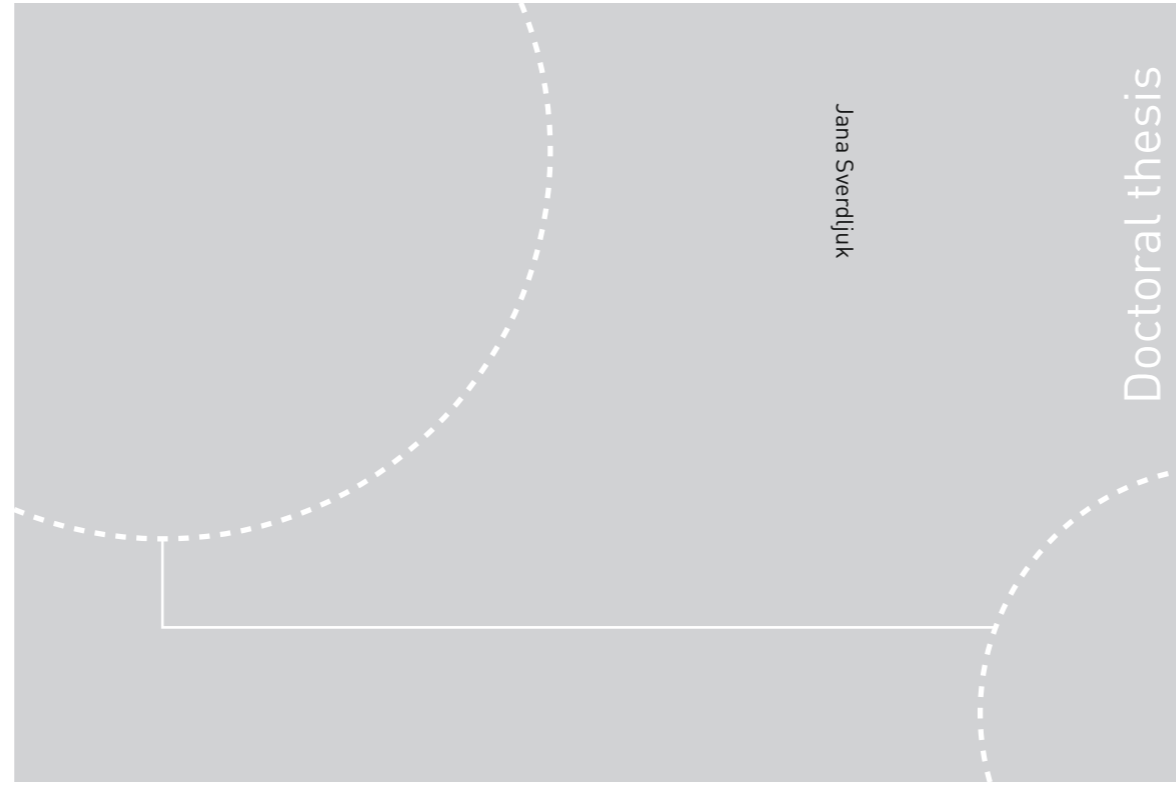


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Jana Sverdljuk

## In the Creative Space of Inclusion

Gender, Sexuality and Ethnicity in the Representations of Migrants in Norway

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**NTNU**  
Norwegian University of Science and  
Technology Thesis for the degree of  
Philosophiae Doctor  
Faculty of Humanities  
Department of Interdisciplinary  
Studies of Culture

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Trondheim, December 2015

Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
Faculty of Humanities  
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## **Abstract**

This doctoral dissertation explores the way in which welfare state professionals and authorities, NGO employees and social work students in Norway represent migrants – Russian women and men from Africa and the Middle East – with regard to gender, sexuality and ethnicity. The main objective of the thesis is to explore whether the representations of migrants generate a tendency towards processes of inclusion or exclusion and marginalisation with respect to Norwegian society. In terms of theory, it draws on the cultural theory of representation (Hall 1997), the Foucaultian concept of subject position (Foucault 1972, 1980) and the post-colonial, post-structuralist feminist theory of intersectionality (Berg et al. 2010; Brah 2003; Lykke 2003, 2005; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006). I argue that professionals tend to represent migrants as ‘traditional’: ‘migrant women in need of liberation’ and ‘foreign macho-men’. That positions persons defined as ‘migrants’ as ‘others’, and lays the grounds for their symbolic and potentially material exclusion from Norway’s ‘gender equal’ society. The analyses presents also the way in which, professionals and migrants (more specifically, Russian women living in northern Norway) transform these problematic gendered and sexualised representations and define migrants as ‘transnational caring fathers’ and ‘career women, living in harmonious families’. The research encourages us to revisit theories of inclusion within liberal feminism, the philosophy of multiculturalism and mainstream policy making. Concerns about the gender equality of migrants eclipse such political issues as distant parenting, the push of migrant women to the care sector of the economy and restrictive regulations of family reunification.



### **List of publications**

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Sverdljuk, J. (2010) "Russian Women-Immigrants in the Nordic Countries: Finland, Norway, Sweden. Gender Perspectives on Social Justice". In Oleksy, E. H., Hearn, J. and Golaska, D. (eds) *The Limits of Gendered Citizenship: Contexts and Complexities*. Routledge: 226–244.

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Sverdljuk, J. (2014) "Trans-National Caring Masculinity: Towards Inclusive Social Counselling". *NORMA, International Journal for Masculinity Studies* 9/2: 126–140.



## Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Abstract .....	5
List of publications .....	7
Introduction .....	11
Political ideal of inclusion of migrants in gender equal Norwegian society .....	11
Research on gender and ethnicity in professional practices .....	15
Thesis overview .....	19
Articles overview: Representations of migrants in different contexts and venues .....	21
1. ‘Russian women immigrants in the Nordic countries: Finland, Norway, Sweden – gender perspectives on social justice’ .....	22
2. ‘Traditional foreign femininities? Experts’ stories about helping Russian migrant women who are victims of domestic violence’ .....	23
3. ‘Trans-national caring masculinity: Towards inclusive social counselling’ .....	24
4. ‘Contradicting the ‘prostitution stigma’: Narratives of Russian migrant women living in Norway’ .....	25
Analytical tools: Gender, sexuality and ethnicity in representation.....	27
Discursive theory of representation .....	28
Subject positions .....	31
Subject, representation and social exclusion.....	33
Agency and resistance.....	34
Intersectionality: Theorising multiple positioning .....	36
Making subjects – Delineating political views.....	41
Migrant women: Liberation as desexualisation .....	42
Migrant men: Powerless macho .....	45
Subject positions as gendered ‘others’ .....	46
Subordinated inclusion.....	47
Material outcomes of gendered representations.....	49
Career women living in harmonious families.....	51
Transnational caring masculinity.....	55
Interrogating gender equality .....	56
Political representation.....	58
Revisiting the mainstream policy of inclusion.....	59

Materials and Method .....	63
Combining different types of material .....	65
1) Interviews .....	66
2) Participant observation .....	71
3) Texts .....	72
Coding, selection and delineation .....	74
Ethical considerations .....	76
References.....	79
APPENDIX 1: ARTICLES .....	94
RUSSIAN WOMEN-IMMIGRANTS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES: FINLAND, NORWAY, SWEDEN—GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE .....	95
Ethical Idea of Social Justice and Cultural Recognition .....	96
Social Justice and Gender Equality in the Nordic Countries Revisited.....	100
Russian Women Crossing Borders in the Barents Region: Increasing Multiculturalism in the Nordic Countries .....	102
Materials and Method .....	103
Background in Russia and the Process of Migration.....	104
Experiences of Integration into Nordic Labor Markets.....	106
Conclusions .....	113
References.....	115
TRADITIONAL FOREIGN FEMININITIES? EXPERTS’ STORIES ABOUT HELPING RUSSIAN MIGRANT WOMEN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.....	119
Encounters between people in the Barents trans-border region.....	121
Theory and analytical tools .....	123
Material and structure .....	126
Murder in Finnsnes .....	128
Conflicting expectations for gender equality? .....	129
Essentialisation of victimhood: escaping economic woes .....	131
Women’s sexual submissiveness: The Russian post-order bride.....	136
Conclusions .....	138
References.....	139
TRANS-NATIONAL CARING MASCULINITY: TOWARDS INCLUSIVE SOCIAL COUNSELLING.....	145
Nordic ‘caring’ masculinity and the foreign ‘other’ .....	148

Inclusive counselling: A complex task .....	148
Studying the intersections of popular and professional discourses .....	149
Data .....	151
‘Just a little worse’: Foreign masculinity and the production of difference .....	151
‘Helping Hussein’: Confronting challenges in communication .....	156
Gendered clichés or an unbiased attitude to the user?.....	157
Trans-national caring masculinity and alternative interpretations of Hussein’s silence .....	160
Conclusions .....	162
References.....	165
<b>CONTRADICTION THE ‘PROSTITUTION STIGMA’: NARRATIVES OF RUSSIAN MIGRANT WOMEN</b>	
<b>LIVING IN NORWAY .....</b>	<b>171</b>
Introduction .....	171
Materials and method.....	173
‘Russian prostitute’ or the ‘mail-order bride’ .....	174
Woman on the move/travelling woman.....	176
Woman marriage migrant.....	178
Working/professional woman.....	180
Woman actively spending her leisure time.....	183
Woman who has a conscious attitude to sexuality.....	185
Conclusions .....	187
References.....	188
<b>APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDES.....</b>	<b>191</b>
Expert interviews .....	193
Students’ interviews.....	195
Individual interviews with Russian women.....	197
Group interviews with Russian women .....	205

## **Introduction**

### **Political ideal of inclusion of migrants in gender equal Norwegian society**

In the last 50 years, migration to Norway has increased significantly, changing the demographic map of the country and enriching its ethnic diversity. In 2014, there were 633,100 persons with a migrant background in Norway and 126,100 persons who were born in Norway to foreign parents. These two groups, altogether, comprise 13 per cent of the total population.<sup>1</sup> The majority of migrants are from Europe (predominantly Poland, Sweden and Germany; that is, EU countries), and less than half of the migrant population has an Asian, African or Latin American background. As many authors have argued, although Norway has strict immigration policies, extensive measures are taken to promote the integration of migrants (International Migration 2009–2010 SOPEMI-report for Norway: 5–6). The concept of universal inclusion is at the centre of state policies on the empowerment of migrants.

In Norway, social democratic welfare state policies of the inclusion of new arrivals have developed as a continuation of the main efforts of the welfare state to provide conditions for equal economic and social participation for all (Brochmann and Hagelund 2005). In line with this, efforts have been made to diminish the differences in living conditions between migrants and the rest of the population and to ensure equal opportunities for immigrants and their children (International Migration 2009–2010 SOPEMI-report for Norway: 7). The Norwegian political social democratic model of inclusion echoes a widespread political discourse of social inclusion that has been developing in Europe since the late 1980s. The larger European discourse on inclusion refers to equal participation in: formal citizenship rights; the labour market; civil society; and social arenas (Aasland and Fløtten 2001: 1028; Guiraudon 2002; Silver 1994; Rawal 2008). It has emerged in the context of the crisis of the welfare state; in many instances, it has replaced the discourse surrounding the concepts of poverty and marginalisation (Rawal 2008). In Norway, the conception of inclusion as the provision of equal opportunity for economic empowerment developed not as a result of an existing crisis, but rather as a continuation of the historical success of the social rights movement (Brochmann and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ssb.no/innvandring-og-innvandrerer/nokkeltall> (accessed 14.09.2015).

Hagelund 2005). In line with this understanding, in the white paper presented by the centre-right Bondevik government in 2004, 'Inclusion and participation' (S.meld.nr 49 2003–2004), and in the subsequent policy efforts of the centre-left Stoltenberg government, the main emphasis was on social and community cohesion, employment and belonging (S.meld.nr 6 2012–2013: 'A coherent integration policy').

To summarise, the Norwegian government emphasises economic and cultural – or identity-based – dimensions of inclusion in its policy making. As to the cultural dimension, in the Norwegian government's view, community cohesion is a result of the common process of negotiation in regards to the central values of democratic procedure, human rights and gender equality (S.meld.nr 49 2003–2004: 61). A special emphasis is made on the value of gender equality. In Norway, gender equality is high on the political agenda. The country is known for the success of its women's movement and its well-developed policies of 'state feminism'. It is internationally known as a 'female friendly' welfare state (Esping-Andersen 2002; Hernes 1987; Skjeie 2013). The policies of state feminism have developed as part of the general inclination of the Norwegian social democratic state to have an active role in providing citizens with the conditions for a good life. The state interferes actively in people's private sphere and promotes gender equality in all aspects of social life (through so-called gender mainstreaming policies). In accordance with this principle, the state is considered to have a normative function as an actor in the multicultural society. In this respect, the government believes, in line with Okin (1999), that it should regulate certain 'unwise or oppressive' practices that may result from a 'lack of knowledge' (S.meld.nr 49 2003–2004: 47; Stokke 2012: 50).

The formation of gender equality policies in multicultural Norway has been studied by Annfelt and Gullikstad (2013). These authors have analysed the recent Norwegian official reports, action plans and white papers on gender equality and found that, today, the gender sensitive policy of social integration is clearly divided into two parts. On the one hand, there are measures that basically target 'native' women, promoting their social and economic empowerment and economic independence and supporting gender affirmative action within leadership positions. On the other hand, a 'special' corpus of

gender equality policies has been formed that basically targets migrant women. These policies concentrate on the ‘gender education’ of migrant women (Annfelt and Gullikstad 2013; Midtbøen and Teigen 2013) and are often guided by the argument that migrant women must step away from their traditional lifestyles and engage in paid work.

While pursuing the idea of a common deliberation about values, Norwegian officials strive to give freedom to civil society; they do not want to interfere, but rather wish to support people’s ‘multiculture’. In this context, the government acknowledges ‘individual diversity’ – complex identities and ‘multiple ways of being Norwegian’ (S.meld.nr 49 2003–2004: 33; Stokke 2012: 49)). In line with Gressgård (2010) and Stokke (2012: 50), one could ask whether social cohesion and the facilitation of inclusion in this discourse actually is a goal in itself, or attempts to increase loyalty to shared values. Are individual difference and people’s ‘multiculture’ associated with a lack of knowledge about democracy and gender equality? In this context, the question of how responsible actors represent migrants in terms of gender, sexuality and ethnicity is not inessential. Representations of migrants influence the way in which policies are formed: which measures are highlighted as most important and which political issues are prioritised to facilitate migrants’ inclusion into society.

The discussion about the inclusion of migrants occurs in different venues and in various contexts of professional practice: within official policy making, at the state level, within the welfare state institutions and within the civil – or NGO – sector. Professional practitioners who work within state and non-governmental institutions can be seen as gatekeepers of inclusion who interact with migrants in their everyday practice. They are guided by official policies of inclusion, on the one hand, but, on the other hand, many have a degree of freedom to form their practice in accordance with the specificity of each concrete situation. In this dissertation, I investigate the representations of migrants made by professionals who are responsible for promoting inclusion in Norway – those who support individuals’ economic and social empowerment. In consideration of the fact that ideas about gender are important in Norwegian society, I inquire into the way in which professionals represent migrants in terms of gender, sexuality and ethnicity

while using the discursive resources available to them within policy making, the media and everyday social interactions. What subject positions within the discourse on inclusion do these representations create for migrants? What occurs within migrants' 'multiculture'? How do migrants represent themselves when they deploy the categories of gender, sexuality and ethnicity?

To summarise, I investigate:

- how the professionals represent migrants in relation to gender, sexuality and ethnicity;
- what kinds of subject positions within the discourse on inclusion these representations create for migrants;
- what alternative representations migrants are able to produce in this context; and
- which subject positions migrants seem to occupy.

How does the study of the representations of migrants in different contexts and venues inform our reading of the ongoing political and theoretical discussions on inclusion and the entitlement of migrants with special, cultural rights (Kymlicka 1995, 2002; Okin 1999)?

### **Research on gender and ethnicity in professional practices**

Representations of migrants in terms of gender and ethnicity produced by journalists, politicians and professional practitioners have been a special target of criticism within post-colonial feminist scholarship in the Nordic countries. In the Nordic countries, research conducted within varying professional contexts has shown that progressive practice of gender relations is associated with being ethnically Finnish, Swedish or Norwegian (Gullikstad 2010; Tuori 2009; Vuori 2009; Yang 2009). Migrants from countries outside the West are represented as those who follow traditional gender roles. Feminist scholars who are inspired by post-colonial feminist theory have argued that the discourse on Western countries as ‘societies of gender equality’ and representations of migrants as ‘traditional’ have a marginalising effect in regards to positions of women and men with ethnic minority backgrounds (Berg et al. 2010; Gullikstad 2010; Gullikstad et al. 2002; Keskinen et al. 2009; Mohanty 1988; Razack 2008). As several researchers have argued, as a result of making linkages between gender equality and the majority ethnicity, cultural minorities have been constructed as ‘others’ who are not capable of living up to the progressive and democratic ideal of equality between the sexes (Jacobsen and Skilbrei 2010; Keskinen 2009; Mohanty 1988; Mulinari et al. 2009). According to Nordic post-colonial feminists, Western majority women’s self-definition as ‘liberated’ in terms of gender results in a representation of other cultures as ‘exotic’, and considers ethnic minority and migrant women as ‘victims of a patriarchal order of life’, weak, dependent and unable to display agency (Gressgård and Jacobsen 2002; Jacobsen and Skilbrei 2010; Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2010).

In the Norwegian context, feminist scholars who are inspired by post-colonial feminist theory have argued that the idea of Norway as a ‘country of gender equality’ symbolically marginalises migrants (Annfelt and Gullikstad 2013; Berg et al. 2010; Gullikstad 2010; Gullikstad et al. 2002; Jacobsen and Skilbrei 2010). For example, Gullikstad focused on gender and ethnicity in the study of the representations of foreign nurses. Recruiting foreigners into Norwegian working life is a priority of integration policies. As a result of linkages between gender equality and the majority ethnicity, foreign nurses are positioned as ‘others’ who do not correspond to the representation of an ‘ideal nurse’ (Gullikstad 2010). In other Norwegian research



involving the employees of women's NGOs – which protect the rights of foreign sex workers – Jacobsen and Skilbrei criticised the tendencies towards victimisation of migrant women prostitutes. The idea of 'gender equal Norwegian women' was interpreted as a liberal attitude to sexuality. According to these researchers, Norwegian majority women's self-definition as 'liberated' results in a representation of foreign prostitutes as 'victims of a patriarchal order of life' in their home countries, weak, dependent and unable to display agency (Gressgård and Jacobsen 2002; Jacobsen and Skilbrei 2010; Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2010).

The researchers included in the Norwegian anthology edited by Leseth and Solbrække (2011) are especially concerned about what impact the clichéd gendered representations of migrants has on their ability to exercise professions (e.g. Debesay 2011). Professionals are seen as mediators of the universal value of inclusion, which occupies a key position in the Norwegian welfare state's ideology of integration (Neumann 2011). Several studies pointed out that gendered and racialised prejudices prevent professionals from securing the well-being of migrant 'users' (Debesay 2011; Neumann 2011). Gendered clichés connected to migrants explain why professionals fail to hear the voices of the actual people; that is, why they fail to understand migrants' problems and needs.

In the Danish context, Nanna Brink Larsen studied parental education as conducted by social workers as an activity intended to integrate minority Danes into Danish society. She analysed the interaction of these professionals with the Arabic speaking mothers, noting that the mothers were positioned unfavourably as passive, suppressed and domestic Oriental women with little education (Larsen 2009: 234). The researcher introduced the concept of 'institutional nationalism' to imply that Danes are united as one nation and developed a common identity based on similar experiences of dealing with institutions. Being ethnically Danish becomes particularly fit for being active in institutions that carry values of humanist and egalitarian pedagogy, gender equality and participatory democracy. The association of Danish-ness with these democratic institutions is combined with the Orientalisation of Arabic speaking women and constrains her status as an agent.

In the Finnish context, Tuori (2009) conducted an inquiry into the work of welfare state professionals and NGOs that promote social participation and economic empowerment for migrant families, and especially migrant women. Tuori noted that being Finnish is associated with romantic love, tolerance towards homosexuality and gender equal families, and this leads to positioning of migrant families as 'different'. Migrant women are seen as exotic, and, for this reason, Finnish workers in NGOs do not manage to hear how migrant women reflect on their families. The researcher concluded that discussions about the problems confronted by migrant families are often intertwined with racism. Another Finnish researcher, Vuori (2009), critically analysed the way in which gender issues and ethnicity are intertwined in representations of migrants when she studied education during their integration into Finnish society. Vuori studied guidebooks produced for migrants and professionals, focusing especially on cases in which gender was dealt with. Vuori asked how 'Finnishness' and other ethnic identities were produced in the provision of information to migrants. Vuori (2009) showed that migrant women were considered receivers of information and actors only within the family. Brochures addressed gender equality as an achieved reality among Finns.

