonging in Sweden'. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 7(2): 79–87

McDowell, Linda (2008) 'On the Significance of Being White: European Migrant Workers in the British Economy in the 1940s and 2000s', Chapter 5 in *New Geographies of Race and Racism*, edited by Dwyer, C. and Bressey, C.Aldershot: Ashgate

McDowell, Linda (2009) 'Old and new European economic migrants: Whiteness and managed migration policies', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(1): 19–36.

Mäkinen, Katariina (2017) 'Struggles of citizenship and class: Anti–immigration activism in Finland'. *The Sociological Review*, 65: 218–234

Nowicka, M. (2017) '"I don't mean to sound racist but…" Transforming racism in transnational Europe'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Advance online publication. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1302093

Puwar, Nirmal (2004) *Space Invaders: Gender, Race and Bodies Out of Place*. Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers

Rastas, Anna (2005) 'Racializing categorisation among young people in Finland', *Young*, 13(2): 147–166

Schiller, Nina Glick. (2010) 'A Global Perspective on Transnational Migration: Theorising Migration Without Methodological Nationalism', in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, edited by Bauböck, Rainer and Faist, Thomas, 109–131. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press

Skeggs, Beverley (2004) *Class, Self, Culture*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge

Sotkasiira, Tiina (2016) *Russian Borderlands in Change: North Caucasian Youth and the Politics of Bordering and Citizenship*. London: Routledge

Statistics Finland (2013) Employment Statistics 2011 (Database). Population by Main Type of Activity, Language, Occupational Status, Sex and Year. Retrieved from http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__tyokay/027_tyokay_tau_104.px/?rxid=4a24d8b1-c9fb-484c-99a8-1ba44edf1c22

Statistics Finland (2014) Employment 2011. Occupation and Socio-Economic Status. http://www.stat.fi/til/tyokay/2011/04/tyokay_2011_04_2013-11-06_tie_001_en.html (Accessed March 11, 2018)

Statistics Finland (2017) Population Structure. http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk_vaesto.html (Accessed March 27, 2018)

Tanttu, J. (2009) *Venäjänkielisenä Suomessa 2008: Selvitys Vähemmistövaltuutetulle* [Russian-Speakers in Finland 2008: Minorities Report]. Helsinki: Edita

Tlostanova, Madina (2003) *A Janus-Faced Empire*. Moscow: Blok

Toivanen, Mari (2013) 'Language and negotiations of identities among young Kurds in Finland'. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 3(1): 27–35