Racialised Integration: Arabic-Speaking Refugees and Immigrants' Experiences on the Paradoxes of Integration

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ABSTRACT

Finland's integration policy is praised for its inclusivity and for guaranteeing equal opportunities. This paper examines how integration processes work within such an ideal image. Building on theoretical and critical discussions of integration and racialisation, we approach integration as a mechanism of racialisation and discuss the consequences of racialised integration practices for Arabic-speaking refugees and immigrants living in Finland. We move beyond the established discussions of high unemployment rates among refugees and immigrants and provide a critical examination of the reasons for their unemployment. We argue that while the national integration policy officially promotes equality and even antiracism, integration practices themselves can be racialising, affecting people's access to and opportunities for employment.

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INTRODUCTION

Silence on racism, including a failure and reluctance to discuss race and racialisation, has been an enduring feature around Europe (Lentin 2020). It was only in 2020 that the European Union (EU) launched its first ever action plan on anti-racism and tackling structural racism (EC 2020a). However, studies have continuously highlighted how racism constitutes one of the major barriers for refugees and immigrants' access to equal opportunities (e.g. Chang & Holm 2017; Kurki 2019; Lentin & Titley 2011). The effects of structural racism on refugees and immigrants can be seen, for example, in higher unemployment rates, being over-educated for one's job and living with mental distress (Biagi, Grubanov & Mazza 2020; Bucken-Knapp, Omanović & Spehar 2020; Fortier 2017; Kurki & Brunila in press; Masoud, Kurki & Brunila 2020; Risberg & Romani 2021).

In the Nordic countries, where unemployment rates and over-education among refugees and immigrants are even higher than in the other OECD countries (Jervelund, Krasnik & De Lasson 2020), racism and how it operates in and through integration has not yet been discussed or acknowledged profoundly (see, however, Hervik 2019; Keskinen & Andreassen 2017; Kurki 2019). In this paper, we focus on Finland, a country that is continuously ranked among the top countries on the integration policies list according to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX 2015, 2020). However, we challenge such indexes and rankings, and argue that they fail to address experiences of people involved in integration practices, including experiences of racism and racialisation. We move beyond the established discussions of high unemployment rates among refugees and immigrants to avoid 'producing a narrative of constant failure, which can prove counter-productive if the goal is to create better integration policies' (Hernes et al. 2019: 15). Instead, we contribute to the thought that integration, as a concept, policy, practice and research field, needs to be problematised more thoroughly and more attention should be paid to the critical approaches that highlight the power relations and differences produced in and through integration practices (Hadj Abdou 2019; Korteweg 2017).

Despite the abundance of integration research, there is still a lack of studies that address the effectiveness of labour market programmes and other initiatives on specific refugee and immigrant groups. Existing research has mostly focussed on unemployed immigrants in general (Andersson Joona 2019; Yijälä & Luoma 2019). Therefore, in this paper, we contribute to these gaps in the research by problematising integration as a concept and a practice. We focus on racialised experiences of integration of Arabic-speaking refugees and immigrants, especially those who are long-term unemployed and live in very precarious positions in the 'wheel of integration' (Kurki 2019).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: RACIALISATION AND FINNISH EXCEPTIONALISM

The concept of racialisation, introduced by Fanon (1963) and further developed by several scholars (e.g. Miles 1989; Mulinari & Neergaard 2017), enables the examination of the lived experiences of people who are racialised as non-white. Racialisation adds to the discussion on race as a social construction, an understanding of the processes that make race significant through societal power relations (Garner 2010; Hochman 2018; Keskinen & Andreassen 2017; Phoenix 2005). As a concept, it highlights the importance of individual experiences of being racialised that are unique, non-static and can carry specific meanings for different people depending on their various experiences and positionalities (Gonzalez-Sobrino & Goss 2019; Hochman 2018; Phoenix 2005).