In the Swedish context, Paulina de los Reyes (1998) studied the positions of migrant women in the labour market and pointed to the problems related to the construction of the category 'migrant woman', which is associated with culture. Another Swedish researcher, Chi-Ling Yang, examined how the topic of gender equality was presented to migrant women in a feminist adult educational institution (Kvinnofolksskolan). She pointed out that the Swedish teachers were especially critical towards the Muslim religion and did not pay attention to the heterosexual ideology that is pervasive in the Bible. Chi-Ling Yang argued that, in such feminist discussions, the Swedish law represents a certain 'Swedishness' and is linked with democracy, while the Koran is represented as 'backward' with 'notorious polygyny' (Yang 2009: 248). The fact that homosexuality is not fully accepted in Swedish society was not made a topic for discussion. In other research, conducted by Tina Mattsson, on social worker's discourses in Sweden, migrants were constructed as a homogeneous cultural group whose members shared common characteristics – such as a lack of knowledge of

gender equality – that were seen as necessary for inclusion into the Swedish welfare system (Mattsson 2010).

To conclude, these Nordic inquiries, which were inspired by post-colonial theory, have shown that in various professional practices in the Nordic Countries there are tendencies towards the discursive marginalisation of migrants. The researchers cited above concentrated on a select set of materials and select examples of professional practice within various welfare state institutions (e.g. Neumann 2011; Debesay 2011). However, not enough attention has been paid to studying, how the gendered representations of migrants influence the process of inclusion across different professions and in various arenas of professional interaction with migrants. Besides, migrants' accounts of gender, sexuality and ethnicity have not been explored to a satisfactory degree. Furthermore, the vast majority of researchers have pointed out that migrants are marginalised due to the discourse on 'gender equal Western women and men' (Debesay 2011; Neumann 2011; Tuori 2009; Vuori 2009; Yang 2009). Less attention has been paid to exploring gendered and ethnicity in representations that position migrants as full-fledged members of society. The current study aims at broadening the existing research on gender, sexuality and ethnicity in professional practice. It includes different perspectives: professional, political, media and migrant accounts, with a special emphasis on professional accounts. It enriches the spectrum of interpretative strategies by concentrating on not only 'hegemonic' representations, but also alternative representations. Furthermore, it analyses different kinds of data, such as interviews, observations and texts.

**Thesis overview**

The thesis proceeds as follows. In the chapter ‘Presentation of articles: Inclusion of migrants in various contexts and venues’, the main empirical results are briefly summarised, as are the main theoretical concepts that were used in the analysis. In the chapter ‘Analytical tools: Gender, sexuality and ethnicity in representation’, the theoretical tools and concepts used to inquire into migrants’ representations and self-presentations are explicated. In the chapter ‘Making subjects – Delineating political views’, I discuss the main empirical findings of the research in light of the explicated concepts and theories. Further, I present the materials and methodology applied in this thesis. The four articles are printed in Appendix 1. The interview guides are presented in Appendix 2.



### **Articles overview: Representations of migrants in different contexts and venues**

The main body of my research consists of four articles. In the articles, representations of migrants in various venues and with various actors as the main contributors are studied. Professional, political, media and migrant accounts are taken into consideration, though a special emphasis is placed on professional accounts. The first three articles analyse the work or education of professionals in different venues and in the various situations in which they encounter migrants. These articles focus on different cases of professional practice: when professionals consult migrants in regards to issues of employment, the prevention of family conflict and domestic violence, housing and young people's social well-being. Thus, the articles explore the discourses and practice of the employees of the employment agencies as they offer assistance to those suffering from employment problems (Article 1: Sverdljuk 2010). The practice of crisis centre employees and the police – institutions at the margins of the welfare system – and their contribution to the development of measures aimed at preventing domestic violence against migrant women is the object of study in Article 2 (Sverdljuk 2012). In Article 3 (Sverdljuk 2014), I study education in multicultural social work and analyse students' professional practice when mediating social conflict at a multicultural youth club. Here, I also analyse professional training for assisting refugees with housing problems. In addition, Article 4 explores the gendered self-representation of migrants, wherein Russian women discuss various aspects of their lives: work, family, leisure and intimate relations (Sverdljuk 2009). In the articles, different interpretative strategies are used to show the existence of dominant and alternative representations of migrants. These interpretative strategies are explicated in the theory part of this dissertation: 'Analytical tools: Gender, sexuality and ethnicity in representation'. Studying the practices of different actors allowed me to ask questions and draw conclusions in regards to common trends in the representation of migrants. Furthermore, I was able to identify discursive tendencies that occur as part of professionals' negotiations and interpretations of the political idea of inclusion. These common trends and tendencies are shown in the last part: 'Making subjects – Delineating political views'.

**1. 'Russian women immigrants in the Nordic countries: Finland, Norway, Sweden – gender perspectives on social justice'**

This article analyses the integration process of Russian women immigrants into the welfare system and labour market. It focuses especially on professional practices of assistance in migrant employment and explores the cultural representations of Russian women migrants. The data consists of interviews with immigrant women and professionals. Particularly in Norway, I interviewed employees of Aetat<sup>2</sup>, especially those responsible for the implementation of introduction programs. In addition, I studied the immigration and integration policies in Norway and compared these with similar policies in Sweden and Finland. Representations of migrants as 'less advanced' relative to native citizens were typical among professionals. The interviewed women, themselves, criticised the way in which their participation in educational integration measures turned into 'a never-ending process of self-improvement' that did not help them access the labour market and become economically independent. Migrant women were represented as subjects under supervision – those in need of additional education to be included in Nordic labour markets. Therefore, the article shows that it is legitimate to talk about the phenomenon of 'structural discrimination' (de los Reyes 2006) – that is, the consequent discrimination of migrants by professionals – based on the idea of cultural difference. The cultural constructions of migrant women as 'subjects under supervision' are examples of discourses based on gender and ethnicity that produce vulnerable social positions for Russian migrant women. The study shows that any difficulties the women experienced, including those connected to economic or other structural problems, were interpreted as 'family problems'. Constructed as 'less advanced', the migrant women were pushed to the periphery of the labour market in low-paid or unstable positions that are traditionally associated with women.

In addition, Russian women experienced injustices in the private sphere conditioned by the restrictive policies of immigration and family reunification (especially the so-called

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<sup>2</sup> Aetat was a state agency in Norway responsible for the implementation of labour market policy. In 2006, it was discontinued. Its functions have since been overtaken by NAV, a joint agency for labour and welfare in Norway.

‘three years rule’<sup>3</sup>). Family reunification policies and the so-called ‘three years rule’ position migrant women as ‘others’ in relation to the celebrated (in the Nordic countries) policies of gender equality. Gender equality policies are uncritically associated with majority women, whereas migrant women find themselves partially outside the system of social protection. To emphasise the connection between economic injustice and the cultural sphere of representation (based on gender and ethnicity), I point to Fraser’s concepts of symbolic and economic justice (Fraser 1997) and, in particular, Fraser’s distinction between ‘symbolic’ categories of gender and ethnicity and the ‘real’ category of class (Fraser 1997). The article concludes that it is necessary to revisit conceptions of justice and inclusion that are based on an idea of the nation-state, as these imply nationalist tendencies. It highlights the fact that individual and group identities are heterogeneous and plural.

## **2. ‘Traditional foreign femininities? Experts’ stories about helping Russian migrant women who are victims of domestic violence’**

This article analyses interviews with Norwegian experts who were working with victims of domestic violence. It explores the interplay of gender and ethnicity in these expert’s representations of Russian migrant women. Russian women were constructed as ‘traditional’ subjects who had internalised ‘patriarchal rules’, whereas Norwegian women and men were seen as ‘gender equal’, ‘modern’ and ‘progressive’. In addition, the article analyses some media texts about a murder as a case study for this kind of discourse. The author shows that the same discourse can be deployed when the male perpetrator of violence is Norwegian. In such cases, the male perpetrator is represented as an individual no Norwegian woman would marry, and a Russian woman is presented as ending up in a relationship with such a man due to her economic difficulties, traditional femininity and sexual submissiveness.

The main argument is that the stigmatising and one-sided gendered representations of migrant women from Russia do not allow experts to pay attention to the structural inequalities (stemming from discriminating legislation such as the ‘three years rule’)

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<sup>3</sup> In Norway, a foreign spouse does not have the right of abode in a country after divorce, if this occurs within three years of marriage.



that lead to the situation of abuse. At the centre of attention is criticism of the hidden ethnocentrism in experts' practices. I use Crenshaw's (1991) idea that gender violence is conditioned by the structural (class and legislative) discrimination of migrant women, rather than problems of patriarchy within the migrant environment. An example of institutional discrimination is the 'three years rule', which positions migrant women in legal dependency on their Norwegian partners. The article claims that it is necessary to pay attention to the structural inequalities and economic and legislative difficulties that migrant women encounter in their host countries.

### **3. 'Trans-national caring masculinity: Towards inclusive social counselling'**

This article studies gendered representations of migrant men in the professional practice of students of 'multicultural' social work and the impact of these representations on professional discourses of 'worthy help'. Two examples are looked at closely: educational practice at a multinational youth club and a practical exercise in a classroom (a role play about assisting a refugee in solving housing questions). I proceed from the idea of Connell (2005) and Kimmel (2000) that masculinities are gendered and plural subject positions. I argue that, in Norway, masculinities are defined in relation to the way in which men participate in the gender equality project. The main finding is twofold. First, the discourse on gender equality in Norway contributes to the construction of a symbolically marginalised subject position of a migrant man. The discourse on gender equality in the Nordic countries, and especially the idea of 'Norwegian kind fathers' who are loyal to gender equality, serves as a mechanism for constructing migrant men as patriarchal 'others'. This produces limitations on the professional ability to provide 'worthy help'. Second, by using the 'open' approach to intersectionality, I was able to show that the professionals also overcame derogative representations of migrant men. There are alternative gendered constructions of migrant men. When recognising difference (i.e. the diversity of and divergence in doing gender), the students created new, symbolically accepted representations of migrant men as 'caring transnational fathers'. In this case, the idea of gender equality was not strictly related to the Nordic contract of parity in childcare responsibilities, and involved – among other things – distant fathering. The migrant user was constructed as both

belonging to the 'other' ethnic and cultural group and being part of the socially endorsed contract of gender justice. Acceptance of migrant men as 'good fathers' had positive implications on the discourses and practices of 'worthy help'. A shift occurred in the practice of inclusion (from partial to full inclusion). Students destabilised the dominant tendency to link the idea of gender equality with the specific ways of doing gender associated with the majority ethnicity. As a result, they showed flexibility in approaching the formal mandate of a social worker allowing male users to send a portion of their social assistance money to their families abroad.

#### **4. 'Contradicting the 'prostitution stigma': Narratives of Russian migrant women living in Norway'**

This article explores Russian migrant women's gendered self-representations, which were created in dialogue with, and in opposition to, the popular discourse on 'Russian women as prostitutes'. The 'stigma of prostitution' is approached as the societal gendered discourse that leads to the production of symbolically devalued representations of Russian migrant women. It is based on the widespread idea of respectable Norwegian femininity, which is gender equal, liberal, but not 'too accessible' (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2010). The process of Russian women's 'speaking back', which can be understood as a result of individual and collective efforts of resistance, is explored (Spivak 1985, 1988). In the background of the analysis is a social constructivist theory of identity formation, according to which self-presentations are constructed in constant dialogue with prevailing societal discourses (Honneth 2007). I use a post-colonial feminist perspective to study the construction of subject positions and ask how discourses on gender and multiculturalism participate in defining Russian migrant women as devalued, yet accepted members of society (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Lykke 2005).

To oppose the 'prostitution stigma', the Russian women presented themselves as 'woman on the move' who were actively spending their leisure time and who had come to Norway to create a family, study and work. They said that they had supportive husbands, a happy family life and a conscious attitude to sexuality. Their self-representations were complex and heterogeneous, and were both similar to and different

from the Nordic ideal of gender relations. They modified the understandings of the heterosexual gender equal (Norwegian) family, wherein equality is approached in terms of parity, introducing a loose idea of ‘harmony’ – or ‘balance’ – in family life. When challenging derogative attitudes, the dominant discourses of Russian women displayed agency as a capacity to question dominant discourses and social norms.

### **Analytical tools: Gender, sexuality and ethnicity in representation**

In this chapter, I present the main theoretical concepts and methodological tools that guided my analysis. To explore the way in which professionals represent migrants in terms of gender, sexuality and ethnicity and what discursive positions these representations offer for migrant subjects, I used the socio-constructivist theory of representation (Hall 1997a, 1997b), Foucaultian notions of subject position and social exclusion (Foucault 1972, 1980) and the post-structuralist theory of intersectionality (Berg et al. 2010; Brah 2003; Larsen 2006; Lykke 2003, 2005; Staunæs 2004; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006).

In particular, I deployed the discursive concept of representation, which was developed within cultural studies by Stuart Hall (1997a, 1997b). Hall pointed to the constructed, discursive and arbitrary nature of the representation. According to Hall, meanings and connotations, which we prescribe to the objects of representations, can be written into different discourses and mean 'anything anytime' (Hall 1997c). Hall and post-colonial theory mainly theorised the historical construction of people as racialised beings. I supplement Hall's theory of representation – which was in many ways influenced by Foucault – with Foucaultian ideas about the subject, subject positions and social exclusion (Foucault 1970, 1982). This was done to emphasise the fact that representations of groups and individuals (human subjects) impact the symbolic and material status of those groups/individuals in society. Foucault's theory holds that the meaning of a subject is double: on the one hand, a subject has a self-relation; on the other hand, she/he is positioned discursively or represented by others. Therefore, representations can be bestowed on subjects by more powerful groups in society; the representation of a group is never free from power and political interests. In line with Foucault (1980), I emphasise the notion of agency and the idea that representation is a dramatic act through which the power of social convention can be challenged. Foucault was mainly interested in the effects of the discourse of modernity and heterosexuality, which offers the major representations and constructions of the subject as a rational, moral and heterosexual being.

At the same time, Foucaultian and Hall's ideas about the construction of subject through discourse and representation have been further developed within the post-structuralist theory of intersectionality – introduced within a particular strain of post-colonial feminism (Berg et al. 2010; Brah 2003; Larsen 2006; Lykke 2003, 2005; Staunæs 2004; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006). It offers analytical tools for exploring the representation of individuals and groups as a result of an interaction of the signifiers as gender, ethnicity and sexuality (Larsen 2006; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006). In line with Hall (1997a, 1997b) and Foucault (1972, 1980), post-structuralist intersectionality suggests that the researcher should be sensitive to the concrete and situation-conditioned interplay of signifiers or categories in representation. This theory accents agency and resistance and offers theoretical methods for investigating the formation of representations of vulnerable social groups that are changeable and situation-conditioned.

#### **Discursive theory of representation**

I used the socio-constructivist and post-structuralist theory of representation as a starting point for theorising how to study representations of migrant subjects based on several categories of belonging, such as ethnicity, sexuality and gender. According to the cultural theory of representation put forward by Hall (1997a), representation is an act of giving meaning to a thing, an event or a group. It is an indirect mediation through which our mental idea about something is expressed by using a so-called signifier – a sign or a word that enters into complex relations with other value-laden signs. In the act of representation, we actively interpret reality 'out there' using various cultural means of expression: words, images and signs. Culture has, therefore, a decisive force in ordering the world (Hall 1997a). Representation actively interprets the mental concept of a thing, i.e. the object of representation.

In my research I have used this basic socio-constructivist idea in relation to studying representation of individuals and groups, or human subjects. To social constructivists, there is no stable metaphysical 'core' from which people operate and make sense of themselves and others (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982). Rather, the linguistic and cultural processes of meaning creation or representation construct subjects. According to Hall,

one of the central principles of representation is thinking in binary oppositions, or producing differences. In relation to individuals and groups, production of differences is based on categories of social belonging (Hall 1997a, 1997b). Thus, subjects – or humans – are classified according to categories of social belonging as, for example, man–woman; Norwegian–Russian; Muslim–Christian; or heterosexual–homosexual. According to Hall, this is the first level of representation, or the procedure of denotation (Hall 1997a).

Further, Hall highlights the discursive and historically-conditioned nature of the representation of individuals and groups. According to Hall, representation is never neutral, it always contains a level of connotation and implicit judgement about a thing, human being or group, and these connotations and judgements position subjects (individuals and groups) in a certain way in a social and cultural universe. Hall pointed out that, at the level of connotation, wider cultural and historical myths or discourses are activated (Hall 1997a). Objects of representation classified as ‘man’, ‘woman’, ‘Norwegian’ or ‘Russian’ absorb certain meanings or connotations as they are placed within discursive storylines or become ‘heroes’ within wider historical myths and valid political ideologies. Hall suggested a discursive concept of representation grounded in Foucault’s theory of power/knowledge (Hall 1997a, 2001).

Foucault launched the term ‘discourse’ as a system of representation, consistently understood as a practice implemented in a socio-cultural, historical context and inseparable from it (Foucault 1972). According to Foucault, discourses are ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (Foucault 1972: 49). In our case, the ‘objects’ of representation are human subjects. Discourses are embodied in ‘socialised’ speech patterns; it may work below the level of ‘common sense’ and govern our perceptions. Discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a particular topic at a particular historical moment. As Hall underlines, for Foucault discourse constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about (Hall 1997a: 29).

When guided by the post-structuralist insights of Foucault, Hall was especially interested in the way in which the category 'race' has been interpreted as part of the discourse of Orientalism and the historical practices of colonization. As he points out, throughout the history of culture, racial difference has been loaded with certain meanings (Hall 1997b). When reviewing the history of Western culture, Hall traced the emergence and transformation of the specific derogative representation of a 'negro' (who is 'lazy', 'unintelligent', 'strong' and 'close to nature') – a racialised representation that was formed within a discourse of Orientalism and the historic practice of colonisation. According to Hall, this representation often has sexual connotations, i.e. it is combined with sexism (Hall 1997b). When critically addressing the discourse of Orientalism formed in the run of history, Hall pointed out that this discourse produces – through different practices of representation – a form of racialised knowledge about the 'other' that is deeply implicated in the operation of power (imperialism) (Hall 1997b). Similarly, feminism has questioned the historical representation of women as irrational, weak and close to nature, which naturalises rationality and strength as men's possession. For example, de Beauvoir pointed out that, historically, women have been positioned within the discourse of patriarchy, as the masculinist society's 'others' (de Beauvoir 1992). As an illustration, the institution of the family has been historically formed as a part of the discourse of patriarchy, as a place for reproducing gender in terms of heteronormativity, constantly recreating certain sexist representations of women.

Although Hall's theory mainly serves to expose stigmatising and devaluing representations of subjects within the discourse of Orientalism, he held a post-structuralist position, believing that subjects can be represented differently in various contexts. According to Hall, we can fix difference in the categories that prescribe certain qualities to subjects and groups. Alternatively, difference can be interpreted in many various ways. Categories, which signify our mental concepts of and construct meaning about individuals and groups, can be written into different discourses and mean 'anything anytime' (Hall 1997c). Culture and human history offer a variety of myths and discourses, and potentially all of these can be activated in the procedure of representation. When referring to the social category of 'race', Hall notes that difference

in regards to race exists; the question is what we make out of it (Hall 1997b). He points out that 'race' is a floating signifier (Hall 1997c); the word is more concrete than the concept it describes – race may mean whatever one wants it to mean. 'Race' is a signifier that can be linked to other signifiers in a representation. Its meaning is relational, and it is constantly subject to redefinition in different cultures and at different moments. There is always a certain sliding of meaning – always something left unsaid (Hall 1997c). For example, according to Hall, race can e.g. also mean eroticism (Hall 1997b).

### **Subject positions**

To further explain the socio-constructivist and discursive theory of representation of individuals and groups presented by Hall (1997a), it is important draw in Foucault's concepts of subject and subject positions. Following the ideas of Hall (1997a) and Foucault (1972, 1980), one can say that when being represented in certain ways individuals and groups are offered specific positions within various discourses. Foucault's theory holds that the meaning of a subject is double: on the one hand, a subject has self-relation and a psychological dimension; on the other hand, she/he is positioned discursively by others (Foucault 1980). In this respect it is important to keep in mind the distinction between the terms 'subject' and 'subject position'. Subject positions point to multiple social characteristics that might be prescribed to a subject. At the same time subject involves a psychological dimension that should be theorised in its own terms – a capacity of giving carte blanche to, refusing, or modifying social categorisation. In this context, Smith (2003) wrote:

Understood from a psychoanalytic perspective, the 'subject' is not the same as 'subject positions.' With the psychoanalytic concept of the subject as a subject of lack, we have the principle of the impossibility of identity, for 'every identity is already in itself blocked' /.../ With subject positions, by contrast, we emphasize the ways in which identity plays an interpretative, mediating role - albeit in necessarily imperfect and incomplete forms—in the incitement of certain practices in specific historical contexts /.../ an emphasis on both dimensions is needed. Subject position theory without the principle of the impossibility of identity could become just another version of functionalism,



while the psychoanalytic concept of subjectivity on its own tends to disregard the ways in which social agents are constructed within historically specific networks of power relations /.../' (Smith 2003: 78)

Foucault underlined his belief that subjects are constituted as they take on certain 'identities' or positions, subjugating themselves to discourses. If subjects take a position from which a discourse makes sense, they subject themselves to its power and knowledge (Hall 1997a: 56). To explicate the meaning of a subject as someone who is discursively positioned and represented by others, Foucault pointed out that one cannot meaningfully communicate outside the discourse (Foucault 1972, 1980). Our self-definitions and identities depend on the discourses and storylines we subject ourselves to (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982; Lock and Strong 2014). According to Davies and Harré (1990), who follow the post-structuralist framework, positioning is 'the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines' (Davies and Harré 1990: 48). Using the concept of subject position, Foucault revisited the concept of 'roles' – or 'identities' within traditional social psychology (Davis and Harré 1990). Whereas the roles were bounded to the modernist notion of the fixed and static self, the notion of subject position presupposes the unfinished and flexible character of the subject's representation. According to Foucault, one can simultaneously have multiple subject positions as well as refuse to follow the offered discursive lines. An important meaning of subject position is a *place* taken by a subject in relation to a discourse. Hall uses the example of a woman who must take the position of a 'male' desiring voyeur in order to make sense of the discourse of pornography and thus accept the offered ways of representing women (Hall 1997a: 40).

According to Foucault, discourse has the function of 'capturing' subjects and they are enacted in the work of social institutions. Therefore, subjects can be also defined as are the products of practices formed within (or of) social institutions of power. In this way, a subject's symbolic meaning, as well as its materiality, is constantly created and recreated (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982). Therefore, according to Foucault, subjects can

be defined as the manifestations of certain discourses; subjected to their power, people become represented in certain ways (Hall 1997a).

### **Subject, representation and social exclusion**

According to Foucault, discourses and representations are not ahistorical, but intrinsically belong to and shift according to major periods in history and systems of knowledge valid in different epochs (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982). For example, Foucault perceived the very idea of rationality as a specific cultural invention – a discourse belonging to the classical age and continuing through modernity to the present (Foucault 1972; Hall 1997a). The subject or the identity of a rational man, with all his connotations (such as heterosexual gender conduct and loyalty to the morality of the modern age) was produced as the major available position within this discourse.

According to Foucault, the criteria for the subject positions individuals are offered or the way, in which subjects are represented are determined by *hegemonic* discourses. Hegemonic discourses show actual power constellations in a society (Foucault 1972). Hegemonic discourses and representations have normalising effects on subjects, as they can govern people's behavior and manage populations. Foucault showed how the modernity discourse normalised the specific representations of the rational man opposing them to the 'criminal man', the 'hysterical woman', the 'madman' and the 'deviant and sexually perverse person' (Foucault 1972; Hall 1997a). Foucault's invaluable merit is that he showed that the symbolic sphere of meaning creation and the procedure of representation are integral aspects of the distribution of power and resources in society. Foucault put forward the conception of power/knowledge, holding that power in society is exercised when more powerful groups of society highlight, invent and prescribe qualities to subjects and groups. The process of constructing the other's identity can put individuals who are referred to under the representation in an unfavourable social position. Therefore discourses and representations relate to the mechanisms of social exclusion.

Foucault pointed out that some subjects get a second-range status through the procedure of being made visible, through accentuating certain qualities of people in representation. According to Foucault, there is power in representation, when qualities that deviate

from normative ideas of right and wrong behaviour are accentuated and when individuals are subjected to observation (Foucault 1977). Thus, the normalised subject of the Classical age and modernity: the 'rational man' (someone who is an incorporation of the rationality discourse) escaped visibility and final judgment. The excluded, accentuated subjects, as the 'mad man' and 'sexually perverse person', constructed people as 'others' in the society; their difference was accentuated in the representation and they were seen as different from the norm. In relation to this, Peters and Besley point out: 'For Foucault the notion of exclusion operates spatially in the development of all-seeing architectures that permit continual surveillance and separates through dividing practices a series of others who represent a danger to the body of society and must be excluded, studied, observed and treated if and before they can be readmitted to society as normalized citizens' (Peters and Besley 2014: 102). The same idea is conveyed by Hall when he points out that difference can be fixed in categories such as 'race', gender and sexuality in certain negative ways.

Thus, the representations of individuals and groups and their positioning as 'one of us' (those who follow the hegemonic norms) or as 'outsiders' play a decisive role in the creation of a hierarchical social order. As already mentioned, this idea, from Foucault (1980), has been decisive for Hall's theory of representation (Hall 1997a, 1997b) and for post-colonial theory (Said 1978). Foucault paid special attention to the way in which modern ideas about morals and sexuality offer specific naturalised representations for subjects defining their positions and governing people's conduct. In line with Hall (1997b), post-colonial theory criticises the fact that people and ethnicities outside the boundaries of the geographical and symbolic 'West' have been represented as weak – as those who should be controlled by education, converted to normalcy and civilised (Said 1978).

### **Agency and resistance**

There is a phenomenon of the internalisation of suppression and the process of becoming a vulnerable or an injured subject (Lock and Strong 2014: 319). Derogative social representations can lead to injury of personal self-respect (Fanon 2008; Honneth 2007; hooks 1992, 1997). However, self-identification in terms of victimhood, which is typical in constructions of vulnerable social groups, is not the only possible basis for the

development of a common feeling of belonging (hooks 1997). According to hooks (1997), subjects can develop radical consciousness and lead their lives guided by positive beliefs about their ability to resist racist, cultural and economic domination. Foucault underlined that the process of representation is connected with a struggle over meaning. Power also has positive effects, as it creates certain positions for individuals and allows them to place themselves within alternative storylines (Foucault 1982; Lock and Strong 2014). I share the viewpoint of authors (such as Jackson) who believe that power is dispersed, contingent and unstable (Jackson 1999: 132). It is important to see disadvantaged groups in a dualistic way, both as subordinate to power and as agents who are capable of exercising power by producing alternative representations. In this context, and in accordance with feminist criticism, power and empowerment are used in the generative sense; that is, not as power over others but as power for self-actualisation and social transformation toward a life free of discrimination and domination. Therefore the analysis of the discursive construction of representations not only involves study of the ways in which subjects adopt dominant discourses, but also inquiry into the transformation of dominant representations (Bhabha 1994, 1996; Brah 1992, 1998; Fairclough 1999).

I proceed from the presupposition that agency is a source of positive self-representation and the capacity to resist hegemonic societal definitions of right and wrong and create alternative (self-)representations (Fairclough 2005). I follow the idea that human agency is expressed through an active (self-)creation realised through linguistic and other means of self-expression. Creation of alternative representations occurs through a critical adoption of dominant discourses (Fairclough 2005). The critical adoption of dominant discourses takes place through a process of negotiation and an inscription of oneself into new storylines (Larsen 2006; Neumann 2001; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006). An inner psychological 'core' of the person gains primary importance in theorising agency as well as collective resistance acts of individuals and the production of new representations and discourses (hooks 1997). This involves a political dimension of representation. Thus, post-colonial feminists have challenged mainstream identity production by questioning the policies of representation, posing the question about who has the authority to present minority women's and men's identities (Gouws 1996: 72).

**Intersectionality: Theorising multiple positioning**

To explore the way in which categories of gender, sexuality and ethnicity intersect in representations of migrants and how these representations and discourses position subjects in the complex universe of social power relations, I used the theoretical and methodological tool of intersectionality. The concept of intersectionality allows researchers to study the way in which subjects are situated in the complex discursive web of power relations conditioned by specific constellations and intertwinings of class, gender, ethnicity and other axes of power. The idea of intersectionality was developed as a criticism of radical feminism (Echols 1989), which emphasises the destructive effects of patriarchy on women's lives and social positions. It was introduced by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) and Collins (2000) as a theoretical tool for exploring the way in which various categories of belonging – or signifiers – work together to influence the social positions and life experiences of Black American women. It challenged the limited notion of a one-dimensional universal female subject. Post-colonial feminists established the influential thesis that gender is insufficient as an operational concept for a critical study of women's social positions, but should be supplemented by the categories of ethnicity and class. The idea was conceptually crystallised by Crenshaw (Crenshaw 1991; Hull et al. 1979), who pointed out that there is a complex positioning of an individual within social structures loaded with power. For example, a minority woman must struggle with racism, colonialism and patriarchy. Thus, according to Collins, different forms of oppression accumulate and become double, triple and multifaceted oppression (Crenshaw 1989). To underline the fact that categories as bearers of discourses have a decisive power over individuals, Collins introduced the concept of the matrix of domination to describe the way in which categories are intertwined and interrelated (Collins 2000). Individual and collective experiences are defined by the necessity to overcome simultaneous and multiple types of domination. As Collins suggested, these types of oppression intersect or enforce each other's distractive effects on the lives of Black American women, and also determine specific, complex strategies for liberation and becoming an independent social actor (Collins 2000).

I agree with Berg, Flemmen and Gullikstad (2010) who advocate that Collins's approach could be called 'classical', or an additive understanding of intersectionality (Collins 2000, 1998; Crenshaw 1989, 1991). Referring to McCall (2005), Berg, Flemmen and Gullikstad defined the classical approach to intersectionality as one that focuses on 'inter-categorical complexity' (Berg et al. 2010: 17) and presupposes ontological hierarchy of categories. The 'classical', inter-categorical concept of intersectionality is insufficient for understanding the ways in which gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality are negotiated by specific actors (Berg et al. 2010; Brah 2003; Lykke 2003, 2005; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006). I distance myself from post-colonial conceptions of intersectionality, according to which power over individuals is thought to be accumulated in an additive way and categories of gender and ethnicity should be simply added to each other.

I use the so-called 'opening', or intra-categorical understanding of intersectionality put forward by researchers such as Berg, Flemmen and Gullikstad (Berg et al. 2010; Brah 2003; Lykke 2003, 2005; Staunæs 2004; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006). It is fruitful to study the way in which gender and ethnicity are 'done' or performed in concrete situations and contexts. People may describe their gender and ethnicity in many different ways, depending on the contexts in which they use these notions. Instead of understanding experiences and statuses to be predetermined by categories, Berg, Flemmen and Gullikstad (2010) proceeded from the idea that subjects are constructed or represented differently at any time. Individuals might inscribe themselves into new, alternative storylines and subject themselves to different discourses. In this respect the observation of Hall is relevant that race can mean anything, it is a floating signifier. Thus, Kristensen (2011) asks which meanings are prescribed to gender and ethnicity when individuals activate these categories in their everyday discourse.

This approach can be further described as 'opening up', rather than 'closing', the categories (Berg et al. 2010: 19). Lykke suggests that we should look at subjects in intersectional terms – as 'nodal points' at which many discourses meet (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Lykke 2005; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006). The perception of an object as a 'node within a network' was coined by Foucault (1980) in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Foucault used the example of a book, which, according to him, is not

made up of individual words, but rather 'is caught up in a system of references to other books and other texts. The meaning of that book is connected to a larger, overarching web of knowledge and ideas to which it relates. In accordance with this approach, I perceive subjects, in socio-constructivist terms, as nodes within a network of knowledge, wherein categories merge in various unexpected ways. There are dominant, hegemonic discourses, but also new storylines that may cross with these discourses and which individuals may use to make sense of themselves.

I agree with Staunæs and Søndergaard, who point out that discrimination *might* be a result of the way in which gender and ethnicity is interpreted by the involved actors. At the same time, it does not have to be the only result of this interpretation (Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006). Although the inter-categorical conception addresses the power, social hierarchies and statuses produced by categories of belonging, it does not assume the flexible, relative and changing character of social constellations and the changeable character of representation. Privileged groups are not defined once and forever. There is no an automatic connection between belonging to a certain gender and culture and being excluded from the community. Rather, intersectionality can make us sensitive to complex power relations, which, at any time, differently form individuals' subject positions, making their symbolic status a flexible notion. It is possible to conduct an open analysis that searches for alternative representations and is sensitive to discursive constellations, and which informs us of not only exclusion, but also inclusion. This strategy sometimes requires one to assume a larger variety of categories than that which is usually applied in social research and people's sporadic processes of classification (Larsen 2006; Neumann 2001). When following this strategy, one looks at a migrant's culture and ethnicity as variables that play together along with other categories of belonging, such as class, gender, interests, geographical origin and so forth (Larsen 2006; Neumann 2001).

A third alternative approach is guided by the idea of 'anti-categorical complexity', which presupposes that any social characterisation is too narrow to describe the richness of individual experience (in Nordic research this approach is defended by Egeland and Gressgård (2007). However, I think that operating with categories can be meaningful in special contexts (Berg et al. 2010; de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005; Lykke 2003;

Phoenix 2006; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006). One should neither underestimate nor overestimate the importance of categories in defining the positions of subjects.





### **Making subjects – Delineating political views**

In the description of my research goals I asked how professionals represent migrants in terms of gender, ethnicity and sexuality. I used a post-structuralist, ‘open’, intra-categorical understanding of intersectionality (Berg et al. 2010; Brah 2003; Lykke 2003, 2005; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006) to investigate the way in which professionals represent migrants. This approach enabled me to investigate the way in which discourses, which surrounded gender, sexuality and ethnicity, meet. A consequence of a post-structuralist approach to representation and subject is that the researcher can concentrate on various categories and discourses, and not just on the most typical ones, such as gender, ‘race’ and ethnicity. This also implies that the researcher can be sensitive to the categories that should be analysed in each case (Larsen 2006; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006). Therefore, when relevant (i.e. when informants are invited), other categories, such as place of birth, participation in social networks, education and so forth, were analysed. When asking how migrants are represented in terms of gender, ethnicity and sexuality, one cannot assume the fixed character of the category ‘migrant’, and should instead study the way in which it interacts with other categories. I explored the way in which professionals form representations of migrants in different contexts and venues. Furthermore, I aimed at examining which subject positions migrants get as a result of these representations. I perceived subjects in post-structuralist, discursive terms as nodal points, wherein many discourses surrounding categories, meet placing migrants in certain ways in the social universe, characterised by the relations of power (Foucault 1980; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Lykke 2005; Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006). Furthermore, I looked at how migrants represent themselves and what subject positions they seem to occupy.

When summarising the analysis of how professionals represent ‘migrants’ (who were Russian women and men from the Middle East) and migrants’ (i.e. Russian women’s) self-accounts, it was possible to identify several representations and define distinct subject positions in relation to the discourse of inclusion. In the following, I summarise the results of the empirical analysis and present two distinct representations and the subject positions within the discourse of inclusion that resulted from these representations: ‘traditional migrant women’ and ‘foreign powerless macho man’. I

reflect on the positions these representations create for migrant subjects and on the consequences of the gendered representations of migrants on the process of their inclusion into Norwegian society. This is done in the parts ‘Gendered “others”’, ‘Subordinated inclusion’ and ‘Material outcomes of gendered representations’.

In the part ‘Inclusion in diverse societies’, when proceeding from the conducted analysis, I critically address the liberal political conception of migrants’ inclusion, which sets the tone for contemporary policies and discussion of this issue in Norway. I show that the mainstream political conception of inclusion is intertwined with the discourse of Orientalism and creates a stigmatising representation of migrants. Therefore, paradoxically, the overall political discourse of inclusion contains tendencies towards the social exclusion of migrants, when it is intertwined with discourses on gender equality and Orientalism.

I provide an account of the alternative representations of ‘career women living in harmonious families’ and ‘trans-national caring masculinity’. In the part ‘New visions of inclusion’, I show that alternative gendered representations of migrants lay the foundation for the formulation of different arguments within the policies of inclusion, highlighting the link between symbolic representation of migrants and political representation of their interests.

#### **Migrant women: Liberation as desexualisation**

When professionals formed representations of migrant women, they prescribed these subjects certain gender connotations. In cases involving Russian women, professionals represented the migrants as too feminine, easily accessible, not liberal and not gender equal (Sverdljuk 2010, 2012). The gender of migrant women was coloured by the idea of culture, which was understood in essentialistic terms and very broadly as an ‘archaic’ or ‘primitive’ way of life. Ethnicity was understood as ‘Soviet or post-Soviet culture’, which was associated with a ‘lack in progress’, ‘economic problems’ and ‘little awareness of human (woman’s) rights’. In the literature, the media representation of Russia as a Nordic, primitive Oriental ‘other’ has been discussed (Hønneland and Jørgensen 2002; Neumann 1999). Whereas during the Cold War the Russian neighbour was represented as a soldier ready to attack, today the place of a man soldier has been

taken by an impoverished woman who is a cross-border prostitute or a postal-order bride (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2010; Stenvoll 2002; Sverdljuk 2009). As has been shown in this PhD, these representations are present in multicultural social work situations when Norwegian professionals meet women from Russia.

Sexualised representations of migrant women from Russia could be considered a result of the culturalisation or ethnification of Russian women's gender conduct. Part of the representation of a 'traditional woman' is her satisfaction of the sexual desires of men. Thus, when inviting Russian women to become citizens in gender equal Norway, the professionals suggested that these women should change their traditional way of gendered behaviour and be 'less sexy', as they did not need to take a service attitude to men. Gender equality discourse implies the representation of liberal but not too accessible women (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2010). As Jacobsen and Stenvoll have shown, in Norway, a myth of 'respectful Norwegian femininity' is widespread. The idea of a special sexiness and the traditionalism of migrant women were also present in professionals' reflections on the causes of violence in migrant, Russian-Norwegian families. In another words, ethnicity and culture influenced the ways in which professionals explained the problems in partner and intimate relations experienced by migrant women. In my analysis (Sverdljuk 2012), I saw that the professionals tended to argue that these women experienced violence because they chose patriarchal partners – those whom Norwegian women had passed on. The argument went that, because of their desperate economic situation in Russia, these women had been forced to marry 'traditional' Norwegian men (i.e. men who were 'losers') to allow for a better economic future for their children. There was an implicit assumption that liberal, ethnic Norwegian women experienced gender violence less frequently. Violence in ethnic Norwegian families is treated as a psychological, not a cultural, issue. At the same time, the professionals suggested that migrant women were more likely to experience violence because they had an internalised patriarchy culture and, in a sense, allowed their husband to be a 'boss' in the family.

It is also possible to conclude that, in reasoning that Russian women married traditional Norwegian men to secure economic futures for their children, the professionals anticipated a special interpretation of the migrant women's economic positions. The

professionals said that Russian women came from a country that had experienced economic collapse. This, in their view, explained the poor economic situations of these women. When the professionals formed their opinion about what it meant to be a migrant woman, they did not ignore economic issues. Rather, women's economic positions were understood to represent the women's prior situations in Russia. In professionals' representations of the migrant women, a certain culturalisation or ethnification of economic situation occurred. Therefore, a further division was drawn between Norwegian women – who were looked at as those who came from a well-off country and needed to make their economic positions more perfect (by, e.g., getting leadership roles), and migrant women, who were thought to be poor and to potentially take any work available (Sverdljuk 2010).

Gender and ethnicity (i.e. 'archaic' culture, understood in Orientalistic terms as a way of life wherein women look after children whereas men are providers) also influenced the way in which the category of 'migrant' was interpreted. Being a migrant or a new citizen and a bearer of rights was understood as being someone who must reject their own 'archaic' culture – with its traditional gender relations – and integrate into liberal Norwegian society. It is possible to conclude that, in the case of women, being a migrant implied an invitation to become liberal. Therefore, migrant women got subordinated subject positions. Accounting for gender issues in a discussion of social inclusion is an important achievement of the feminist movement in the Nordic countries. However, inclusion of migrant women is looked at as a separate case, and gender equality discussions put different issues on the agenda of migrant women equality. This confirms the results of the study of approaches to migrant women's employment conducted by Annfelt and Gullikstad (2013). These authors concluded that the economic inclusion of migrant women is looked at as a special case. I came to a similar result when I saw that the professionals constructed migrant women as poor and therefore willing to take any work available. In addition, I saw that the same tendencies to separate the gender equality agenda into two parts could be observed when the professionals discussed relations within the family and sexuality. Whereas Norwegian women were considered to have completed their sexual liberation and to enjoy equality in family life, migrant women, it was implied, still needed help to solve these issues. It

was shown that migrant women, who were considered good new citizens, were positioned as subjects undergoing the ‘consciousness raising programme’.

**Migrant men: Powerless macho**

How do gender, ethnicity and sexuality construct representations of the migrant man? In my analysis, it was shown that public and media representations of foreign men as dangerous and threatening to public order (Gottzén and Jonsson 2012; Jensen 2010) were present in the practices of the professionals. Students of social work created representations of migrant men as patriarchal family fathers with tendencies towards gender violence who are hostile to the idea of gender equality. In representations of male migrants from Africa and the Middle East, ethnicity was associated with skin colour, an ‘exotic’ look and different traditions and norms of behaviour. Therefore, it could be said that ethnicity and culture, understood in essentialistic and Orientalistic terms, coloured the interpretation of their gender conduct.

Men get specific connotations when gender interacts with the category of ethnicity. In public discourse in the Nordic countries, men are supposed to live up to the ideal of ‘gender equal’ masculinity. Today, the ideal of gender equal masculinity prescribes men spending the same amount of time looking after children as women. In Nordic public rhetoric, men can basically be ‘warm’ fathers who are close to their children. It is no longer ‘not masculine’ to provide near and bodily care of a small child. A man does not lose his authority as, for example, a leader for that reason (Oftung 2009: 60). There is more status and power (in a positive sense) attached to men when they actively participate in family life and childcare. One can even maintain that, today, masculinity can function as a power position (in a good sense) when it is understood as ‘gender equal’. Besides, there is still a double moral implicit in the idea of gender equality, when mothers’ childcare is taken for granted whereas male caretakers are offered the position of ‘heroes’ (Annfelt 2007).