Discussing both race and racialisation is important as the term race alone can have misleading assumptions implying that those who belong to the same socially and culturally constructed race have identical experiences of racialisation (Anthias 2016). The discussion is also important in order to avoid seeing non-white people always (and only) as racialised 'others'. Instead, we should reflect on what Ahmed calls as 'modes of encounter', which means understanding how and in which ways social processes shape the 'other'. By doing so, we do not 'hold the other in place, or to turn her into a theme, concept or thing' (Ahmed 2000: 145).

Racialisation is also the production and outcome of unequal power relations (Anthias 2016; Garner 2010), through which racial and racialised meanings become attached to social issues, including integration and unemployment. As Murji and Solomos (2005) argue, those issues are usually represented as social problems which should be tackled with a critical lens bringing to the surface the constructed categorisations, differences and inequalities. Just like race, refugee, immigrant and asylum seeker are race-related terms and also socially constructed (Kurki 2019; Rosvall et al. 2019).

As previous studies show, integration itself constitutes refugees and immigrants as racialised 'others' (e.g. Korteweg 2017; Kurki 2019; Masoud, Holm & Brunila 2019). This racialising aspect of integration is not, however, easily acknowledged as the Nordic countries, Finland included, are preferably perceived with notions of 'exceptionalism' when it comes to racism and the colonial histories (Keskinen 2020; Mulinari & Neergaard 2017). The notion of Nordic exceptionalism is historically related to the idea of the 'Nordic race' being superior. Today, it is associated with the Nordics being portrayed as model countries in equality, democracy, tolerance and social cohesion (Brunila & Edström 2013; Hervik 2019). At the same time, however, it means denying any engagement with both the historical and present-day colonialism and its effects on the colonised. As Vuorela (2009) states, although Finland never was an official coloniser, through its 'colonial complicity' it cannot be considered innocent from conveying colonial influence. The belief of exceptionalism has made racism appear as something not engrained in Finland's history and its social structures (Rastas 2012; Vuorela 2009). To dismantle and decolonise this misperception, operating also in integration, examining integration as a mechanism of racialisation is imperative (Keskinen & Andreassen 2017; Kurki & Brunila in press).

PROBLEMATISING INTEGRATION

Hadj Abdou (2019) highlights how integration is a vague concept that allows it to be manipulated by political agendas. Integration is regarded as an important practice for refugees and immigrants to become 'full' members and good citizens of the integrating society. A good citizen becomes understood as someone who represents the neoliberal subjectivity by being autonomous, resilient and continuously cultivating skills (Anderson 2013; Fortier 2017) in a society which functions based on shared principles, values and equality. This imagined 'integrated society' obscures inequalities and makes integration a project that defends society's values from 'outsiders', mainly non-white 'others' (Anderson 2013; Hadj Abdou 2019). Considering refugees and immigrants as 'not yet full members' of the society but in need of practices making them good citizens, show how problematic, racialising and othering, integration as a concept and a practice is (Anderson 2013; Korteweg 2017; Kurki 2019).

As Bhambra (2016) argues, we need to understand colonial histories and their present effects, as the failure to do so misleads us into not seeing integration as a neo-colonial project. Schinkel (2018) notes that measuring degrees of integration for instance carries

the risks of (re)producing neo-colonial practices. This is because integration builds on the colonial history and its power relations of racial categorisations and othering. Wieviorka (2014) suggests that integration should be understood as a social construction in order to problematise it more thoroughly as a concept and a practice and to understand how integration contributes to the distinction between different social groups based on labels, such as those of refugees and immigrants. Thus, an antiracist approach is needed to understand integration, which could underline and dismantle power structures that produce racialised constructions (Saharso 2019). Given that the concept of integration is used in the politics and everyday practices of integration, we cannot escape it, but we can scrutinise its meanings and consequences. Therefore, in this paper, we utilise integration critically and show how integration becomes a racialising practice shaping the experiences of Arabic-speaking refugees and immigrants.