Migrant men are supposed to adjust to the norm of a ‘new’ fatherhood. Because their masculinity is constructed as traditional due to their different ethnicity (Gottzén and Jonsson 2012; Jensen 2010), and because masculine power is now rooted in the ability to be a warm and caring father, these men become positioned as men who do not have

power<sup>4</sup>. It is assumed that migrant men's masculinity lays in their macho style of sexual and intimate behaviour; thus, they are looked at as second-range citizens. When intersecting with the category of ethnicity, masculinity becomes a marginalised social position. New types of underprivileged masculinities emerge (Gottzén and Jonsson 2012) when gender equality discourse intersects with Orientalised representations of ethnically different men. Connell's (2005) idea of the plurality of masculinities was confirmed in my research, when the relative character of being a man was shown. In a society that highly appreciates the norm of gender equality, migrant men can be stigmatised as patriarchal and thus marginalised. This allows us to see, in new light, Kimmel's (2000) claim that masculinity is always constructed in relation to power, to which it is subordinated in a gendered way. Power takes unexpected shapes when the representation about 'gender equal Norwegian men' can work as a tool of exclusion.

#### **Subject positions as gendered 'others'**

To summarise, professionals came up with a specific culturalised or ethnicised analysis of migrant women's and men's gender, sexual and intimate relations and offered a certain explanation of their economic situations. I used the intra-categorical understanding of intersectionality in exploring how professionals represent migrants in terms of gender, ethnicity and sexuality, I have seen that because of their one-sided focus on culture, the professionals 'anticipate a specific toning' of migrant women's gender, sexuality and economic situations, to use the expression of Nanna Brink Larsen (2006: 65). Other structural and situational positions – such as migrant status, status as a citizen and a bearer of rights, status as a resident in Norway (or other Nordic countries), membership in social networks, and employment in the area of women's residence – were not taken up in these representations of migrants or new citizens.

Thus, when drawing an overview of the conducted empirical analysis, I may say that there was a tendency of gendered and cultural 'othering' of migrants in professional practices. Because of the practices of one-sided representations, migrants got subordinated subject positions. I have shown that, in various contexts of professional practice, while appealing to the (heterosexual) 'progressive' gender of the majority, the

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<sup>4</sup> In this interpretation, I focus on just one of the several aspects of power of the majority middle class men.

professionals and students practised what can be called gendered culturalisation and Orientalisation (Said 1978) of migrants' gender and economic positions. Brah (1992: 129) referred to this problem as 'ethnicism'. Whereas the 'classical' discourse of Orientalism operated with the notions of civilization, the new Orientalism, or the discursive process of the culturalisation of difference, operates with political values – human rights and gender equality. Migrants are associated with 'their' patriarchal cultures, whereas cultures are perceived as stable and unchangeable categories. Most often, media, politicians and professionals focus on the problematic sides of culture, such as women's oppression.

Migrants were given subordinated subject positions, since they were defined according to whether they would assimilate to the ideal of the progressive, gender equal 'Norwegian' citizen. Positioning migrant women as sexualised victims of patriarchy implied that they would be included, as they would actively participate in the project of their own liberation. With respect to migrant men, being a new citizen ultimately implied a willingness to become masculine in a new way. As we have seen, in both cases, a focus on migrants' differences in terms of gender distracts from the possibility of seeing common features between migrants and the majority population within the categories of gender and class. Drawing attention to differences can help us (re)produce and potentially reinforce boundaries between immigrants and the majority population. Representations of migrants as 'traditional' can direct attention to the features that separate 'them' from 'us' (Kristensen 2011: 24). Instead of looking for the common ground for potential conversation and cooperation, this type of discourse contributes to the production of societal hierarchies. This type of thinking and an accentuated attention to migrants' gender relations can contribute to the legitimation of the unequal treatment of migrants, relative to the majority population (Kristensen 2011).

### **Subordinated inclusion**

In spite of the fact that the Norwegian state pursues policies of inclusion, the ways in which these policies are interpreted, practiced and negotiated can lead to the exclusion of migrants. I proceeded from the ideas of Foucault that any society contains a set of representations about ideal citizens and that trials to establish common norms and to



facilitate the emergence of common identity are fraught with the practice of suppression (Foucault 1980; Hall 1997a). I showed that the norm of gender equality, although it has undeniable democratic potential, can function as a tool for exclusion. Therefore, one can speak of the subordinated inclusion of migrants into Norwegian society and its various institutions. In the studied examples of how professionals constructs representations of migrants, migrants get subordinated subject positions as partially included. On the one hand, legal migrants are provided with the basic formal rights and institutional protection. On the other hand, as Gail Lewis points out, ideological differentiations are made to identify who “automatically and ‘rightfully’ belongs within the border of the nation” (Lewis 1998b: 101). According to Lewis migrants do not have neutral positions, but are racialised, either on the grounds of bodily or culturally specific features, i.e. they are socially constructed as different from the assumed homogeneity of the (white) culturally similar majority (Lewis 1998b: 99–103, 125–126). Immigrants in European nation states, either by reference to bodily features (‘race’) or differences in culture (‘ethnicity’) have been historically marked and defined as ‘others’ of the nation.

Lewis refers to the definition of “nation” in Benedict Anderson (1983) according to whom nation is not a ‘real’ grouping but rather an ‘imagined community’, “in which imaginary ties of a common ancestry and a common history are the means by which a sense of belonging is achieved” (Lewis 1998b: 101). Lewis concludes that, historically, the construction of ethnic groups (e.g. definitions as ‘ethnic minorities’ or ‘immigrants’) has been a form of social organisation, e.g. in relation to allowing entry and providing social benefits. Lewis points to the historical practices of ideological and institutional discrimination. The same idea is expressed by de los Reyes, when she points to the cases of structural discrimination of migrants (de los Reyes 2006). Nowadays, as the conducted research has shown, there are tendencies towards symbolic differentiation between civilized and gender equal ‘us’ and uncivilized and traditional ‘them’. It is possible to say that migrants also today are included in a subordinated way into the community unified by the idea of the nation state. The condition of becoming a full-fledged member of the community is a willingness to integrate into the idealized gendered forms of social interaction, which are associated with the majority.

Subordinated inclusion describes the situation through which individuals and groups might be formally included in social structures and institutions, but are treated differently (Lewis 1998a). In this respect, it is tempting to return to the idea of Foucault mentioned in the theory section about the effects of the modern discourse of rationality (Foucault 1980). Foucault argued that hegemonic discourse of rationality and the major representation of a rational man have the power to exclude all subjects and identities that do not fit into an accepted way of behaviour. Symbolically excluded subjects, who are constructed through practices of representation as, for example, the mad man and the hysterical woman, become objects of special control and observation (Foucault 1980; Hall 1997a: 56). Similarly, migrants, who are constructed as different from the norm of gender equality, are subjected to practices of regulation and observation, and their inclusion into society is understood as assimilation into the most accented norm of behaviour. Through the practices of representation, they are made especially visible citizens with a set of accentuated qualities. A status of 'excluded citizen' defines migrants as persons who are subjects of border control. Due to representations of migrants as 'gender traditional', this status continues to define their situation even after they obtain a full package of rights (Bosniak 2006; Eggebø 2013). The widely spread representation of foreign traditional femininity and masculinity constructs migrants as 'different' citizens, symbolically excluding them from the imagined community of gender equal citizens of Norwegian society.

#### **Material outcomes of gendered representations**

The conducted analysis draws attention to the material and economic outcomes of unequal treatment. The tendencies to differentiate between progressive majority and traditional minorities have practical outcomes. According to Crenshaw (1989, 1991), while expressing concerns about migrant women's gender liberation, liberal feminists do not manage to address the problem of structural discrimination of migrant women and men, double standards in legislation and policies of inclusion discriminating between the majority population and migrants (Crenshaw 1989, 1991). In my research, it was shown that when gendered cultural stigmatisation took place, professionals paid little attention to solving the social and practical problems that the migrants encountered in their host society. For example, when focusing on gender issues and the idea of

cultural difference, employees at an employment agency overlooked the fact that migrant women had unstable employment statuses. These women were often pushed into the care sector of the economy in Finland, Sweden and Norway (Sverdljuk 2010). In my analysis, it was shown that – in various situations of multicultural professional practice – professionals developed patronising attitudes towards migrant women and men. The analyses of the work of employees at employment agencies aimed at assisting migrants with job searches showed that migrant women were looked at as ‘less competent’ relative to the majority population (Sverdljuk 2010).

Also, experts working at crisis centres and a policeman lost sight of the economic problems and legislative discrimination that increased the risk for migrant women of being exposed to gendered violence (Sverdljuk 2012). Furthermore, social work students rushed to interpret uncertain gestures of an imagined refugee as signs of masculine stubbornness and a refusal to get help. Students lost sight of Hussein’s uncertainty and willingness to help his family in Afghanistan and concluded that social workers did not need to help (Sverdljuk 2014). Moreover, problems connected with young people’s communication were reduced in the discussion of gender and cultural differences. Social issues such as isolation and a lack of contact were not taken into consideration (Sverdljuk 2014). Rather, the social workers paid attention to the migrant’s gender and ‘culture’ (Crenshaw 1991; Sverdljuk 2012). Experts defined measures that were neither relevant nor effective when it came to improving the migrants’ social positions.

During my analysis, I saw that ideologies, discourses and beliefs about gender, the nation and full-fledged citizens penetrated into the practices of the co-workers of welfare state institutions, select NGOs and control authorities responsible for the prevention of domestic violence. This impacted migrants’ relationship to welfare. Provision of services to help migrants with welfare and personal security needs took place in a context of discussions and negotiations about their gender relations. It was this conditioned (or subordinated) character of migrants’ inclusion into Norwegian society and its various institutions that I investigated in this PhD.

According to Foucault, there is an intrinsic connection between discursive marginalisation – or the process of producing specific accepted and excluded subjects – and the legal and material deprivations or privileges that people in these positions might experience (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982; Foucault 1980). Devaluing representations might influence the material situations of the people they refer to. Discourses and representations construct subjects in relation to their materiality. It is possible to use these ideas in the context of contemporary multicultural welfare societies. It would be legitimate to point out that the gendered culturalisation of migrants and the construction of them as ‘other’ citizens serves to push aside the economic issues. In this context, Fraser critically addressed the established political discourse of recognising the cultural identities of migrants, pointing to the problem of the displacement of redistribution (Fraser 2000).

According to Fraser, the displacement of redistribution takes place when ‘questions of recognition are serving less to supplement, complicate and enrich redistributive struggles than to marginalize, eclipse and displace them’ (Fraser 2000). Fraser noted that there are many cases in which cultural value becomes institutionalised. Institutions might take for granted that some categories of social actors are defined as normative and others as deficient or inferior. One can say that, when it comes to migrants, the question of recognition has become the question of whether to accept or eventually reject parts of their cultures. However, if we perceive identity – in line with the post-structuralist approach – as multifaceted and unfixed, we rethink the entrenched belief that culture is the main category that defines the identity of ethnically different citizens. Furthermore, we are able to see common features that bring together different vulnerable groups.

#### **Career women living in harmonious families**

When proceeding from the open intra-categorical concept of intersectionality and the idea that subjects have agency – an ability to resist dominant representations – I was sensitive to analyzing, what alternative representations are produced by migrant women. When doing this, I assumed that new representations do not emerge out of a subject’s metaphysical ‘self’. Rather, subjects inscribe themselves into, or activate, different discourses. Thus, I pursued the strategy of putting Russian women outside the ‘offered’ subject position as women ‘undergoing the liberation programme’ and looked at the

way in which my informants talked about their interests, hobbies, life plans, work and leisure (Sverdljuk 2009). I looked at the self-representations they came up with and the subjects they constructed when they spoke about their experiences as (family) migrants, women who lived in Norway, migrants from the neighboring Russian territories, mothers and wives. In this respect, I used the strategy suggested by Larsen (2006), Staunæs and Søndergaard (2006) and Neumann (2001) of extending the number of categories for analysis, whilst being sensitive to the categories that were relevant for discussion in each case. In the produced stories, when it came to gender relations, the Russian women basically represented themselves as 'liberal women' who were living their lives in accordance with the principle of gender equality. The qualities and characteristics that were normally used to define 'majority' women were being free, working, being conscious of one's own sexuality, and actively taking leisure time.

Thus, it was possible to define these women's self-presentations by paying attention to their way of 'doing gender' – particularly as this intersected with their taking leisure time and being the subject of various education programmes. These characteristics of subjectivity led these women to present themselves as 'modern' and 'gender equal'. At the same time, the status of 'family migrant' impacted the way in which they defined and made sense of their gender and intimate relations. The legal regulations of transnational marriage made these women participants in a gender contract when they became legally and economically dependent on their Norwegian husband, who could be defined as an 'anchor person'. At least initially, a man functioned as a provider. In the migration situation – defined by women's unemployment in the period of adjustment, at least temporarily – a gender contract, wherein a husband is a provider, often becomes the only option. Because of the necessity to learn a new language, a risk of going down the career ladder and complicated rules of the adoption of foreign education, the situation of dependency may be prolonged for an indefinite period of time (Sverdljuk 2010).

In this context, Russian women negotiated the definition of a 'liberal woman' and the content of gender equality. Gender equality was defined not as parity, but as 'harmony' in family and partner relations. 'Harmony' can refer to various everyday practices and gender contracts (Temkina and Rotkirch 1997). It can imply both being a working

mother sharing house responsibilities with a husband and a situation in which the man plays the role of provider. Migrant women's self-definitions as women living in 'harmonious' families may be interpreted as a justification of their temporary situation of dependency on their partner, rather than a celebration of patriarchy. In the context of their migrant status, their dependent legal position and unstable employment pattern, Russian women's insistence on defining gender relations in terms of 'harmony' is a kind of compensation for their unsatisfactory social and economic position. Gender harmony is migrant women's response to a situation in which they are put in a dependent position on their husband on the one hand, and are expected to be equal and independent on the other hand. It requires them to balance the classical and modern definition of a woman, depending on the situation they find themselves in. Thus, we can see that status as a migrant and the consequently instable employment situation produced impacts the way in which migrant women practice and interpret their gender, family and intimate relations. Therefore, the women attributed gender with various connotations, from 'liberal gender relations' to 'gender relations under negotiation'. The latter is the definition that is activated in the flexible concept of 'harmony'.

It is possible to interpret gender relations in terms of 'harmony' in the context of the stigmatising sexist representations of foreign women. When the Russian women complained that they were missing 'lady' and 'gentleman' types of relations (Sverdljuk 2010), they revealed more about their wish to be 'heroes' within the modern storyline of romantic love than about their inclination to practice patriarchy. Romantic love is an accepted discourse that is part of the modern story of gender equality (Giddens 1991). As the Russian women had to deal with sexist media representations, this part of the story of practicing modern gender relations was not as applied to them. Foreign women are stigmatised as potential cheaters and easy accessible women, both in the media and in the legislation of family reunification. The sexiness of Russian women, which means both sexual availability and attractiveness, has become a common cliché in the media (Stenvoll 2002; Sverdljuk 2009). In this context, 'harmony' in gender and intimate relations, and playing the roles of 'lady' and 'gentleman' as part of this contract, may be read as women's interpretation of romantic love, which they oppose to sexiness. In this way, harmony becomes a significant definition of gender, which is a result of the way in

which being a migrant living with a Norwegian man is interpreted in women's narratives. To conclude, the problems that Russian migrant women discuss pertain to their symbolic status in society, their status as migrants and their difficulties getting work. I showed that these factors impact their personal lives.

Similar observations were made in the study of the identity formation of migrants in post-colonial literature by Vogt-William (2005). Vogt-William pointed out that the typical problem discussed by post-colonial authors is the conflict within a migrant's subjectivities generated by the influences of both cultures the migrant is a part of (Vogt-William 2005). However, as Vogt-William underlined, the migrant's inner conflict is depicted by such authors not simply as a clash of two 'entities' – two different cultures – but rather, politically, as the challenge of non-recognition emerging from social interaction in a diverse society (Vogt-William 2005: 388). Thus, as she noted, the symptoms of intellectual uneasiness are caused by racism and ideological discrimination. Vogt-William described the trajectories of a migrant's liberation, which are established through a gesture of the refusal of the created juxtaposition – 'we, liberal' versus 'they, non-emancipated' – and through a rejection of the logic of assimilation. Vogt-William, as well as the authors of the studied novels, tried to describe the phenomenon of migrants 'taking freedom on their own terms' – not willing to be accepted as 'honorary members' of the majority's society, but joining other migrants and people with transcultural identities in order to lead a meaningful and harmonious existence (Vogt-William 2005).

Proceeding from this, one might return to the question formulated within post-colonial feminism about who has the power to represent migrants' identities. In this research, I showed that gender equality issues, which migrants are concerned with, are quite different from mainstream definitions of migrants' best interest. At the same time, it is important to note that there is no automatic connection between being a migrant and taking a certain political stand in relation to migration issues. Many migrants join the mainstream discourse on the dangers of migration and take positions as exclusive members of the majority, advocating the need for liberating migrant women. A bright example of this is the political position of the Somali women with migrant background, Amal Aden (2010). As Foucault underlined, hegemonic discourse can capture subjects,

offering people ready-made patterns for understanding themselves and the world around them. Subjects are not real, but are constructed notions; people might submit themselves to the power of the dominant discourse.

### **Transnational caring masculinity**

I pursued the same 'open' intersectional approach and approached subjects as nodal points where many discourses meet, when analysing the way in which students described migrant men's situations. I was sensitive to the categories that were relevant for analysis when students constructed the representation of a migrant man. Students of multicultural social work were active actors who transformed the most common gendered representations of migrant men as uncaring and selfish. I considered the way in which my informants spoke about migrant men's gender, ethnicity, family situation, parenting style, economic status in Norway and role as a user of social services. The students explained that the way in which migrant men practiced their gender relations had to do not with their culture, but with their status as a migrant. The fact that these men were separated from their children was evaluated as a special situation characteristic of migrant and refugee men. In the student's discourses, migrant men appeared as kind and caring fathers (Sverdljuk 2014). Although the gender relations practiced by refugee men were portrayed as different from those practiced by Norwegian fathers (who, ideally, actively participated in childcare) in the students' stories, these two types of men shared similar ethical qualities, such as kindness and concern for others. The professionals stressed the qualities that united both majority and minority men. 'Transnational men' were, according to the students, like ethnic majority men – caring, working and good caretakers of their children. The representation of the migrant man was akin to the representation of the modern, caring family father trying to live up to the ideal of gender equality.

In these representations of an accepted masculinity, the participation of fathers in childcare – care through presence – was challenged by their care through distant parenting and material support. However, in this context, care through presence could have been evaluated as privilege, and not as something that the migrant men refused to do because of their patriarchal culture. Thus, men's participation in childcare took on new connotations in relation to the widespread perception of Norwegian caring men as



‘heroes’ (Annfelt 2007). When the professionals created gendered representations of the transnational man, the Norwegian man’s position as a ‘hero’ could be seen in a new light as a ‘lucky’ guy. This also destabilised the stereotypical description of the migrant man from someone unwilling to take care of his children to someone caring very much and envying Norwegian men.

### **Interrogating gender equality**

The intersectional analysis of migrants’ subjectivities makes us grasp the problems of migrants’ inclusion not in terms of teaching migrant women and men gender equality, but in terms of diversifying the gender equality agenda. In my examples, migrants and professionals participated in a process I call a ‘transversal examination of the liberal value of gender equality’. Transversalism is about making alliances across the boundaries of gender, ethnicity and other categories of belonging (Yuval-Davis 1997: 125–132). It is grounded in the practices of ‘shifting’ and ‘rooting’, when different subjects take each other’s positions, lead a dialogue about common interests and decide how to better represent themselves in political arenas. Informants pointed out that the migrant status – but not culture – impacted the way in which migrant women and men practiced gender relations. Many ways of practicing gender relations were assumed. Students of social work deconstructed the value of gender relations as parity and accepted the seemingly traditional scheme of gender relations with a masculine bread provider and a feminine caretaker. In this sense, the value of gender equality was questioned, as it was originally understood within the narrow framework of parity practices by individuals living in the same territory. This scheme did not take into consideration the fact of transnational family networks or the ways in which migrants lived their intimate and family relations. In this context, the actual problem – within a gender equality agenda – in the case of men refugees, became not teaching foreign men equality but taking up seriously the issue of distant parenting, which is becoming more and more urgent in Norway, as in Europe more generally (Lutz 2007). Issues of parenting could be discussed from many angles, and not just from the perspective of white ethnic Norwegian middle class women and men. One could also address the similarities between divorced Norwegian fathers (Oftung 2009) and transnational men, who both lack contact with their children.

Another issue relating to the inclusion of migrants that has been repeatedly discussed in feminist research on gender and migrants (Crenshaw 1991; Eggebø 2013) is the vulnerable situation that women migrants face as they become subjects of family reunification programs. Migrant women present themselves as liberal, but they experience problems in gender equality due to their migrant status and unstable employment situation, and cases of societal ‘othering’. As was shown in my research, it was not women’s culture but their legal and economic situation as migrants that impacted their understanding and practice of gender and intimate relations. In regards to family reunification, another frequently discussed example is minority men marrying women from their countries of origin. The issue raised in this context is the gender culture of these couples and the patriarchal dependency of the migrant wives. Although in the example of Russian migrant wives culture was not problematised to the same degree, similar tendencies could be traced. At the same time, the impact on gender patterns of the migration situation, an unstable legal status and racism and Orientalism – which these women must face – is not a topic of consideration in these debates. The patriarchy with which migrant women are confronted is not the only question that can be discussed as part of the debate about migrants’ inclusion. Similarly, the gender sensitive policies of inclusion should question the impact of migrant status on women’s intimate and private lives.

Equally important is the question of whether women’s mobility must result in women being pushed into the care and service sectors of the economy (Lutz 2007). Migrant women’s own appreciation of feminine qualities is blurred with the public’s association of migrant women with service and domestic work, regardless of whether this work is conducted at home or at the workplace. At the same time, human freedom and leadership are conceptualised as abilities that are associated with masculine features. Therefore, the relevant gender equality issue for discussion is the meaning and the value of femininity (Longva 2003). Must being feminine result in occupying a service- or carework-related profession? What role does the modern value of ‘soft’ or ‘flat’ leadership play in this context?

### **Political representation**

In this way, my study showed that a subject's presentation in terms of gender, sexuality and ethnicity leads us directly to the question of political representation in terms of the delineation of issues that gain primary importance once political concerns about inclusion are formulated. Political representation refers to the definition of policies and measures that consider the interests of the subjects these policies would concern. Policies differ depending on the construction of subjects and identities. In the theory part, representation was defined as an active process through which subjects and groups are constructed – or, as Hall (1997b) put it, the process through which certain qualities of people are emphasised, or even invented. With respect to the transition from symbolic to political representation, one might say that the representation of subjects and groups (e.g. migrants) is crucial for the process of setting up a political agenda and defining the issues within the policies that are supposed to promote the interests of these groups. For example, if migrants are defined as gender traditional, issues delineated for the policies of inclusion might include the challenge of combating patriarchy. Alternatively, we have seen that migrants can be looked as liberal, but having problems in the sphere of intimate relations as they must confront restrictive policies of family reunification. Correspondingly, the issues put forward to promote migrants' inclusion could include changes in the immigration legislation. As was mentioned in the theoretical part, more powerful groups can decide how to represent others' identities. Political questions put forward for discussion do not necessarily correspond to the interests of the groups for whom the actors who are in power seemingly stand. On the contrary, they might obscure these interests, and instead promote their own.

The formation of political subject positions that are elaborated in relation to migration issues and are intrinsically connected with the process of representing migrant subjects is important. One kind of political subject position merges with immigration hostile attitudes when, under the heading of the inclusion of migrants, the 'dangers of immigration' are discussed. Problems that are articulated by adherents of this position can vary, and embrace wide-ranging issues from gender oppression of other cultures to sneak-Islamisation. The dominant political discourse on the inclusion of migrants is intertwined with the discourse of Orientalism, thus pushing important political questions

that represent both migrants' and the majority's interests to the periphery of political concern. Another position that can be defined proceeds from the alternative representation of migrants. It defends more active policies of accepting refugees to the country, liberalising the immigration legislation and critically discussing the issues of migrant women's domestic work. These political positions, in relation to migrants, are well-visible in the Norwegian public sphere, where the issue of migration and integration creates a visible division line between political actors and forces. As has been shown in this dissertation, both political positions are present in the discourses and practice of professionals.

#### **Revisiting the mainstream policy of inclusion**

In this part, I discuss the implications of gendered and ethnicised representations of migrants for the policies of inclusion. As we have seen, many of the involved professionals and the actors behind political and media discourses construct migrants as traditional in terms of gender. Thus, they prioritise the issue of gender liberation in the discussion of inclusion. At the same time, they hold the opinion – in line with the official policies of inclusion – that migrants should enjoy freedom to practice their culture. According to this thinking, migrants should both have 'freedom' and be warned about the limits of this freedom. This logic, which is implied in the political idea of inclusion, has obvious restrictions. First, migrants' freedom is almost exclusively associated with the possibility of practicing their own culture. Other dimensions of freedom are overlooked, such as the freedom not to be exposed to the strict regulations of family reunification policies. Second, gender issues, which concern migrants, are discussed one-sidedly as problems of patriarchy. Many other issues, which pertain to gender equality and concern both the majority and migrants (e.g. the issues of parenting and women's place in elite business and political positions) are ignored. Later, I will return to this last point. Therefore, although Norwegian authorities and respective professionals state that they do not formulate their ideas of inclusion in accordance with the philosophy of multiculturalism (S.meld.nr 49 2003–2004; Stokke 2012), in practice, they are – to a great degree – influenced by this philosophy.

Within the philosophy of multiculturalism (Kymlicka 1995), questions have been raised about the possibility of introducing special cultural rights for migrants to allow them to

practice their traditions. Critics of this line of reasoning have questioned whether special cultural rights might prevent migrants from integrating into Western and European societies. At the same time, cultural rights are seen by adherents of liberal philosophy (Kymlicka 1995) and liberal feminism (Okin 1999) to contradict or threaten universal democratic values such as gender equality. There have been active discussions about how the minimum of shared values should be defined (Kymlicka 1993; Mills 2007; Parekh 2006; van der Veer 1997). The argument over whether it is necessary to restrict migrants' ability to exercise cultural rights has been raised (Kymlicka 1995; Okin 1999). According to the liberal feminist Okin (1999), allotting special cultural rights to migrants might negatively influence migrant women's situations. As Okin (1999) pointed out, cultural rights relate to traditional ways of practicing gender relations with the subsequent oppression of ethnic minority women. This discussion can be labelled the 'Okin-debate'. Also, Nordic feminist debates centre on how the idea of a 'women-friendly' welfare state (Hernes 1987) should be connected to multiculturalism or ethnic diversity (Borchorst 2012). For Wikan (2002), for example, an important issue is the reconciliation of gender equality and ethnic diversity, which presumably leads to the spread of discriminatory practices towards women.

The empirical results of the conducted research – the fact that there are Orientalising representations of migrant women and men – lead us to critically revisit dominant ideas of multiculturalism. As has been shown in the analysis of the empirical cases, and as Lentin and Titley (2011: 11) noted, in contemporary public and political debates, the discourse on multiculturalism has become a 'maddeningly spongy and imprecise discursive field' – 'a conceptual grab bag of issues relating to race, culture, and identity that seems to be defined simply by negation'. 'Naïve' and well-intended concerns, which were originally intended to open a discussion about how to secure migrant women's freedom and human rights, have actually turned into a totalising discourse that stigmatises migrants (Lentin and Titley 2011). We have seen that professionals, when pointing to the necessity to restrict migrants' freedom to practise their culture, produce Orientalising representations of migrant women and men. The idea of the liberation of migrant women becomes intertwined with patronising attitudes and sexism. Sometimes, salvation is even interpreted as desexualisation. Similarly, in the case of migrant men,

sexism is manifested in representations about 'foreign macho masculinity', which is opposed to 'kind Norwegian fatherhood'.

In line with these observations, several post-colonial feminists have exposed the limitations of the argument that 'cultures' are threatening the liberal order of European societies as Eurocentric or ethnocentric (al-Hibri 1999; Bhabha 1999; Griffin and Braidotti 2002; Honig 1999). Post-colonial feminists have pointed out that liberal feminist approaches to the inclusion of migrant women imply the stigmatisation of migrants. To oppose Okin's point of view, post-colonial feminist writers (al-Hibri 1999; Bhabha 1999; Honig 1999) have emphasised that gender oppression, both in third-world countries and in the West, is rooted not in 'culture' or religion, but in everyday discriminating social practice. They distinguish between 'culture' – or Koran-Bible – on the one hand, and the social structures of the specific societies, on the other hand, and maintain that gender oppression is a phenomenon that exists in all countries and societies, irrespective of their 'cultures' (al-Hibri 1999; Honig 1999; Narayan 1997). Paths to social cohesion and inclusion are seen not by contrasting cultures and the liberal order, and not just by allowing migrants to practice their culture, but by preventing the social segregation of vulnerable groups (Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1989, 1991). To conclude, it is necessary to be aware that the discussion about the minimum of shared values can be connected with the stigmatisation of migrants. A focus on shared values can easily be reduced to these discussions, whether the specific characteristics of the 'others' match with the democratic set of values that is associated with the majority population.



## Materials and Method

The research was empirically driven, explorative and open-ended, in order for the empirical findings to guide the analysis. As mentioned in the chapter ‘Nordic Research on Gender and Ethnicity in Professional Practices’, the main aim was to extend the scope of the analysed materials to give voice to different contributors. The perspectives of professionals, students, politicians, the media and migrants were taken into consideration. Collecting qualitative data from each of these actors implied combining, in different proportions, various data types: interviews, observations and texts. Thus, I pursued the ‘classical’ data strategy in the social sciences to mix different kinds of qualitative data (Bryman 1993; Moran-Ellis et al. 2006; Phillips and Schröder 2005).

The data of the dissertation can be divided into three main material types:

Material type	Location	Number	People involved	Time period
1) Qualitative thematic semi-structural interviews with:				
a) professionals who met migrants (Russian women) in various situations of professional practice	‘Norden’ <sup>5</sup> Norway	21 12	21 12	2004
b) students and teachers of multicultural social work interviewed as:	Norway	13	13	2009
i) individual students		6	6	
ii) students in groups		2	6	
iii) teachers		2	1	
c) women migrants from Russia interviewed:	‘Norden’ Norway	65	65	2004

<sup>5</sup> With ‘Norden’, here, I refer to Norway, Finland and Sweden, the countries were included into the RWN project.



i) individually	'Norden'	21	21	
	Norway	8	8	
ii) in groups	'Norden'	6	44	
	Norway			
2) Participant observation of:				
a) multicultural social work education				2009
b) the lives of Russian women in north Norway				2004
3) Texts of:				
a) political documents	'Norden'			
	Norway			
b) media articles	'Norden'			
	Norway			

I used materials that I compiled during my participation in two research projects: 'RWN: Russian Women as Immigrants in *Norden* – Finland, Norway, Sweden – Gender Perspectives on Everyday Life, Citizenship and Social Justice' ('RWN'; 2004–2009)<sup>67</sup> and 'Experts and Minorities in the Land of Gender Equality' (2009–2013)<sup>8</sup>. The extended time period of the research had certain consequences on the outcome of the research. First, the time factor made it possible for me to carry out an extended qualitative study of immigrants' views on their gender, family life and economic position and to contrast this knowledge with professionals' representations. Thus, it enabled a more thorough analysis of the discourses of these two groups of actors, who were central to the research. Second, it allowed me to get a different quality of case studies to those presented in the articles. Since the beginning of the research, multiculturalism and ethnic diversity in Norway and the Nordic counties had been on

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/projects/files/ryska\\_kvinnor.pdf](http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/projects/files/ryska_kvinnor.pdf).

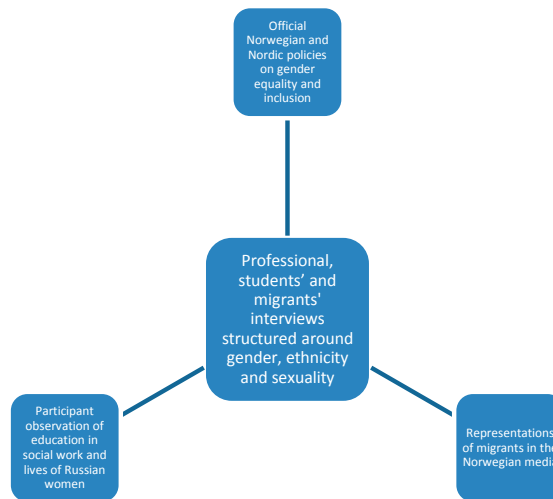
<sup>7</sup> [http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/projects/files/russian\\_women\\_norden\\_final\\_20080516.pdf](http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/projects/files/russian_women_norden_final_20080516.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.forskningsradet.no/servlet/Satellite?c=Prosjekt&cid=1224698284948&pagenam=kjonnsforskning/Hovedsidemal&p=1228296172523>.

the political and scholarly research agenda. Therefore, one might point out that the time evolution of ideas on inclusion, as well as the variety of representations of migrants, was captured in this research. For example, the representations that came out of the analysis in the last article (Sverdljuk 2014) were a result of this development.

### **Combining different types of material**

Foremost in my attention were the interviews, whereas other types of material served as background information to supplement the interview analysis. I was interested in the dynamics of interviewees' discourses and discussions around gender, sexuality and ethnicity in the context of existing official Norwegian (and Nordic) discourses and media representations. When approaching professionals', students' and migrants' interviews, I perceived them as 'interactions' in the sense of critical discourse analysis (CDA) – as 'texts' created by dialogue partners using different semiotic resources (e.g. official discourses used in policy making, populist media utterances and non-formal everyday speech) to create meaning (Fairclough and Wodak 1997; van Dijk 1993; Wetherell et al. 2001: 240). By referring to the concept of the 'order of discourses' – the way in which different semiotic resources are structured and related to each other – I tried to determine which kinds of discourses on gender, sexuality and ethnicity prevailed in the interviewees' utterances and discussions: What were their attitudes to the official policies of migrant inclusion into a women friendly welfare system? Did they take a critical stand towards media representations of migrant and minority women and men? Schematically, the interrelation between discourses – student discussions, official policies, academic curricular writings and media utterances – can be presented through the following diagram:



Most of the substantial work of the study was spent collecting and critically analysing the interviews. Other kinds of materials, such as field notes made on the basis of observations and texts, were approached as background material to better understand, interpret and contextualise the main ‘text’ of the interviews. In order to conduct data analysis in a reasonable time, I did not carry out a separate study of official state documents and media articles. Instead, I drew on reviews and scholarly studies of the relevant background material. How did informants combine, or ‘chain’, the different discursive possibilities that were made available through the background material? Did they create their own ways of approaching gender and ethnicity to allow for social change? By asking these questions, I approached interviewees speaking about gender and ethnicity as active participants in the production of social life (Wetherell et al. 2001: 238)

### 1) Interviews

Interviews were the main material used for studying the process of inclusion from the perspectives of working professionals, students – future employees of institutions

promoting inclusion – and migrants. The interviews were semi-structured; that is, they were simultaneously thematic and open to allow interviewees to take initiative by posing questions themselves and defining the problems and aims from their own perspective.

***a) with professionals***

I conducted twelve thematic interviews with state professionals and employees of relevant NGOs in Norway. The materials from Norway were part of the Nordic database, which involved, in total, 21 interviews from Norway, Sweden and Finland. The Nordic interviews were collected jointly with Aino Saarinen and Kerstin Hägg during the ‘RWN’ project (2004–2009). In the article ‘Russian Women Immigrants in the Nordic Countries: Finland, Norway, Sweden – Gender Perspectives on Social Justice’ (Sverdljuk 2010), all of the Nordic material was used as background for a more detailed analysis of the examples of professional practice from Norway. These interviews were used to answer the main research objective about gendered representations of migrants in professional practice in Norway and their impact on the process of inclusion. Interviews with professionals were the main source, and these enabled insight into the reports about the realised, long-term experience of communicating with migrants. In my project, I defined professionals as having special education in various fields and working in state institutions and non-governmental organisations. Professionals in my project were responsible for securing the protection of different rights of the inhabitants: individual rights or rights of bodily security and integrity (as protected through crises centres and the police); social and economic rights (as protected by employees of the employment agencies); and rights of social participation (as protected by students working at the youth centre). Professionals were active at different institutional venues: at public state service and administrative departments, local municipalities and NGOs. The majority of professionals worked at municipal or state public organisations. This is because, in Norway, professionals who are responsible for the protection of various rights are predominantly public employees.

The interviews involved professionals with different migration- and integration-related roles, who dealt with female Russian migrants in their practice. Many of them worked

in institutions under the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), which includes both state institutions (social security offices) and municipal institutions (social welfare offices). I included the employees of relevant NGOs (such as crises centres for women), in order to involve actors from the civil sector, especially those working directly with gender and women's rights issues. Among the interviewees from Norway were a staff member at an employment office, a doctor at a health clinic, a nurse at a health clinic, a crisis centre staff member, a crisis counsellor at a police station and some voluntary workers from the Russian Association in Norway.

The questions were designed to invoke professionals' reflections on key topics of inclusion in relation to the issues of gender equality and women's empowerment. I asked the interlocutors to share their general reflections on migration policies and migrants' integration. As female 'friendliness' is a special feature of the Nordic welfare states (Hernes 1987), gender and gender equality were a natural part of the discussion on inclusion. Special attention was paid to the issues of gender violence and prostitution. Women's employment and their opportunity to live lives free of violence and harassment are among the key issues of the women's movement and state feminism. Questions about how these issues were discussed in relation to migrant women were included in order to determine whether migrant women were perceived as integral subjects of these policies or whether they were defined as 'special cases' within feminist policies and practices. The complete list of questions used for the working professionals is provided in the appendix.

***b) With students of multicultural social work***

I collected twelve interviews with students: six individual interviews and six group interviews. Altogether, 30 students from all student years were involved in the interviews. Two interviews were conducted with teachers, as well, in order to deepen the knowledge received during participant observation at lectures and seminars. Especially important were the interviews with the six third-year students who were in the final stage of their programme of studies and who met clients with migrant backgrounds as part of their practical training. I interviewed students who were working

at youth clubs in the community, at refugee centres, and at child welfare services and social welfare institutions.

In contrast to the interviews with the working professionals, in the student interviews I emphasised topics relating to their studies in multicultural social work. Had the students acquired new knowledge about how to provide services to clients with migrant backgrounds? Questions touched upon what the theory of social work defines as ‘professional communication’ with clients (Heydt and Sherman 2005; Shulman 2008). Such issues as the ability to balance power relations with clients and the ability to practice non-discriminatory social work were discussed. We also took up the challenges that the students encountered in their multicultural social work training. Special attention was paid to the role of gender in multicultural social work practice. The complete list of questions is attached. To gain insight into the professional concept of providing assistance (discourses on adequate ways of providing inclusive social help, exercising tolerance and maintaining an open attitude to ‘clients’), some material from the multicultural social work curriculum was used, as well. Attending lectures on multicultural social work was helpful in this respect, and made it possible for us to gain insight into the latest theoretical discussions on ‘diversified’ social work (Sverdljuk 2014).

***c) With Russian migrant women***

These interviews were used to gain insight into the gendered self-accounts of migrants and to enquire how these accounts influenced the positioning of migrants as ‘one of us’ or ‘other’. I conducted qualitative thematic individual and group interviews with migrant women from Russia. I interviewed 24 women living in Norway.<sup>9</sup> These interviews were the focal point of the article ‘Contradicting the “Prostitution Stigma”: Narratives of Russian Migrant Women Living in Norway’ (Sverdljuk 2009). In the article ‘Russian Women Immigrants in the Nordic Countries: Finland, Norway, Sweden – Gender Perspectives on Social Justice’ (Sverdljuk 2010), I drew on interviews with Russian women, as well, although interviews with professionals were also included in the data. To recruit interviewees, the ‘snowball’ method was used (Denscombe 2003:

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<sup>9</sup> In all, I conducted 65 interviews with Russian migrant women (from Norway, Finland and Sweden).

16). The project team had local native contacts who knew Russian women (Saarinen 2006). I contacted leaders of the Russian communities in the Northern counties and the capital (Oslo). Once I got to know one Russian woman, it was easy for me to obtain further information about other women to contact. Some interviews were conducted within the border areas. The choice of border locations allowed me to explore the sensitive issues of gendered violence and the discourses of prostitution (Sverdljuk 2009). In order to approach female Russian migrants as a differentiated group, I selected interviewees according to age, education, work position, marital status and place of residence (in a town or rural area). The majority of the interviewed women were so-called marriage migrants. Apparently, many were single mothers. The Russian women had met their partners in Nordic-Russian companies, during short-term visits and at the homes of friends and relatives living in the Nordic Barents (Hägg 2006; Saarinen 2006).

i)

Within the individual interviews, questions focused on the part of the life story that related to the integration process and the period of adaptation. Greater emphasis was placed on questions concerning migrant women's views on integration policies. Thus, questions dealt with the experiences of introduction programmes, everyday life and private relationships. Special attention was paid to conceptualisations of gender and family relations, as well as to experiences related to gender violence. Because of the sensitive nature of the topics of gender violence and prostitution, it was not always possible to discuss these issues in the individual interviews.

ii)

Therefore, I included group interviews in my research. The group interviews enabled me to obtain material for the analysis of how the Russian migrant women dealt with derogative gendered discourses leading to social exclusion (e.g. the 'prostitution stigma'), and how they mobilised other discourses (multiculturalism, the gender equal family) in the process of creating alternative gendered representations. Group discussions made it also possible for them to discuss issues of collective identity formation (Bloor et al. 2001: 17; Saarinen 2006), driven by the act of 'speaking back'

(Spivak 1985; Sverdljuk 2009). A complete list of questions for the individual and group interviews with Russian women is provided in the appendix.

## **2) Participant observation**

The ethnographic method of participant observation essentially enriches interview-based analysis. The method is especially suited for combination with other methods (Fangen 2004: 151). The advantage of complementing interviews with participant observation is that, during fieldwork, the researcher is able to write down utterances that have not been guided by the interview questions. Research participants talk freely, and this allows the researcher to gain a better understanding of the way in which they interpret their experiences (Fangen 2004: 72). In this way, I was able to include informants' 'everyday talk' as a supplementing background and an additional semantic resource for the interview analysis. Similar kinds of material could be collected during the introduction to and debrief after the interviews. When interviewees knew that the tape recorder was not switched on, they felt free to share their thoughts and make comments relevant to the topic of the enquiry. Thus, it was possible for me to understand the assumed knowledge that lay behind the statements of those involved.

### ***a) At university colleges***

I emphasised participant observation when studying education in social work in order to allow more space for joint reflections involving both students and myself, the researcher. Universities and colleges (i.e. the educational institutions attended by professionals) were looked at as places characterised by a greater freedom of expression and a less routine way of functioning, relative to established institutions. I was optimistic that there would be a certain degree of openness and alternative perceptions of gender and ethnicity in these free fora. Through my involvement in the project 'Experts and Minorities in the Land of Gender Equality', I conducted participant observation at select university colleges in Norway where multicultural social work was taught.