INTEGRATION POLICY AND PRACTICES IN FINLAND

To understand the problematics of integration in practice, a look at the EU's action plans and policies and their understanding of integration is essential as they have consequences for national agendas too. At the EU level, the main document on integration is the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (EC 2020b), which goes in line with other EU strategies for achieving inclusion for refugees, immigrants, and for the first time, EU citizens with migrant backgrounds. Compared to the previous versions, the 2020 action plan also claims to prioritise actions towards anti-discrimination in line with the first EU Anti-Racism Action Plan (EC 2020a). A common goal in the action plans is to foster active individuals in economic terms, capable of achieving long-term integration amidst acknowledged hardships (EC 2020a; EC 2020b). The Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion includes also four key areas for integration, employment remaining as its main focus. In this regard, the new European Skills Agenda for Sustainability, Competitiveness, Social fairness and Resilience (EC 2020c) forms an integral part of the EU's integration policy as it also emphasises making refugees and immigrants employable individuals (Masoud, Kurki & Brunila 2020), but with a new focus on resilience:

> For the individual, improving resilience through skills means reducing dependence on market conditions and increasing his or her potential to navigate through life and professional transitions. (EC 2020c)

In Finland too, integration policy is described as inclusive and anti-discriminatory. In 2019, a Parliamentary Audit Committee report required a thorough reform of the Finnish integration policy and practices acknowledging that the current policy has not been successful and new solutions are needed to remedy the situation. Language capacities and labour market access were listed among the main challenges (Parliament of Finland 2019). As a result, in 2021, an action plan was formulated suggesting the need to enhance integration especially at the early stages of migration. The action plan also acknowledged that racism exists in the Finnish society and affects refugees and immigrants' education, employment and mental health (Finnish Government 2021).

However, as we and other scholars have shown, regardless of inclusivity and anti-discrimination, integration practices are entangled with social structures that contribute to the exclusion of people involved in integration (Kurki 2019; Masoud, Holm & Brunila 2019; Masoud, Kurki & Brunila 2020). Ahmad (2020), for instance, has documented several discriminatory practices against people with foreign names and its effects on their integration into the labour market. The study focussed on

the children of immigrants, as the common assumption is that if people were born and raised in Finland, speak Finnish and have been educated in the Finnish education system, despite a family history of immigration, they are better integrated and face fewer inequalities and discrimination. However, Ahmad shows, having a non-Finnish name is a hindrance to getting a job or even invitation to the job interview despite having the requisite skills and experience. The Diversity Barometer 2020 equally showed that 39% of Human Resources experts participating in the barometer indicated that a foreign name is a disadvantage for the applicant (Bergbom, Toivanen & Väänänen 2020). Similarly, a study conducted by Lehmuskunnas, Sandqvist and Roth (2020) revealed that half of the Finnish companies interviewed perceived that immigrants from certain countries are incapable of working effectively and efficiently. Middle Eastern and African countries were the ones that company representatives were not content with hiring workers from. These findings show that it is not only newcomers who are subjected to discrimination and racism within Finnish society at large, including integration and employment, but also the so-called second-generation immigrants, especially those of non-European origin and with a non-Finnish-sounding name (see also Non-Discrimination Ombudsman 2020).

Studies also show Finnish exceptionalism and racialising stereotypes existing within integration services effecting the integration process itself. In Bodström's (2020) study on integration information packages targeted at newcomers it is evident how the packages exclude important issues that reveal the unappealing aspects of Finland, racism included. Instead, the packages depict work as an activity and space of equal encounters, where everyone can be happy and treated equally. At the same time, the packages construct stereotypical racial representation by depicting the Finns valuing work while for refugees and immigrants work is depicted as an objective for integration. Also Intke-Hernandez and Holm (2015) show how integration programmes for stay-at-home mothers can be a space of silencing but also a space for resistance. They demonstrate how such a space represents specific knowledge and devalues other forms of knowledge, which is referred to as a western approach and learning to do things in the 'Finnish way'. Kurki, Brunila and Lahelma (2019) in turn reveal that career guidance in educational institutions for immigrant students is not only racialising but also gendering. The study shows how guiding immigrants, young immigrant women in particular, to care work was justified by teachers and career counsellors as well-intentioned practice to get them employed and integrated. The guidance to care work was, however, shown to be gendering and racialising, as the suitability was said to be based on 'natural' skills for care work (Kurki 2008).

In Finland, once an adult with refugee or immigrant status has registered as unemployed job-seeker at the Employment Office, they are entitled to integration and labour market services (TE Services) where an individual integration and employment plan is prepared. Participating in TE Services is considered a gateway to better opportunities for refugees and immigrants to become equal members of the Finnish society (TE Services n.d.). The services are offered to anyone who is unemployed and intends to develop their labour market, life management and workforce skills. The services also include a variety of integration training specifically for refugees or immigrants that become part of the integration plan, such as language training, labour market skills development, career guidance, vocational education and other services. As employment remains the most important indicator when evaluating successful integration, employability and becoming employable is the main focus of integration practices (Jervelund, Krasnik & De Lasson 2020; Masoud, Kurki & Brunila 2020). The emphasis on other skills however complies with the World Health Organization's understanding on the importance of

life skills as 'abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. In particular, life skills are psychosocial competencies' (World Health Organization 2003).

The received vocational and career guidance on integration is offered by psychologists and other experts at the Employment Offices (MEAE 2020a). Involving psychologists in integration guidance is related to Finland's vocational and career guidance system, established based on psychology (Toni & Vuorinen 2020). Psychological guidance is part of the Government's Lifelong Guidance Strategy that aims to assist transitions to work life through career planning, vocational guidance, identifying competences, providing advice and other support (MEAE 2020a; see also Brunila et al. 2020). Such guidance, however, has multiple shortcomings. A current report by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment indicates, for instance, that the 'service quality was considered uneven and not everyone felt that they had benefited from the service. The most expressed criticism was that the guidance should have been more specific' (MEAE 2020b: 5). Studies also show how refugees and immigrants struggle more than any other unemployed group (Jervelund, Krasnik & De Lasson 2020) and how guidance and teaching do not tackle racism in services or integration practices (Masoud, Holm & Brunila 2019, see also Rosvall et al. 2019 on the Swedish context).

In the following sections, we introduce our data and analytical approach followed by an analysis utilising the empirical data to scrutinise integration practices, and reveal racialised practices of integration experienced by Arabic-speaking refugees and immigrants.

DATA AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH

This paper is part of Masoud's ethnographic study conducted in 2017–2018 in two educational institutions providing vocational training, located in Southern Finland[1] where Masoud participated in and observed vocational programmes of practical nursing, childcare, construction and mechanics. In the first educational institution, programme participants were expected to have B.1. level of Finnish language (equal to language skills of an independent user of Finnish) and already finished one year of pre-vocational training. In the second institution, participants could enrol in the programme regardless of their Finnish language level.

To produce the data, Masoud spent an average of two days per week (for 15 days/programme) observing each programme during the first year of studies. During the second year, Masoud focussed on conducting individual interviews with 30 students, five teachers and trainers, three professionals of integration services working at the institutions, and a group interview with three policy makers. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted around 1.5 hours. In addition, 15 EU and national policy documents on integration, immigration and employment were gathered and analysed.

We coded the data thematically. For this paper we focus on the theme of racialisation, which emerges among participant interviews. The extracts we chose for this paper show similarities of shared experiences in terms of racialisation in integration. The

1 Before commencing the data collection process, a research permit was obtained from the municipality. A meeting was held with the programme manager of each institution and discussed the research and data collection plan. All research participants have signed a consent form in which Masoud explained the research. The forms also ensured their privacy, and their names or any personal information will not be mentioned. We use pseudonyms in this paper.

focus is on individual interviews conducted with twenty Arabic-speaking refugees[2] (15 men, five women) and a group interview with five Arabic-speaking non-refugee immigrants (all women). All interviewees participated in the aforementioned vocational programmes as part of their integration plan and employment guidance of two to three years. They were between 20 and 35 years old and all except one had completed educational degree at a university level.