Recently, due to increased multiculturalism, several university colleges in Norway have introduced studies in intercultural social work in order to educate professionals with adequate competence (Dalland 2008). The aim of the social work studies programme is



to qualify professionals for working with clientele at employment offices, in social services and at family counselling agencies. An obligatory part of the curriculum is learning about the family, gender and sexuality of minorities in Norway, gender and ritual life in different social/cultural contexts, Norwegian family policies and other topics at the intersection between gender and ethnicity. Prospective professionals engage in practical studies in social work with minority background people in Norway and abroad. I perceived multicultural education in social work as an arena in which future professionals were educated to practise inclusion in multicultural contexts. As part of the project fieldwork, I attended lectures and seminars in multicultural social work at two select university colleges in Norway. I listened to students' group presentations and oral group reports on professional practice. I spent two to three weeks in each university college. The whole period spent in the field was approximately one month. I made sound recordings and transcripts of several lectures and seminars, and wrote field notes.

***b) in the Nordic fields***

Observations were part of the fieldwork, allowing me to gain an impression of life in remote areas of the Barents region. Fieldwork in this location was part of the process of understanding the special situations and problems Russian women encountered in their everyday lives. I was able to glimpse the vast rural landscape and the everyday life in the home regions of the interviewees (Saarinen 2006: 279). As Saarinen noted, 'Travelling in trains, buses and taxis in the north took from a few days to more than a week at a time. Discussing such sensitive topics as prostitution and gender violence required a secure environment. To guarantee anonymity, some of the interviews were conducted in hotels and cafes. In the small rural communities, however, with few public venues, the interviews were conducted in private homes, if the interviewee chose this herself' (Kennedy Bergen 1993; Saarinen 2006).

**3) Texts**

Texts such as documents on immigration and integration policies and newspaper articles on issues such as Russian migration, trans-border prostitution and violence served as background material (Prior 2004). I engaged with this material to gain an overview of the discursive resources available to the professionals, in order to analyse the way in

which they chained, or combined, these resources (Silverman 2001). The material was used as a contrast to ascertain whether the informants created their own ways of approaching gender, ethnicity and inclusion or whether – as active participants in the process of producing social life – they allowed for the potential of social change (Wetherell et al. 2001: 238).

**a) Political documents**

Policies and programmes of inclusion were compiled and analysed (Sverdljuk 2010). In particular, I read and compared the Norwegian, Finnish and Swedish integration acts and regulations in detail<sup>10</sup>.

In Norway:

Lov om introduksjonsordning og norskopplæring for nyankomne innvandrere (introduksjonsloven) 2005;

Lov 1997-02-28 nr. 19: Lov om folketrygd (folketrygdloven) Del III.

In Finland:

Förordning om främjande av invandrades integration samt mottagande av asylsökande 1.5.1999–1.5.2005.

In Sweden:

SOU 2003: 75 (2003). Etablering i Sverige. Möjligheter och ansvar för individ och samhälle. Stockholm;

SOU 2004: 21 (2004). Egenförsörjning eller bidragsförsörjning. Invandrarna, arbetsmarknaden och välfärdsstaten.

**b) Media articles**

To access background material on popular discourses on gender and ethnicity, some media articles were also used. For a concrete example of a media discourse, I used

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<sup>10</sup> Full references to these documents are given in the reference list to the article: 'Russian Women Immigrants in the Nordic Countries: Finland, Norway, Sweden – Gender Perspectives on Social Justice' (Sverdljuk 2010).

newspaper reports on a murder case involving a Russian woman victim. In addition, I analysed statements made in the newspaper by the head of a regional project on the prevention of violence against Russian women (Sverdljuk 2012). In the article ‘Contradicting the “Prostitution Stigma”: Narratives of Russian Migrant Women Living in Norway’ (Sverdljuk 2009), I used reviews and scholarly studies of the media articles to gain insight into gendered stereotypes about migrants. Natalia Kopsova’s novel was another source within the sector of culture and media that was used in the analysis. The following media sources were analysed in detail:

‘Drepte kona mens barna sov’. Dagbladet 01.10.2003;

<http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/2003/01/10/358216.html>

‘Ulike kjønnsideal’. Dagbladet 01.10.2003;

<http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/2003/01/10/358217.html>

Kopsova, Natalia ‘Russisk kone’ 2007.

#### **Coding, selection and delineation**

When analysing the representations of migrants in terms of gender, ethnicity and sexuality, I was most interested in the way in which these issues were discussed in relation to specific topics that had been actively discussed in professional fora, politics, the media and academia. This was my main strategy when deciding what was relevant to code in addition to the issues of gender, sexuality and ethnicity. As Bryman (1993) emphasised, the criteria for what is relevant to code might stem from what the researcher has read about similar issues in other research or in the media. Other criteria might be the repetition of chosen topics or something that surprises the researcher, or something an interviewee states as important to the issue. These criteria were also taken into consideration. Not least, the choice of codes was conditioned by the research questions and the overall theme of ‘inclusion into the gender equal society’. Proceeding from this, I identified specific codes, or issues: work, housing, prevention of family conflicts, social communication and intimate relations. Furthermore, I explored the relations between these codes and the issues of gender, sexuality and ethnicity. The

identification of codes made it possible for me to select the units of analysis; this was an important initial step, as a means of reducing the materials for analysis. I decided which data would be analysed by focusing on a select aspect of material, depending on the research question. In the table below, the codes relate to the materials that were chosen for a thorough analysis in the separate articles:

Article	Main topics/codes	Materials
'Russian Women Immigrants in the Nordic Countries: Finland, Norway, Sweden – Gender Perspectives on Social Justice' (2010)	- Russian women's integration into the labour market	1 a) 'Norden' 1 c) i); ii) 'Norden', with an emphasis on Norway 2 b) 'Norden' 3 a) 'Norden'
'Traditional Foreign Femininities? Experts' Stories About Helping Russian Migrant Women who are Victims of Domestic Violence' (2012)	- Gender violence and the prevention of family conflict	1 a) Norway 3 b)
'Trans-national Caring Masculinity: Towards Inclusive Social Counselling' (2014)	- Solving housing issues for refugees - Social communication and the well-being of young people	1 b) i); ii); (iii) 2 a)
'Contradicting the "Prostitution Stigma": Narratives of Russian Migrant Women Living in Norway' (2009)	- Work, leisure, family and the intimate relations of Russian women	1 c) Norway 2 b) Norway 3 b); (a)

Thus, in all of the articles, some of the material was used, depending on the issue discussed. In all articles, I followed the principle of triangulation – mixing various types of materials – discussed above. In addition, in some articles, the choice of material for analysis merged with the case study research (Thomas 2011). I concentrated on concrete events that I considered most representative of the phenomenon in focus. One may follow the definition of the case study according to which one analyses various subjects (persons, events, policies, institutions, etc.) holistically by one or more method (Thomas 2011). Based on this approach, two events were analysed in detail. One such case concerned the provision of help to migrants in the case of violence and the development of measures on violence prevention. In the article 'Traditional Foreign Femininities?

Experts' Stories About Helping Russian Migrant Women who are Victims of Domestic Violence' (Sverdljuk 2012), I examined in detail the reflections of a police coordinator on a family violence prevention team and a crisis centre staff member on helping Russian women victims of gender violence. I considered this case to be most representative of the whole material on experts' reflections on the problem of violence. In another case, in the article 'Trans-national Caring Masculinity: Towards Inclusive Social Counselling' (Sverdljuk 2014), I especially highlighted a seminar on helping a refugee solve housing issues. However, the case study proceeds from positivist thinking, according to which the subject of the inquiry is looked at as an instance of a class of phenomena that the case illuminates and explicates (Thomas 2011). In my research, I proceeded from the socio-constructivist epistemology, perceiving cases as the mode of examples of certain discourses.

#### **Ethical considerations**

To ensure confidentiality in all three phases of data collection, letters of informed consent were signed by the researcher and the interviewees. All involved parties, including the contact persons who helped find informants, were aware that they were obliged to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees. These precautions were in accordance with the ethical guidelines for conducting qualitative research (Atkinson and Coffey 2004; Denscombe 2003: 137–140; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 112–114). Ethical guidelines for conducting qualitative research projects were complied with, especially when intimidating personal issues concerning migrants were dealt with (Darlington and Scott 2002: 22–30; Kennedy 1993; Renzetti and Lee 1993). As the interviewed Russian migrants mostly lived in small, sparsely populated areas, maintenance of anonymity was a special challenge. Special precautionary measures were necessary to ensure that the identity of the informant would not be revealed to the authorities in cases where criticism of the officials was expressed in the interviews (Saarinen 2006: 282).

Research on migration raises the issue of the choice of language used during the interviews (Saarinen 2006). I could speak Russian with my interviewees in Norway. This was especially helpful when discussing sensitive issues, as my use of the

informants' native language made it easier for me to establish a trusting relationship. Use of the native language required extra effort on my part to maintain a balance between being 'one of them' – a migrant woman from Russia – and a member of the research team composed of 'natives'. In this respect, I used ideas of transversal practices of 'rooting' and 'shifting' as guidelines (Yuval-Davis 1997: 125–132). Complex subject positions such as 'migrant' or 'one of us' constantly changed and contradicted each other (Saarinen 2006). The same practices of 'rooting' and 'shifting' were applicable to participant observation and interviews with professionals and student representatives of the majority. My main challenge consisted in having an open mind and not being judgmental – positioning myself as 'one of them' and a migrant. My personal presence at the seminars and student discussions, being 'one of them', allowed me to become aware that prejudices construct the interpretative universe of the researcher, as well.



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**APPENDIX 1: ARTICLES**

**APPENDIX 1**





## **RUSSIAN WOMEN-IMMIGRANTS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES: FINLAND, NORWAY, SWEDEN—GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE**

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The chapter analyzes the process of integration of Russian immigrant women into the Nordic (Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian) labor markets and institutions of welfare. It proceeds from the concept of social justice as a necessary condition to enjoy social and economic rights by all members of a society and then relates it to the current Nordic debates concerning welfare and justice in the era of globalization. While exploring problems and difficulties encountered by immigrant woman of Russian origin in their everyday lives within local social structures the chapter draws attention to the so-called “grey zones” and shortcomings of the Nordic systems of integration/justice and equality politics. The argument is developed in line with the criticism formulated by Nancy Fraser which has been taken up by some Nordic gender studies scholars, who call for an institutional transformation of Western/Nordic systems of social welfare so that they embrace both economic redistribution (i.e. providing immigrants with the necessary means for economic survival) and cultural recognition (i.e. allowing immigrant women to get worthy social positions within their new societies).

### **Ethical Idea of Social Justice and Cultural Recognition**

This inquiry aims at analyzing the situation of Russian women-immigrants in the Nordic countries from the perspective of social justice. The issue of social equality understood as a opportunity to fully enjoy social and economic rights by all members of a given society, regardless of their race, gender, and social status is one of the most discussed issues in contemporary Western public debates. Social justice as a safeguard of moral dignity is a basic idea behind the functioning of Western social institutions, which secure access to both material goods and social resources. According to John Rawls, one of the most influential theorists of justice, in order to be able to acquire an independent social position, an individual should be protected by social institutions, such as employment agencies, health services, and social insurance groups. Social institutions help in executing the function of redistribution building on the principle of justice, according to which “all social primary goods--liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases for self-respect--are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favored” (Kymlicka 2002: 55; Rawls 1971: 303). As Paul Ricoeur underlines, social justice by definition implies care of the Other as well as a realization, that a person constitutes his/her Self-identity in a process of a continuous dialogue with the Other. A relation to the Other, by prudence of justice, is not an immediate one, but is being mediated by a third party, materialized in the form of either a judge or a social institution. In a just social order it is this third party, that settles disputes and arguments or decides on the processes of redistribution (Ricoeur 2000).

The idea of a fair redistribution, guaranteed by functional social institutions, is an important point of departure for the gender-sensitive social research. Schmidt, for instance, points out that since the problem of social justice has to do with the functioning of social institutions on macro- and meso-levels, researchers involved in applied analysis, and feminists above all, usually tend to inquire into how social institutions affect different groups/women and attempt to develop recommendations for necessary changes (Schmidt 2001). Feminist criticism is primarily concerned with the social institutions of the meso-level but at the same time challenges common understandings of social institutions as the only realm to which the idea of justice can be

applied. The private sphere, or family, is regarded as an equally important space of contestation as far as social justice is concerned, especially when women--overloaded with family responsibilities--are deprived of unrestricted access to material and social goods distributed on the public level (Kymlicka 2002: 377–431). Therefore, the problem of a fair redistribution is of vital importance for both public and private spheres. Consequently, the idea that “private is political” ended up as one of the main slogans of the Western feminist movement, which has subjected the patriarchal social order and marginalization of women on the income-generating labor market to thorough criticism.

Whereas the private sphere became the main focus in theorizing justice among Western academics, feminist representatives of immigrant women and women-minorities pointed out that alongside the concern with fair redistribution in all spheres of women’s activity, gender-sensitive research should also take up the issue of cultural recognition with an aim of intensifying efforts to overcome discrimination on the basis of race or cultural belonging. In the feminist intellectual circles the voices of “non-Western” feminists have raised claims that cultural or racial discrimination is as harmful for immigrant women as gender discrimination and that these different systems of structural oppression overlap and intersect. Whereas the latter is mostly perpetuated by men, the former can in many cases be related to both men and women belonging to majority groups.

Cultural recognition as a new addendum to redistribution is an important idea in the works of Nancy Fraser who claims that the concept of justice should be analytically divided into socio-economic justice and cultural or symbolic justice. Whereas the former is related to the problems of exploitation and marginalization (“being confined to undesirable or poorly paid work or being denied access to income-generating labor altogether”) and deprivation (“being denied adequate material standard of living”), the latter “is rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication.” Fraser gives the following examples of cultural (in)justice: cultural domination (“being subjected to the patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one’s own”); non-recognition (“being

rendered invisible by means of authoritative representational, communicative and interpretative practices of one's culture"); and disrespect ("being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions") (Fraser 1997: 13–14).

A lack of cultural recognition manifested through ignorance, victimization, sexual discrimination, and representations of immigrant women as "poorly cultivated housewives," is a central object of extensive criticism expressed by non-Western/black feminists. An essential argument is that cultural discrimination, usually intersecting with gender oppression, should be regarded as one of the crucial ingredients contributing to socio-economic marginalization. This overlap of various systems of social exclusion has been problematized in the theoretical concept of intersectionality, i.e. crossing and mutual reinforcement of different types of oppression (see, for instance, Crenshaw 1995 and McCall 2005). According to Fraser, in order to achieve conditions of justice in the era of globalization, one should take into account both economic and cultural aspects of social inequalities. As she argues, modern liberal politics of welfare and the mainstream multiculturalism should both be seriously rethought and channeled towards what she labels "deconstruction in culture" and "socialism in economy." As for the cultural recognition (deconstruction in culture), it should not focus only on affirmation of the devalued and disregarded group identities (such as homosexuals, ethnic minorities, and others), but rather be aimed at thorough destabilization of moral definitions, which produce dichotomies, such as, for example, heterosexual/homosexual, majority/minority, etc. (Fraser 1997: 33). Consequently, sexual and ethnic relations should be understood as spaces of "multiplicity, fluidness and ever-shifting differences." This process will also help to restore justice as far as redistribution is concerned and deliver inspiration for inter-sexual and inter-ethnic solidarity. Efficient implementation of Fraser's concept of "socialism in economy" would secure better access to universalistic programs of social protection, ensure the progressive taxation, and develop "macroeconomic policies aimed at creating full employment, a large non-market public sector, significant public and/or collective ownership, and democratic decision making about basic socioeconomic priorities" (Fraser 1997: 26).

Coming back to the feminist critique of the liberal idea of social justice, it is important to note, as Fraser emphasizes, that the logic of recognition is not alien to the gendered criticism of the society. “Gender,” like “race,” is the “bivalent mode of collectivity,” and gender-sensitive critique implies a reinstatement of both cultural and economic justice through affirmation of woman and the feminine. As is demonstrated by the current feminist intellectual debates, the concept of multiplying cultural identities is a natural development of feminism in an attempt of both Western and non-Western feminists to find common language and gain political influence.

To avoid further theoretical discussions I will now turn to the chapter’s main thesis and sum up the discussed above premises for the inquiry into the situation of Russian immigrant women in the Nordic Countries. 1) Social justice is inseparably linked to moral ideas of personal dignity and social protection afforded by public institutions by means of a fair redistribution of material and social goods, such as, for instance, access to work or welfare services. 2) Justice should be an object of inquiry not only in its reference to the “official” social institutions, but also in the context of a family, which allows for the inclusion of gender equality into the social justice debate. 3) The issue of justice understood as a fair redistribution in all spheres of women’s activity, including the “private” one, cannot be, however, utterly actualized without touching upon the problem of socio-cultural recognition. This aspect of justice refers to the sphere of cultural representation, interpretation, and communication and as such is especially relevant in the contemporary context of migration and politics of multiculturalism, diversity, and difference.

In this chapter, while shedding light on the situation of Russian immigrant women, I will focus attention on the idea of justice understood in terms of equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from income-generating work and social welfare. Before proceeding to the interviews analysis I will give a brief account of the reception of these ideas (i.e. social justice, gender equality, and cultural recognition) in the Nordic countries in order to connect the presented theoretical debates to the social and political reality of the Nordic countries.

### **Social Justice and Gender Equality in the Nordic Countries Revisited**

The ideas of fair redistribution, women's social participation, and cultural recognition of immigrants are of vital importance for the current development of the Nordic countries. Nordic welfare states are notorious for their attachment to the ideal of egalitarianism and redistribution to the advantage of weak social groups (Følesdahl 2002: 4–5). Taking into account equal inclusion of citizens in the income-generating labor market as well as their equal access to economic resources and welfare services (such as health care, employment services, income maintenance, and social insurance) regardless of their social status, health condition, sex, or age, it is tempting to classify Nordic countries as successful welfare states. Since the state plays a major role in providing for child and elderly care, it is often argued that Nordic welfare is women friendly too (Hernes 1987).

The success of the women's movement made possible the integration of feminist solutions into the state building processes, encouraged overcoming of gender stratification in the Nordic societies, and contributed to the substantial increase in women's social protection. In the OSCE statistics, Nordic Countries occupy leading positions in terms of the income women receive in the labor market. Social policies to level parental responsibilities between men and women as well as introduction of the parental leave for fathers are among important measures undertaken by state, which facilitate the broadening of possibilities of social participation for women (Berdgqvist et al. 1999: 278). Worth mentioning also is the high representation of Nordic women in politics and state governance, which allows for inclusion of women's interests in decision making processes and redistribution of social resources. Successive gender-sensitive policies accompanied by the recognition of "women's experience" and ferocious criticism of patriarchal structures of power, which resulted in the eventual inclusion of "women's issues" in the agendas of political parties (e.g. as happened during the period of governance by Gro Harlem Bruntland in Norway in 1980s), can be seen as a token of success of Nordic feminist movement. Similarly, introducing gender perspective into state politics contributed to a general humanization of politics in the Nordic countries and radically transformed the character of power itself. Moreover, problematizing gender asymmetries within the operating structures of power allowed

for the strengthening of the principles of equal rights and human dignity for both women and other disadvantaged groups.

In Nordic feminist literature it has been underlined that in the 1970s and 1980s women's movements in the Nordic Countries led the global struggle for social and economic rights. In the 1990s a well-developed strategy for gender equality—an outcome of a compromise between women and the state—became a part of the widely acknowledged social contract. Nevertheless, in the beginning of 2000, at the dawn of the 21st century, women's movements in the Nordic countries have drawn attention to new political issues connected to globalization and the politics of multiculturalism. Immigrant groups of population have alerted the public to developing social differences and new kinds of inequalities, particularly the inequalities faced by women-immigrants. According to the statistics of the United Nations, women who actively or passively take part in globalization processes (women-refugees, workers, family immigrants) are one of the least protected and most vulnerable groups. In the developed Western European and Nordic countries social security and welfare services for immigrants are incomparable to those offered to natural born citizens (de los Reyes 2006). On the one hand, the welfare state guarantees equal social and economic rights to the entire population, including regular immigrants. On the other hand, however, restrictions in the immigrant policies and inefficient integration measures as well as everyday discrimination have a negative impact on the social and economic status of immigrants.

Both civil society organizations representing interests of immigrant women and numerous feminists-representatives of the “native” Nordic women point out that immigrant women are especially vulnerable: 1) in the first period of adaptation; 2) because of the lack of cultural recognition partly due to the widely spread social discourses of domination; 3) because of their often weak position in the family and a possible exposure to the risk of domestic violence. The gap between the situations of immigrant and local women has led to the reformulation of the feminist movement's goals in a so called “third wave” of feminism in Western and Nordic countries. The “third wave” feminist agenda focuses on, for instance, rethinking of the historiographies of Western feminism; conceptual heterogeneity in defining the term “woman” (women



of ethnic majority vs. minority women etc.), and last but not least, revision of the content of feminist struggle itself with an aim of widening its borders beyond the nation state and broadening its scope to include women-representatives of minority groups. Difference-sensitive politics are an important addendum to gender equality struggles (Christiansen et. al. 2004).