We analysed the data by applying a discursive approach (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine 2017; Bacchi & Bonham 2014; Foucault 1972). We have further developed this approach in our previous work to study education policies and practices and inequalities related to them, and processes of subjectification (e.g. Brunila et al. 2020; Kurki et al. 2018; Masoud, Kurki & Brunila 2020). We understand integration as a discursive practice (Korteweg 2017), shaping the experiences and subjectivities of people involved in integration. As a discursive practice it is embedded in the social and the psyche (psychosocial), shaping the subjectification of refugees and immigrants (see also Fortier 2017; Phoenix 2009). Here, 'psychosocial' demonstrates how inequalities and power relations are formed and reformed 'not only discursively and materially, but also thorough different "anxious states"' (Fortier 2017: 9). In integration this means social constructions affecting the process of integration and how much one invests 'emotionally' in integration (Fortier 2017). This also means that subjects have agency, but agency is manifested through a process of subjectification (Butler 1997). Our attention is therefore directed to the experiences of racialisation produced during participation in integration practices, which enables us to view the power structures connected to integration and their effects on refugees and immigrants' racialised experiences. Through our approach we challenge some self-evidences and silences related to integration and open areas for critical analysis of power that is implicit within integration.

BOUNCING BACK AND RESILIENCE

In the context of integration, resilience contributes to shaping and forming racialised understandings of integration as resilience becomes not only a skill but a subjectivity required from refugees and immigrants. As such, resilient subjectivity creates a 'subaltern resilience or the resilience of the wretched of the earth' (Bracke 2016: 60), meaning that refugees and immigrants who might have suffered from war, continue to suffer while integrating because of racism, unemployment and other forms of injustice. At the same time, they are expected to master resiliency if they want to become 'integratable' subjects (Masoud, Holm & Brunila 2019).

All interviewees involved in this study had been struggling to enter the Finnish labour market and had been guided to participate in further education by the Employment Office to reskill themselves (Masoud, Kurki & Brunila 2020), in other words, to re-construct a desirable form of subjectivity. Below we follow the conversation with Firas who came from Syria as a refugee:

> Firas: I have a master's degree [...] I cannot even remember the number of jobs that I have applied for. I remember I had to show the employment office all the applications and emails I sent. That is when I was again guided to another Finnish course. [...] The Finnish course is good to

2 We use the term refugee because in Arabic the word is used to describe anyone who fled war and/or persecution. It could include for instance people who came to Finland as quota refugees or asylum seekers. The interviewees used the term refugee to describe their experiences. This does not make a difference for purpose of the paper.

> establish knowledge in the Finnish language [...] but it does not really help you to be fluent. I went physically to ask several companies and to show them my CV. I thought it would be good to practise Finnish in a workplace that suits my background and career. I went to many start-ups where they even work in English and Finnish. It did not really help. I ended up going to a day-care centre for two weeks.
>
> Masoud: Did you try to ask for help from the employment office to find a place suitable for your skills and educational background?
>
> Firas: I did. The only thing she was able to give me was a letter as a support, which I can show to each place I apply for. She also kept encouraging me to just stay positive and keep applying [...] employers will appreciate such motivation and positive attitude. [...] By coincidence, I found a programme for international people offered in English and it offers an internship as part of the study module. Actually, I studied all over again the same topics that I had already studied in my master's degree. But I thought it is fine if this leads to an internship then hopefully, I will find a job [...] but the position was given to a Finnish person who was doing the internship at the same time. They actually gave me wonderful feedback, and they said that any company would be lucky to have me and the potential and expertise I have to offer. They always say they are sorry they cannot offer me the position right now. The employment officer told me that's unfortunately the case with many foreigners not only you. But you just learn to get stronger each time and bounce back stronger.

Bouncing back is a form of resilience expected from refugees and immigrants, typically used as an encouragement in every difficulty faced by them. All interviewees mentioned that they were constantly reminded to be resilient for their own good. This is in line with what Bracke (2016) writes about resilience as a desired good and how resilience can be foreseen as the reward for the individual who manages to be the most resilient person amidst challenges and unfairness. Thus, not only to endure, but also to thrive. This type of 'from risk to resilience' approach derives from understanding societal and economic problems as individualised problems and then learning to carry one's own choices and responsibilities. It also means learning to become developmental and trainable as part of the market-oriented integration policies and practices and the making of human capital (Brunila 2012; Kurki et al. 2018). While such an ethos is visible among all individuals labelled as being 'at risk' (Mäkelä, Mertanen & Brunila 2021; Mertanen, Pashby & Brunila 2020), refugees and immigrants face manifold hardships that affect their employment opportunities including language proficiency requirements, having a foreign name, and not least racism. This can be seen in the interview extract above with Firas, who is highly educated and has practically done everything possible. Being a non-white refugee or immigrant, however, determines their access to available opportunities and eradicates previous education and skills, requiring new skills and the ability to bounce back. This was commonly experienced in other interviews as well:

> Jamal: I could not find anything, or actually, it is the opposite. I found plenty of job opportunities, I applied for all of them but with no results [...] I was placed by the TE [Services] in a one-month programme in which I had to go daily and sit at a computer with a group of people and apply for jobs. Someone would sometimes come and help by giving advice like what to change or do differently in the job applications, but nothing more.

Jamal's experience reveals integration as a continuous self-development and self-disciplining project by developing the self throughout 'supporting contexts'. He was expected to master a challenging reality by being told that this way he would get used to the hardships of a job. He was positioned as someone who had never worked before and did not know the work culture while in reality, he had worked in reputable companies in various international contexts. Still, he was told that the one-month training programme was good for him to cultivate self-discipline skills and that he should try to find joy while doing that.

FINDING JOY WHILE BEING RACIALISED

Finding joy and happiness in adversity corresponds to what De La Fabián and Stecher (2017) explain about happiness and how it becomes a prerequisite skill for employment, a radical new form of human capital (see also Brunila, Vainio & Toiviainen 2021). Similarly, in the next extract from an interview with Samer, who came to Finland as a Syrian refugee, was expected to learn how to find inner happiness and optimism, a form of successful resilient subjectivity:

> Samer: I was sending most of my job applications to beverage companies because of my experience in this field [...] after a while not even landing a job interview, I got the chance to talk with a career counsellor. He said that I should reconsider applying for other jobs not in this field. When I asked why, there was a long pause and silence, then he said: 'well [...] OK first of all from your name it is obvious that you are from the Middle East and this is an Arabic name, right? And I don't know if you know, but these companies you are applying for they also produce and sell alcohol. And isn't this like a no no in your culture?'
>
> I have experienced a lot of racism, but it never occurred to me that one reason of not being invited to an interview could be related to the assumption that alcohol is a taboo for all Arabs [...] the counsellor said to me there are other opportunities out there than just beverage companies so find what fits you and most importantly learn to be a positive thinker. I remember him saying that just be positive but in a managed way and smarter. If you know there are risks, then do not apply for a particular job.

Regardless of the counsellor telling Samer to look for other opportunities, he continued to apply for jobs in his field of expertise in addition to other relevant jobs. To break the stereotype attached to alcohol being a taboo for all Arabs, he had ended up adding a clarification about it in his cover letters. This, he explained, was his attempt to break such stereotypes and at the same time an attempt to resist being positioned in the racialised subject position that categorises all Arabs as homogeneous group. Despite his efforts of applying for jobs yet not been invited to interviews or offered employment, for him, these efforts of not submitting to the stereotypes were important even if it meant limiting his chances for employment.

Samer's experiences are also an example of racialised stereotyping and homogenisation of anyone coming from the Middle East and/or having an Arabic name. It disregards diversity, multiple ethnicities and religions among Arabs. While the counsellor might have drawn a generalised conclusion about Arabs, this inflicts implicit assumptions that all Arabs are Muslims and that all Muslims are people who are confined by religious constraints. This also affected the guidance offered by the counsellor, reinforcing racialised assumptions of Muslims as people who are incapable

or unwilling to work in certain industries. These stereotypes attached to Arabs and Islam further shape how individuals from the Middle East are perceived in the labour market and Finnish society at large, affecting their chances of getting employed amid such stereotypes while also wanting to challenge such stereotypes.