### **Russian Women Crossing Borders in the Barents Region: Increasing Multiculturalism in the Nordic Countries**

In what follows I will critically explore the process of integration into welfare system and labor market of Russian women-immigrants in the northern parts of Finland, Norway, and Sweden. In the Nordic countries immigration of women from Russia has long been a part of increasing multiculturalization of Nordic societies. Women crossing borders and coming to the Western European countries as family immigrants have considerably changed the demographic map of Europe. During the so called “first wave” family and marriage migration, brides and partners arrived from the Third World countries, mainly Thailand and the Philippines. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and opening of the borders between “East” and “West,” Nordic countries became a destination for new groups of migrants from the post-socialist countries. In the trans-border Barents Region (comprised of the provinces of Oulu, Lapland and Kainuu in Finland, Finnmark, Troms, and Nordland in Norway; Norrbotten and Västerbotten in Sweden and Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Nenets, Komi, and Karelia in Russia) ordinary people-to-people contacts and trans-cultural Russian-Nordic marriages became possible through economic and cultural cooperation. In Finland there is even a special group of “returnees” immigrating with families for naturalization from Ingermanland in the St. Petersburg region who can trace their heritage to Finland (then a Swedish state) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As Finland shares a long border with Russia, Russian immigrants outnumber all other immigrant groups and make up 25 percent of all immigrants (there are approximately 21 000 Russian immigrants in Finland /Statistics Finland 2008/). Meanwhile, the proportion of Russians in Norway and Sweden is substantially lower as this group amounts to less than 2 percent of the total number of all immigrants.

## **Materials and Method**

The material for my analysis has been gathered during thematic individual and group interviews that I conducted with a number of Russian women who had moved to Norway in the period between 1991 and 2004. The interviews were a part of the Nordic collaboration research project: “Russian Women as Immigrants in the Nordic Countries – Finland, Norway, Sweden – Gender Perspectives on Everyday Life, Citizenship and Social Justice” undertaken between 2004 and 2006. The project was carried out in collaboration with Aino Saarinen (University of Helsinki) and Kerstin Hägg (University of Umeå) who were in charge of collecting empirical material in the Northern provinces of Finland and Sweden respectively. My task was to meet and talk to Russian women living in Northern Norway and then approach the material collected within the project through the prism of social justice. All in all, we managed to interview 65 Russian immigrant women: 21 of them individually, 38 in groups, and 6 as specialists in their fields, i.e. co-workers of the civil society and voluntary organizations. The questionnaire touched upon different sides of immigrant women’s lives allowing us to get acquainted with stories of their immigration, the first period of adaptation in a new social environment, the experience of attending language courses and looking for a work, studying, organizing family life and leisure, planning for the future, etc. Special attention was paid to such “sensitive” issues as the coverage of Russian prostitution in the Norwegian media and intimate relations within Russian-Nordic partnerships. Since I was using Russian as the main language of communication, it was possible to enter into trustful relations with my informants and discuss often complicated and delicate issues in an informal and very personal way, which made the process easier for both sides.

Aside from the narratives of Russian women, the material of the research project comprised of a number of interviews with relevant actors in the “system” as well as representative from the ethnic majority, employees of the welfare institutions, employment services, police, and other officials responsible for immigration and equality policies (these were the so-called “expert interviews.” All together, there were twenty interviewees who were involved in different immigration related roles. The analysis was supplemented with a study of relevant documents on Finnish, Swedish, and

Norwegian integration welfare policies. The method of analysis consisted of, first, a cross-reading of individual stories and collective discussions in regard to the structuring question about the process of women's integration into the local labor markets and welfare institutions (individual and group interviews), and second, analysis of materials on the "system" level ("expert" interviews and official documents) in an attempt to match and combine micro- and macro- levels disadvantages, which immigrant women experience in their everyday lives.<sup>11</sup>

### **Background in Russia and the Process of Migration**

Any inquiry into the participation of Russian women in the paid labor and institutions of social protection would be incomplete without making a brief introduction to social and economic situations of women in the post-Soviet Russia. In the modern literature on migration, the trans-national mobility from the less developed to the more developed countries is often explained as one of the range of "survival strategies." For example, in his study on migration and the ways of overcoming welfare deficit in the countries of the former Soviet block (in this case Poland and Russia) Jakob Godzimirski looks upon trans-national mobility in its various forms as one of the means of "tackling welfare gaps," alongside such strategies as, for instance, looking for an additional work, changing of qualifications/professions, or active use of dachas etc. While referring to the inquiries of the Russian sociologist T.I. Zaslavskaya (Zaslavskaya 2003), Godzimirski studies "survival and adaptation strategies," i.e. "coping measures taken in response to the new challenges linked with the post-Communist transition in Central and Eastern Europe." According to him, "individual and groups were faced with deterioration of their social and economic position and had to tackle a new social and economic reality in order to counter the negative developments and retain--and if possible improve--their own position" (Godzimirski 2005: 65). Alongside the inner-national survival strategies (active creation of private enterprises and participation in gray economy structures and corruption) these groups develop strategies, which contain a "strong spatial element", i.e. short-time back-and-forth trade traveling, labor migration and seasonal work, migration of specialists (brain drain), asylum seekers who are

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<sup>11</sup> A more detailed description of the method used in the "Russian Women in Norway" project can be found in Saarinen 2006.

“playing the ethnic card,” trans-national prostitution and trafficking, and the so-called “nuptial strategy.”

Among the most typical “push factors” of women’s migration Godzimirski counts low wages, high unemployment, necessity to buy or rent a flat, paying back of study and medical services loans (2005: 90). These and other factors stem from a crisis of state system of social protection as well as the lack of trust to the state from the part of its citizens. Consequently, state is not ascribed a role of a basic social security warrant, but rather is often thought of as a “semi-predatory institution willing to take your money” (Godzimirski 2005: 89). According to the inquiry by Debra Sue Alnock, the collapse of the Soviet Union has made a negative impact on women’s employment and the level of women’s economic and social protection. While the majority of the Russian population has been trying to live up to the dream of future wellbeing in the democratic market economy, nowadays people (and women above all) have to care about at least preserving the pre-collapse welfare level, relying on the alternative and traditional ways of coping with economic issues. Although the post-perestroika period has opened new economic opportunities, the majority of the population has lost some protection afforded by state and social services; this is above all the experience of women employed in the women-dominated sectors of education, health care, social protection institutes who after the transition period have lost their jobs (Allnock 2003).

An analysis of the interviews on the basis of the “life lines,” i.e. re-creating of the main life events proceeding from the narratives, leads to the conclusion that many of the interviewees happened to be left without help in critical moments of their lives. Especially vulnerable are the least protected social groups, such as single mothers. In these cases the decision to move to one of the Nordic countries is often conditioned by the necessity to take care of children and secure their future. In the context of a general social crisis in post-Soviet Russia the institution of family has been seriously damaged. The stories of marriage migration of Russian women are often connected to a previous negative experience of family relationships and economic crisis experienced as an aftermath of a divorce. Elina Ihamäki, having conducted a series of interviews with women from North-West Russia who came to Finland to become prostitutes, also makes the same observation. As she claims, critical economic situations which typically

emerge after the collapse of a family hit women with children worse than men. The problem is often not connected with difficulties in finding an income-generating occupation, but rather stems from the fact that such a job is usually low-paid. Consequently, prostitution comes to be seen as a means of earning money and supporting the family (Ihamäki 2004).

Russian women who were interviewees in the RWN project have mostly been family immigrants who met their Nordic partners through work, studies, or voluntary and cultural activities and settled down to live ordinary lives. Many interviewees brought with them their children from Russia and/or married men with children from previous partnerships. There were examples of singles partners who moved together to create a family, and students or workers of Nordic companies with unstable residence status.

### **Experiences of Integration into Nordic Labor Markets**

The fact of being admitted a residence allowance automatically opens access to a full use of social and economic rights similar to those of all other members of the society. In the first period of adaptation active social citizenship is secured by participation in the so-called introduction programs, which are aimed at “promoting individual development of immigrants, equality, and freedom of choice,” as well as their following inclusion into the labor market. The equality of the newcomers is meant to result from a successful integration and introduction programs undertaken in the Nordic countries (Finland, Norway, and Sweden) are regarded as main instruments of successful integration (Brochmann and Hagelund 2005: 23). First, immigrants are allotted the same rights and duties as the unemployed, i.e. a right to adult education or an internship, plus additional rights to study local language, and other related measures. Second, participation in an introduction program is meant to occur over a 2 to 3 year period and is usually structured around an individual plan worked out in accordance with the individual needs of the newcomer. Third, in the period of participation in an introduction program a newcomer has a right to personal economic support, which is defined on the basis of his/her own and his/her family’s financial situation.

Introduction programs liberate participants from the necessity to make their own welfare directly dependent on labor (Schierup 2006: 42); individual integration plans open up opportunities to choose a line of work, which corresponds to person's talents and abilities and additionally provides necessary support in cases of unemployment. As Virginia Guiraudon points out, transformation of an inner/national concept of social citizenship towards inclusion of immigrants into an existing system of social rights does not demand any radical changes of the paradigm of social citizenship. In spite of rather strict immigration policies, noticeable ethnocentrism of western societies, and negative attitudes towards immigrants in the western media, extensive inclusion of immigrants in the system of social protection became possible due to an inner attachment to the principle of egalitarianism, notwithstanding the relatively invisible way social institutions function. Abilities of politicians to separate their decisions from public pressure and efficiently promote necessary programs in the social sphere are also worth underlining (Guiraudon 2002).

In the stories of Russian immigrant women, the system of social protection is valued as a guarantee for personal dignity and wellbeing while, simultaneously, they often point to obvious similarities between former Soviet and modern Nordic models of welfare. Russian women stress the importance of social protection for single mothers as well as general access to the benefits welfare system, which was generally not available in post-Soviet Russia. As can be concluded from the interviews, Russian women take an active part in national introduction programs and willingly spend the first period of their adaptation in new social environment on learning languages, starting new education programs or acquiring a new profession. Participation in the introduction programs and undertaking an internship at a local business both creates opportunities for integration with new societies and establishes contacts with other immigrants, who find themselves in a similar situation. Russian women emphasize that even when they are formally unemployed, being a part of an introduction program is a good alternative to "staying in the four walls" and a good opportunity to improve one's professional and communication skills.

At the same time, however, the interviewed women mention a lack of attention to family immigrants from the authorities or institutions responsible for immigrant integration. The main focus of legislation on integration is on refugees and asylum seekers whereas the status of family immigrants is not clearly defined. Especially in Norway, family immigrants are expected to show their own initiative and make additional efforts to participate in introduction programs. Many of the informants point to the problem of insufficient information concerning existing possibilities and rights and misinformation on social services. In much the same vein, women's non-governmental organizations express extensive criticism as far as promotion of social services available to immigrants is concerned. For example, Lotherington and Fjørtoft and the MiRA-Centre in Norway (<http://www.mirasenteret.no/spraak/eng.html>) claim that the lack of information concerning basic rights and liberties has a negative impact on active social participation of newcomers. Consequently, a substantial lacunae forms in citizen-education in the first period of adaptation often result in putting a woman-family immigrant in the situation of economic dependence on her partner which entails an increased risk of multiple forms of violence (these include psychological, physical, and other forms of violence). These conclusions have been drawn from the study of the situation of Russian immigrant women in Northern Norway which focused on the issue of "human capabilities" (Lotherington and Fjørtoft 2006) In remote sites, such as the Northern regions of Finland, Sweden, and Norway additional factors hamper the immigrants' way to a successful social integration and personal independence, severe climatic conditions and lengthy distances between inhabited areas being the most significant hindrances. Therefore, when inquiring into the trans-national female migration in the Barents Region from the point of view of social justice, it is of vital importance to point to the problems of insufficient social protection of women-family immigrants. Since the cross-border family immigration is still a novelty in the Nordic context, this social group runs a risk of entering the so called "grey zones" of Nordic welfare and, consequently, finding themselves outside the existing mechanisms of official protection of human dignity and citizenship rights (Saarinen and Sverdljuk 2006).

The issue of inadequate and unequal access of immigrants to social and economic rights is one of the leading themes of heated public debates in the Nordic countries. For example, Birte Siim argues that in the Danish context help for immigrants finding themselves in their first phase of adaptation is insufficient and incomparable to the “regular” social assistance offered to local citizens. Therefore it comes as no surprise that these inequalities in access to welfare benefits contribute to economic marginalization of immigrants, being both the result of and fuelling negative public attitudes towards migration (Siim 2004). Connected to it is the total negligence of any forms of material or social support that should be offered to women-family immigrants in the period of their adaptation. The issue is of vital importance, since women-family immigrants can easily find themselves in the situation, when difficulties connected with personal economic empowerment are regarded as “family problems”; such a woman, often associated with her husband and seen as dependent on him, is then not taken into consideration as an independent member of society, who needs to be protected by stable social guarantees and have her economic rights secured by the state.

Another point of criticism is what which Ali Osman called the “construction of incompetent immigrant subject.” In his study of complementary educational programs, or the so called integration measures in Sweden (integrations- eller mångfoldsåtgärder) Osman considers the extent to which complementary educational measures are connected to “structural forms and practices of discrimination, which form and construct an ethnicized and oppressed subject” and comes to the conclusion that additional educational measures are not based on the idea of recognition of cultural differences and acknowledgement of social diversity. Consequently, immigrants are constructed as a homogenous cultural group, whose members share most of the common characteristics, above all the lack of knowledge and competence, which are necessary for successful inclusion into the Swedish labor market and work culture. As a result, heterogeneity of immigrants, i.e. their different educational backgrounds, competences, and experiences are not taken into account and, therefore, the concept of diversity is not reflected in the design of the introduction programs. Thus, constructed differences are seen as abnormal and as such should be corrected in the process of adaptation (Osman 2006).



In this context it is necessary to mention the problem of structural discrimination, which is closely related to justice/injustice issues. This phenomenon is rooted in both institutional rules and society's system of norms. According to de los Reyes, structural discrimination emerges as a result of subsequent actions based on the ideas of cultural/ethnic differences. Consequently, rules determined by the normative models are applied to both individuals and groups, notwithstanding the fact, that their needs usually significantly differ from the "general rule." As de los Reyes argues, attention should be drawn not only to those actors who exercise discrimination, but also to the rules, routines, and practices, which while privileging certain groups work to the disadvantage of marginalized others (de los Reyes 2006).

According to the narratives of Russian women, the participation in educational programs aimed at enhancing or reorienting professional qualifications of participants can turn into the never-ending process of self-improvement, which results in neither social recognition nor achievement of a stable and respected social position. This was part of the experiences of a number of women, who had taken several courses within introduction programs but never succeeded in improving their social status. The problem is further worsened by a high unemployment rate in the northernmost regions in Finland. In effect, many women fail to realize the program's goal of lessening discrimination and raising women's self-esteem. Some women feel that taking part in introduction courses or courses organized by unemployment agencies is their only "legal" or "moral" right; women develop a feeling of guilt and a wrong conviction that they cannot aspire to a position in a local business, and hence win the job over a local.

Before coming to the Nordic Countries the majority of women-immigrants possessed permanent work, which corresponded to their education and professional skills. Many interviewees mention the feeling of being respected and socially recognized and point to the personal satisfaction which they used to get from their work. As it can be inferred from these stories, work is usually perceived as an inseparable part of one's existence and a "human right." Nevertheless, after settling in the Nordic countries it is common for immigrant women to get involved in so-called "atypical kinds of employment," i.e. different forms of short-term jobs, part-time work, unstable project-related tasks, or

work connected to public integration programs. Therefore, Russian immigrant women endure instability and have to change from job to another, depend on daily allowances, and eventually return to being clients of any number of employment agencies.

Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian laws on national insurance (*folketrygdloven*) state that residents of these countries have a right to a daily allowance if they lose their income and become unemployed. By definition, a person is understood as unemployed if his/her working time decreases to the level of min. 50% of the one he/she had before the reduction. In order to get the right to a daily allowance, a person must be capable of proving that he/she was in possession of an income-generating job within the year preceding the dismissal; daily allowance partly covers work income and is counted on the basis of the received income in the last year of work.

As demonstrated in Carl-Ulrik Schierup's inquiry into the intersecting problems of labor market, migration, and welfare state in Sweden, part-time and unstable employment is typical for immigrants in general and entails lower standards of work maintenance benefits, incomplete social insurances, and lower pensions. In fact, immigrants using the services of employment agencies or getting unemployment allowance substantially outnumber "local" citizens who benefit from the same welfare services. Moreover, immigrants are at risk of getting into a grey zone between reduced levels of subsidies on the one hand and a competition oriented labor market on the other (Schierup 2006: 62–64). The stories of Russian women reveal that in their opinion it is considered shameful to make use of the unemployment benefits which is seen as a kind of confirmation of personal inferiority: "Decent families do not live on social help". It is also underlined that although in comparison to Russia, the system of social protection is "at the highest level, it does not make a person happy if she cannot find a job."

Ernesto Guitiérrez's article on difficulties encountered when confronted with Swedish employment agency confirms what many of the interviewed women point to. He stresses the formal character of functioning of social institutions which is often against their role of being a safeguard for securing social justice. As Russian women emphasize, "They only pay daily allowance, but do not really help to find work" (Nor-2); "I do not know a single friend who has got a job through the employment office!"

(Fin-1). According to Guitiérrez, an employment agency is not able to become an efficient mediator between an immigrant and her new society and therefore does not serve as a competent advisor in finding job opportunities for women with a specific foreign education and work experience abroad. As an institution which is primarily aimed at helping in lowering the unemployment rate rather than providing individualized support, employment agencies cannot critically re-evaluate their own working procedures and hence improve efficiency. The role of employment agencies is therefore reduced to exercising control over the disadvantaged groups and tends to encourage the unemployed to get involved in the process of active search for work, since this is a necessary condition for applying for material compensation (Guitiérrez 2006). Consequently, it is not the responsibility of these institutions to actively combat cases of structural discrimination and mobilize efforts to overcome growing social exclusion on the basis of either culture or descent.

Inefficiency of employment agencies in supporting immigrants notwithstanding, Russian women aspire to opening their own small businesses as they perceive such initiatives as a means by which they can overcome social/structural exclusion. Their activities are often connected to different kinds of cultural mediations; they work as interpreters from/into Russian, operate tour groups for Russians, become teachers of the Russian language in private schools, and are involved in development of cultural projects, etc. Somewhat paradoxically, this tendency harmonizes with a new vision of integration in the Nordic countries (and especially in Sweden), which is aimed at supporting and stimulating the innovative spirit, entrepreneurship, and individual career motivation. According to Schierup, this approach integration, which is based on the idea of consolidation around commonly shared democratic values and an increased emphasis on the individual, should be seen as a manifestation of the neo-liberal turn in Sweden, which occurred as an aftermath of Swedish accession to the EU (Schierup 2006: 57, 64, 73). However, it is important to note, as Schierup does, that setting up a private business in order to get employed does not create the same career opportunities nor the same level of income as a permanent job in a well-established and well-functioning institution. Furthermore, self-employment does not guarantee stability and is usually provides low wages (especially at the outset) and unregulated working times. These

negative aspects of immigrant women's involvement in the Nordic countries labor market contradict both the idea of a fair distribution of material and social goods and the basic rights to labor, leisure, and health support.

## **Conclusions**

To sum up the results of the analysis of the situation of Russian women-immigrants from the perspective of social justice in the sphere of social security/welfare and employment, it is important to point out that the issue of social equality should be approached from a trans-national perspective, as a safeguard for social citizenship where rights are equally distributed to all members of society, regardless of their ethnic belongings or descent. Many women-immigrants from post-Soviet Russia decided to move to the Nordic countries in hope of getting a stable social position and becoming a part of Nordic welfare states through successful employment and extensive social protection. Characteristics of this immigrant group include aspiration for a rapid inclusion into the social structures of the new communities, active participation in integration programs, displaying initiative and striving for self-employment. In general, Russian immigrant women stand good changes for a successful social integration into Nordic societies. At the same time, however, involvement in atypical kinds of employment and irregular participation in the labor market should be both counted among the most serious causes of entering the "grey zones" of the Nordic welfare system. These "grey zones" stem from such negative phenomena as structural discrimination, lack of attention paid to "family immigrants," and incapacity of welfare system to integrate "cultural element[s]" and develop an approach to immigrants, which would be based on the recognition of diversity of individual competences and work experiences (Saarinen and Sverdljuk 2006).

In spite of the fact that the system of social protection, including introduction programs, is aimed at creating conditions for the realization of social and economic rights, a confrontation with institutions of social security can also result in restrictions of social citizenship (de los Reyes 2006), especially in cases where institutional norms "absorb" cultural and ethnic prejudices and are built on the idea that immigrants should conform

to the local Nordic values and norms. Cultural recognition is still not seen as an integral component of and critical factor in structural functioning of the social security institutions, or to use Fraser's terminology, redistributive justice is not perceived as intertwined with cultural justice. Formalism in the functioning of the social security institutions complicates the effective implementation of the concept of justice and leads to such phenomena as "brain waste," lowering of self-esteem, and the construction of the woman-immigrant as a "second sex." Structural discrimination, which results firstly, from discriminatory institutional norms and, secondly, from stigmatization and segregation of certain social groups or immigrants hampers the possibility of developing equal social relationships; the dialogue with the other is interrupted by the distractive force of prejudices, which is manifested in such phenomena as a lack of mutual understanding, ignorant attitude towards difference, invisibility and marginalization.