The continuous efforts of applying for jobs while fighting against stereotypes can, however, feel exhausting, as explained here by Nadia who came from Iraq:

> Nadia: I could not just wake up and keep applying for jobs anymore [...] I was transferred to talk to a psychologist because I was just too tired and frustrated. He was telling me to go for more walks and play sports. That is the best way to overcome these hardships. 'We cannot change the system, you cannot keep thinking of the past, but you can be positive, oh yes you can.' That is what he was telling me [...] he told me to repeat this sentence several times after him.

While exhaustion is widely recognised as a psychosocial consequence of 'living' integration among mental health professionals working with refugees and immigrants (e.g. Kurki 2020), it remains inadequately addressed in integration practices. Instead of understanding integration as a mechanism that can have negative psychosocial consequences on the body and mind of refugees and immigrants, a 'failure' to integrate is understood as an individualised problem. Studies have indicated, however, that integration process, where one must study and learn new things while also facing hardships in life, can cause stress (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare 2021). A recent study by Kieseppä et al. (2021) also shows that refugees and immigrants report high levels of anxiety, which can attribute to many factors, including discrimination and unemployment. This indicates a need for more inclusive interventions that address socioeconomic and psychosocial issues along with integration practices (Rask 2016). Combined with experiences of racism, challenges of integration can thus invoke mental distress, including exhaustion and frustration. Positivity can indeed become a shield to overcome these challenges but require a lot of emotional investments from the individual, which becomes a form of subjectification. Encouraging people to find happiness amid continuous experiences of racialisation turns the gaze away from structures of integration that contribute to the enduring process of racialisation.

TEMPORALITY AND TOLERANCE

All research participants mentioned that integration professionals, including their teachers, employment officers and career counsellors emphasised how the current situation of integration is only temporary and that the future would be better. To analyse temporality and tolerance, we focus on a group interview with five women who have moved to Finland due to their husbands' work almost a decade ago. Amal, one of the women, demonstrates rather a different picture of the 'better future':

> Amal: I moved to Finland with my husband around ten years ago [...] I have a degree in human resource management and economics but when I came here, I understood the harsh reality that we are needed for specific fields and not welcomed in other fields. So even if I had my degree validated and it is from an accredited university, it doesn't make any difference. If you do not land a job, you are shifted into a different path and you become a different person.

Like other women, Amal was guided to study practical nursing despite having a university degree in another field. She explained how she tried to seek for help to find a job in her field of expertise especially after several rejections. She also asked for advice on what to do when one experiences racism and discrimination, which constantly took place in her everyday life. She mentioned how using words to describe racism were intimidating for teachers and career counsellors. She was instead told:

> Amal: [...] that for you [referring to the fact of being an immigrant, and a mum who stays at home raising children] the best way to get back into society is to spend some years studying. The unfortunate experiences you are facing are temporary, and less discrimination will take place while you are studying.

Riham, another woman in the group interview, has also been living in Finland for almost 10 years, pointed out how challenges related to racism do not become easier and are not indeed temporary:

> Riham: I remember when I discussed with the teacher that many of these experiences were related to the fact that I wear a headscarf. I was advised to do the practical part of my studies in a place where I do not need to encounter many people, because of the way I dress and that means less trouble or racism.

Ascribing living in the integration phase as temporary, claiming that one day life would get better, ignores these kinds of experiences of racism, or at least assumes they are only temporary. Emphasising temporality could be described as 'white ignorance' (Mills 2007), which silences experiences of racism and puts focus on resilience and tolerance instead of acknowledging and challenging racism.

> Salam: During the practical part [of the studies] at a nursing home, I have noticed that I am not given the full trust even after more than nine years living here. I am still perceived as someone who is not fully capable of doing the work [...] which somehow, I understand that the reason could be because I am now still studying, but then it also feels I am not given the chance to practise enough and learn because of the mistrust or fear. I wish people would trust us more, we might even do the work in a better way [...] of course it is not about who is better, but I mean they are missing out on so many skills and diversity at work.

Salam perceived mistrust towards her as racist and undermining. Her experience, just like for the other women in the group, shows how racism is not experienced only by newcomers but also by people who have been part of the Finnish society longer. All these women have encountered racism and discrimination in Finland for years to the extent that they have not been given a chance to succeed or use their skills and knowledge in the labour market. Experiences of racism within the integration system are remarkably similar regardless of their background and reasons of migration.

Integration practices end up silencing certain experiences by claiming that racist incidents are only temporal. For Abeer, highlighting temporality made her unwilling to share her challenges as she considered keeping silent is less exhausting because when she did talk about experiences of racism, she had not been given a solid solution or guidance. Claiming that racism and other challenges during integration are only temporal, discourages people to share their experiences of racism, keeping racialised experiences of integration unchallenged.

Temporality also frames the praising of those 'exceptional' refugees and immigrants who show capacity to face challenges. The women quoted above were constantly commended on their ability to endure unemployment for so long and spending time wisely by raising their children. We argue that thriving within such standards is an example of gratitude politics, where refugees and immigrants are expected to show gratitude especially as the integration phase is considered temporary. Consequently, gratitude politics start constructing refugee and immigrant subjects as '(not-quite-) good-enough' citizens, as 'tolerated subjects' who are somewhere in between the failed citizens and the good citizens (Anderson 2013). The tolerated subjects are the ones who can manage hardships rather than just receive services.

As we have shown in this paper, discursive practices of integration repeatedly create racialised sites and norms. This has long-term outcomes for instance in terms of employment opportunities, being pushed to low-skilled labour, lack of interaction with majority population and being trapped in the wheel of integration (Kurki 2019). Being considered as refugees and immigrants situates them in integration practices which leads them to encounter the described racialised experiences of integration, shaping their experiences and subjectivities. This is why a disruption of power relations is needed, or racism will remain as an incident that takes place occasionally among a few, but is not acknowledged as structural.

CONCLUSION

This paper focuses on Finland, a Nordic country often considered a model of welfare state, equality, equity and educational success. However, as we show, inequalities prevail in welfare policies and their implementation creating and (re)producing an ideal image of integration and integrated refugees and immigrants. Failure to comply with these culturally produced ways of thinking can result in sanctions including the blame that refugees and immigrants are incapable or 'fail' to integrate into society (Kurki 2019).

Our analysis underscores the need to move beyond this common discourse of 'failure' to integrate and instead utilise people's experiences to highlight the problem. Studying integration from anti-racist perspective provides the premise of this paper when looking at integration and racialisation as two different yet inseparable concepts affecting individuals' lives. We therefore call for a recognition of the racialisation of people labelled as refugees and immigrants. We also argue that racial structures embedded in society are key factors in shaping refugees and immigrants' experiences of integration, effecting their access to employment, education and equal opportunities. Our analysis shows how the current approach to integration goes beyond the educational and labour market skill formation, towards governing (Lentin & Titley 2011) and building life skills. In practice, this ends up meaning that integration practices can include anything from resilience and employability to managing racism and mastering the vicious cycle of integration with de-skilling, skilling and reskilling (Kurki 2019; Masoud, Kurki & Brunila 2020).

When looking for alternative ways to construct integration policies and practices, one suggestion based on our analysis is that acknowledgement of the wider societal context with structural inequalities, including racism, and the functioning of the labour market should be taken as a more integral part of integration. Consequently, refugees and immigrants should be better supported to become critically reflexive citizens who can contribute to changing the prevailing racialising power structures, instead of passively adapting to the needs and demands of the integrating society

(see Kurki 2019). To achieve this, professionals working in integration services play an integral role in taking a step forward dismantling structural inequalities, and 'to enact antiracist actions in the daily lives and to consider the effects of racism more broadly in society' (Ministry of Justice 2021). Addressing structural racism as a barrier to integration is essential as even if integration is officially formulated as inclusive and antiracist, integration practices continue to contribute to the exclusion of refugees and immigrants, constituting the paradox of integration.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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