From the theoretical point of view it is evident that the institutional paradigm, which is oriented towards nation-state (national state apparatus, which executed power over a certain territory and its inhabitants) and national social and economic citizenship (related to a certain sharply demarcated territory) is unable to adequately respond to the growing trans-nationalization of social, economic, and political citizenship (Fraser 2005). Constructed on a premise of solidarity and development of dialogical relationships between citizens (united by territory, institutional apparatus, language, national discourse-space, media and communication infrastructure) this paradigm of social justice does not prove to be able to take up new challenges characterized by the dissolution of the traditional national concept of economic and social citizenship. The latter is characterized by reference to several institutional, cultural, and discursive centers (migrants, diasporas, bearers of dual citizenship), which challenges possibilities to "assert democratic control over the powers that determine the basic conditions of their lives" (Fraser 2005). At the same time the development of loyalty and trust to a single center of institutional and discursive power by the "community of fate" becomes problematic as well.

In this context, it is necessary to take up the issue of institutional renovation (Fraser 2005). According to Fraser, contemporary times witness a "mismatch between

Westphalian-state based citizenship” and “post-Westphalian communities of fates and risk.” It would be possible to overcome this conceptual clash through “institutionalizing elements of trans-national/quasi global citizenship; generating concomitantly broad solidarities that cross divisions of language, ethnicity, religion, and nationality, and constructing broadly inclusive public spheres in which common interests can be created and/or discovered through open democratic communication” (Fraser 2005: 6). Institutional transformations and discursive changes should be considered as intersecting and inseparably connected to each other. Such an approach would allow for overcoming oppression and discrimination, which occur as a result of an incompatibility between nationally oriented and slightly outdated structures and discourses on the one hand, and inevitable trans-nationalization and pluralization of identities on the other.

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## **TRADITIONAL FOREIGN FEMININITIES? EXPERTS' STORIES ABOUT HELPING RUSSIAN MIGRANT WOMEN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

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Women have a high status position in Norwegian society and have an impact on social and economic life in the country, which is known for its liberal gender relations. The Nordic countries in general and Norway in particular are characterised as social-democratic "women friendly" welfare states, or even "paradises" for women and children (Esping-Andersen 2002; Hernes 1987). Women actively participate in paid labour, politics and decision-making. Family life is organised according to the two-bread-winners principle and men are encouraged by the state to assume an equal share of the domestic and childcare duties (Bergqvist et al. 1999: 278; Hernes 1987).

However, as post-colonial Nordic gender researchers point out, this picture is not entirely correct. First, there is a lack of gender equality in many sectors of the society. Second, there is a tendency to associate gender equality with the majority population, which results in the marginalisation of certain groups of people. Division lines are drawn between included "natives", on the one hand, and excluded foreigners, on the other hand (Keskinen et al. 2009: 6). Women's freedom is perceived as a part of a lifestyle that is characteristic for the "civilised" and "advanced" majority. Feminist

researchers who examine the relations between gender and ethnicity within various spheres of life in Norway have introduced the concept of “gender equal Norwegianness”. According to the criticism of e.g. Berg, Flemmen and Gullikstad (2010: 12–13), majority middle-class women and men are considered to be the exclusive “owners” or exclusive practitioners of gender equality, whereas the representatives of ethnic minorities and migrants are perceived as non-liberated social subjects. Migrant and ethnic minority women are defined in terms of traditional femininity and are said to need help and education to achieve gender equality.

Feminist post-colonial researchers have also examined the discourses of welfare state employees. In particular, they have discovered the implicit presence of stigmatising and victimising representations of ethnic minority subjects (foreign women) in the welfare system’s operations. They have drawn attention to the symbolic injustices experienced by newcomers to the Nordic/Norwegian welfare state(s) (Keskinen et al. 2009; Mattsson 2010; Otterstad 2008). Ideologies of the Nordic welfare system have been criticised for absorbing cultural prejudices and marginalising migrants along cultural lines, treating them as ethnicised subjects. Ethnic minorities are often perceived as a homogeneous cultural group that in gender relations is defined under the value of traditionalism (Osman 2006). As Jacobsen and Stenvoll (2010: 16) point out, professional personnel in the Scandinavian welfare states (Norway) tend to focus on “rescuing” strategies when developing measures for the empowerment of migrants. The main emphasis is placed on their assimilation and integration into the gender order of the majority.

Proceeding from these theoretical observations, the article presents an analysis of the discourses of experts who are working within various agencies of the Norwegian welfare state. The main research question is as follows: is the idea of gender equal Norwegianness present in experts’ stories about providing assistance to migrant women? Prevention of domestic violence and securing women’s freedom and wellbeing is an integral part of gender equality policies and is one of the main concerns of Norwegian “state feminism”. But how do experts construct identities of migrant women? Do they victimise migrant women who experienced domestic violence and

present them as “different” and “traditional”? What role does ethnicity play in the constructions of the images of the victims of violence? And last but not least, how do the representations of migrant women influence experts’ ideas on the provision of help?

### **Encounters between people in the Barents trans-border region**

In terms of geography and the ethnicities in question here, I have chosen to concentrate on studying the practices of experts who are living and working in northern Norway. The region is multicultural and ethnically diverse in nature (Kramvig and Flemmen 2010). Trans-cultural encounters between the people in this region could occur due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the increase in migration across the borders with the neighbouring north-west Russia. After the border restrictions between Russia and Norway were relaxed in the early 1990s, Russians started to come to counties in northern Norway. This migration had a “female face”; the majority of the people crossing the border were woman coming to the country through family reunification channels (Saarinen 2006). Some Russian women came to Norway to study or work in joint Russian-Norwegian enterprises (Sverdljuk 2009). In addition to this, the northern Norwegian counties experienced a rise in cross-border prostitution. As Stenvoll observed, there was a grey area with extensive overlapping between prostitution, arranged marriages and “normal” relationships. The phenomenon of Russian women’s migration has attracted much attention in the media, and in local and national political fora.

In the eyes of the local public, Russian migrant women were perceived as impoverished, poor and uncivilised people who wanted to come to the rich “West” to earn money. Impressions about the economic dependency of the Russian women would easily emerge, as the welfare gap between Norway and Russia in the trans-border Barents region is deepest in Europe (Yukina et al. 2003). Both women family migrants and women sex workers were often represented as financially disempowered and dependent on their male partners. In the first period of adaptation, migrant women have to rely on their spouses. Therefore, they could be represented as “different”, i.e. breaking the ideal of their partner’s equal economic status in the family. Often, instead of paying attention

to the difficult structural circumstances of migrants' lives, politicians and researchers discussed cultural "differences" between local and migrant women. Russian migrant women marrying Norwegian men were constructed as representatives of a different, patriarchal tradition of gender relations (Kramvig and Stien 2002).

In this context, I want to investigate trans-cultural encounters between experts, practitioners of welfare policies in Norway and Russian women who experienced violence in close relations. My analysis is aimed at revealing the presence of clichéd representations of "traditional Russian femininities" in the experts' stories. I am especially interested in showing the tendencies towards stigmatisation and victimisation of migrant women who suffered from domestic violence. As mentioned above, migrant women's vulnerable position right after arriving provokes constructions of one-sided pictures of "traditional foreign femininities". In this connection, it is also interesting to reveal the presence of the ideas about "progressive" gender relations in Norway in the discourses on migrant women who experienced violence in the home.

In the northern Norwegian areas close to Russia, the local inhabitants have a conflicting historic memory about Russia and Russians. On the one hand, the history of social relations in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region tells about people-to-people contacts and development of cultural ties across the borders of ethnic and cultural divisions. On the other hand, the Russian and Norwegian states have developed, respectively, anti-Western and anti-Russian ideologies throughout the Cold War period. Russian-Norwegian trans-border encounters provide a suitable context for approaching expert-client relations from the angle of feminist postcolonial theory. I agree with Ivar B. Neumann (1999) who points out that in Norwegian historiographies and in policy-making during the Cold War, Russia has usually been represented as the Norwegian "other". The Soviet Union and Russia were seen as the "Second World", a country with under-developed democratic and social institutions and "traditional" culture. This imaginative construction helped to put the Nordic countries in a positive light as a progressive region, which features established democracies and the rule of law.

Thus, the important question is whether the negative heritage of an ideological disharmony between Russia and the West influences the way Norwegian state actors

think when they provide assistance to migrant women from Russia. Are the old images of an adversarial Russia being transformed into the images of the gendered and ethnic “other” and threatening equality in gender relations? And if that is the case, do the one-sided representations of Russian migrants impede professionals from taking into consideration the complexity of factors which put migrant women in difficult life situations?

### **Theory and analytical tools**

I perceive the popular idea about equality between the sexes in Norway as the main “narrative context” (Paley 2009: 18–19) influencing the way experts construct the identities of their clients. “Narrative context” consists of one’s own beliefs about the story-teller; it implies prejudice and the most common ideas that experts “inherited” from the societies they live in. According to Paley (2009: 18), a description of an event or a “story” is never direct, it is rather mediated through a series of ideological and meaning-generating presuppositions and understandings of reality. Thus, I approach the idea about achieved gender equality in Norway as the main context in which I find experts’ stories about Russian women and violence. My next step is to ask how the idea of “gender equal ‘Norwegianness’” modifies experts’ representations of female migrant victims of domestic violence. Do experts see foreign women as subjects who internalised patriarchal rules of gender relations and are therefore more susceptible to becoming victims of men’s violence? And do experts pay attention to other characteristics, such as class and ethnicity when dealing with women’s experiences of violence?

In my analysis, I critically approach ethnocentric understandings of gender equality when trying to illuminate disadvantages experienced by migrant women. I show that when used in relation to migrant women, the underlying idea of women’s liberation, i.e. freeing oneself from men’s domination, cannot provide a sufficient ideological background for migrant women’s empowerment. First, the scheme tends to essentialise the performance of femininity and masculinity, viewing men as aggressive perpetrators and perceiving women as passive sufferers (Carmody 2003). Second, and most

important, the universalization of the category of woman implies a prevailing orientation towards the Western ideal of liberated femininity, which serves as an example to follow for all women. As Jacobsen and Stenvoll (2010: 18) maintain, only women's individual choices that correspond to the Western standards and visions of women's freedom and liberation are seen as legitimate.

Underpinning this is the history of the Western women's liberation movement, where patriarchy was viewed as the major instrument of male domination over women (Pateman 1988). Domestic violence was considered to be one of the manifestations of the overall phenomenon of men's domination over women. As Stenvoll (2002) observes, the radical feminist concept of violence in intimate relations has been adopted as an ideological underpinning by Norwegian welfare institutions, in particular by the police, the Ministry of Justice and the many NGOs working to prevent gender violence. Crisis centres can be viewed as one of the brightest examples of such organisations. Post-colonial and post-modern feminist scholars have shown the limitations of this gender-binary approach in the attempts to explain various disadvantages experienced by women.

As postcolonial feminists have shown, oppression and violence in the experiences of ethnic minority and migrant women have different reasons than injustices in the lives of Western women. According to Collins (1990) and Crenshaw (1989), for example, class and ethnicity (i.e. experiences of racialization) constitute, in addition to gender, grounds for domination of ethnic minority women. When explaining migrant women's vulnerability, the category of gender alone, or criticism of patriarchy, is not sufficient. Migrant women's disadvantages should be explained through a complex interplay of different forms of oppression, including class and racial discrimination (Crenshaw 1991).

Thus, as Crenshaw (1991: 1242) points out, for example, in the case of ethnic minority and migrant women, the physical abuse that leads women to the shelters "is merely the most immediate manifestation of the subordination they experience. Many women who seek protection are unemployed or underemployed, and a good number of them are poor". Using various examples of Black and migrant women's experiences of being

subordinated to violence, Crenshaw concludes that apart from patriarchy and gender-based domination, these women also face class and ethnic subordination, which puts them in difficult life situations. Thus, restrictions in immigration legislation in relation to family migrants in the US make migrant women reluctant to leave “even the most abusive of partners in fear of being deported”. Crenshaw (1991: 1243) classifies legislative restrictions as “similarly coercive, yet not easily reducible to economic class”. In my material (Sverdljuk 2010), Russian women report about difficulties experienced due to the “three-year rule”. The first period of adaptation is difficult not because there are “cultural differences”, but due to the lack of legislative protection and unemployment which women from Russia have to deal with. Therefore, it is legitimate to speak about double subordination based on the categories of gender and class.

Apart from the lack of economic empowerment, distorted images of ethnic minority and migrant women are major symbolic or cultural factors of oppression. Often the one-sided representations of migrant women as victims of gender traditionalism lead to the replication and reinforcement of ethnic subordination (Crenshaw 1991: 1245). Thus, I use ideas from postcolonial feminism that see Western policy-making suffering from a systematic misrepresentation of non-Western and migrant women as victims of underdevelopment, oppressive traditions and poverty (Gouws 1996: 71; Mohanty 1988: 56). Bearing this in mind, I critically examine Norwegian experts’ representations of their female Russian clients as “traditional housewives”, “victims of economic hardships in Russia” and “women who are lacking awareness about their own sexuality”.

Therefore, in my analysis I operationalise the concept of intersectionality (Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1989) to reveal limitations of the gender-centred approach when dealing with violence against migrant women. The concept of intersectionality implies that patterns of subordination intersect in ethnic minority and migrant women’s experiences of vulnerability. It sees gender, sexuality, class and race/ethnicity as intersecting and reinforcing each other’s oppression. In comparison to the Western middle-class female subject, the concept is based on the basic idea of the different situatedness of minority women in the social, economic and political world. In addition to gender subordination,



migrant women experience oppression based on the category of ethnicity. What is necessary to meet minority women's needs for empowerment is a complex approach that takes into account class or structural disadvantages that complement and reinforce gender oppression.

### **Material and structure**

The background material comprises 12 qualitative semi-structural interviews with experts who dealt with female Russian migrants in their professional practices. I define "expert" as a reliable source of skills in the domain of providing professional assistance to individuals in difficult life situations. Professionals in the presented research were working in Norwegian state and non-governmental organisations: the police, crisis centres, health clinics, i.e. organisations that actively provide assistance to women who have experienced incidents of domestic abuse. Focusing on a wide range of public organisations makes it possible to explore how everyday prejudices and beliefs about migrants make their way into practices of various professional milieus. This also makes it possible to examine how different professionals who assist female migrants who are victims of violence understand, help and plan strategies for migrant women's empowerment.

The interviews were held in the Norwegian part of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. I collected material when travelling in the selected areas of the Norwegian Barents Region while participating in a collaborative Nordic research project. The project investigating the situation of female Russian immigrants in the Nordic Countries<sup>12</sup> was conducted by a group of researchers together with Aino Saarinen and Kerstin Hägg.<sup>13</sup> Whereas Saarinen and Hägg collected interviews from the Finnish and Swedish sections

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<sup>12</sup> *RWN: Russian Women as Immigrants in the Nordic Countries – Finland, Norway, Sweden – Gender Perspective on Everyday Life, Citizenship and Social Justice* (2004-2006).

<sup>13</sup> The research is also a part of my PhD project: "Destabilising Gender and Sexuality in the Practices of Norwegian Welfare State Employees: Majority-Minority Perspective" (2009-2012) which has been conducted under the overall project: "Experts and minorities in the gender equality country of Norway" (together with Trine Annfelt and Berit Gullikstad):

[http://www.ntnu.no/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=870baf1a-e3e2-4071-9bb1-7e31cf3622c7&groupId=10234](http://www.ntnu.no/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=870baf1a-e3e2-4071-9bb1-7e31cf3622c7&groupId=10234) (01/11/2011)

of the Barents Region, I was responsible for collecting material from Norway. The material comprises qualitative semi-structured interviews with the experts who were counselling female Russian victims of violence in close relationships. I have chosen those interviews which represented the most striking examples of the stigmatisation of migrant Russian women.

The analysis has been divided into three main sections. First, I focus on media coverage of a murder case where a Russian woman was killed by her Norwegian husband. In particular, I analyse statements made by the head of a regional project on preventing violence against Russian women. The project was supported by the Police and the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and was part of the government's action plan: *Violence against women*.<sup>14</sup> The analysis reveals that the head of the project addresses the issue of gender equality in Norway when reflecting on the murder of a Russian woman. This expert's statements reveal a focus on the contrast between doing gender in Norway and in Russia, rather than a focus on structural difficulties that put women in difficult life situations. Second, I examine the reflections on episodes of violence as expressed by a policeman, a coordinator of the team dealing with family violence and a crisis centre staff member who was working in one of the northern Norwegian locations. In particular, I show that the key concepts in the experts' reflections on migrant women's experiences of violence are economic victimhood and difficulties connected to political and economic transformations in Russia. These concepts, which are operationalised in connection with the reflections on violence, make it possible to associate women's problems with circumstances that are outside the actual context of domestic abuse. Thus, the experts seem to pay less attention to structural difficulties and racism as important factors, even though they co-construct migrant women's experiences of violence. Third, my analysis of the experts' discourses on the notion of sexuality shows that the experts complete the constructed image "victim of economic transformations in Russia" with the notion of women's sexual submissiveness. The notion is a result of ethnocentric perceptions of migrant women's identities, and implies a juxtaposition between "liberated" Norwegian and "traditional" Russian women.

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<sup>14</sup> [http://www.krisesenter.com/materiell/drommen\\_om\\_det\\_gode\\_liv/drommen\\_om\\_det\\_gode\\_liv.pdf](http://www.krisesenter.com/materiell/drommen_om_det_gode_liv/drommen_om_det_gode_liv.pdf)  
(01/11/2011)

### **Murder in Finnsnes**

In the following, I will describe a case of domestic violence which will serve as an “ideal-typical” image for the further analysis of the experts’ discourses on and articulations of the problem of violence. Other examples from my material involve less dramatic cases of physical and psychological violence, such as physical injury, women being “thrown out of their homes” and moral and psychological abuse. In my material, a staff member at a crisis centre shares impressions about an incident that happened in the town where the centre is located in the winter of 2003 when a Russian woman was killed by her Norwegian husband: *This Russian woman was shot by her Norwegian husband*. The incident took place in Finnsnes, one of the small towns in northern Norway. With its approximately 4000 inhabitants, this small town is situated on one of the small islands in Troms County. It is accessed by boat from the county centre of Tromsø. The case of the murder of a Russian woman was reported in the national media the morning after the murder took place. The title of the news item was: *Killed wife while children were sleeping* (Dagbladet [major Norwegian daily] 10/01/2003)<sup>15</sup>.

The journalist reported about a 32-year-old man who shot his 38-year-old wife with a rifle in the bedroom of the couple’s home. As mentioned in the article, the man surrendered to the police immediately after the incident, and two children from the woman’s previous marriage in Russia were taken into care by the child welfare authorities. The journalist states that the perpetrator was being charged with first-degree murder. The article further informs that the man was to undergo a psychiatric examination. As both the mother and the children were Russian citizens, the authorities had to decide whether the children were to stay in Norway or should be returned to Russia. The article also provides reactions from people who had close contact with the victim: *Everybody thinks it’s terribly sad. Friends miss their classmate’s mother; she was well liked by young people. She had a positive personality*, the local priest said (Dagbladet 10/01/2003).

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/2003/01/10/358216.html>

### **Conflicting expectations for gender equality?**

I am interested in showing the “gap” or contrast between the given neutral account of the event (in the murder-report genre), and the experts’ politicised descriptions of the incident. As an overview of the media publications that followed the murder shows, the Finnsnes murder was written into the context of the discussions on gender relations and gender roles in Norway and Russia. Images of a victimised foreign woman, and native, liberated women were created. Thus, the Finnsnes murder, together with another case of a murder of a Russian woman, was highlighted in one national newspaper under the title: *Different gender ideals* (Dagbladet 10/01/2003). In the article that followed right after the murder, the head of the development project *Tana in transition* explained this case of violence in a trans-national Russian-Norwegian family as being due to the “conflicting expectations for gender equality”. According to the expert, Russian women aspire for greater gender liberation, whereas Norwegian men wish to live according to “traditional” gender norms. In particular, the project head said:

*Russian women have heard about the Norwegian ideal of gender equality where Norwegian men treat women with dignity. At the same time, many Norwegian men say that they want a Russian woman because they are not so demanding as Norwegian women.*

*Head of project on the prevention of violence*

Although the expert is supportive of Russian women, pointing out that they aim to live up to the ideal of gender equality, she indirectly labels them as “traditional” and “different” from Norwegian women. Behind this there is an undiscerning assumption about Norwegian women as liberated and free, and a production of meaning about “non-liberated”, “not demanding” Russian women. The reader is left with the impression that if Russian women are to be free and liberated, they will have to go through a process of self-perfection trying to reach the level of self-awareness possessed by women in “gender equal Norway”. The professional presents gender equality as a “Norwegian” value, constructing women with different national background as outsiders of the

Norwegian gender equality regime. Belonging to the Norwegian nation becomes a marker, or a symbol of gender equality, whereas Russia and Russian people are being constructed as less civilised and guided by the patriarchal ethics of gender relations.

The victimised image of Russian women is reinforced when in the next passage the journalist presents the results of the report written by the crisis centre secretariat on foreign women who are married to Norwegian men. The journalist provides statistics about foreign women who are victims of domestic violence: *In 2001, 237 foreign women (with children) married to Norwegian men sought shelter in the crisis centres.* The article mentions that the majority of abused women were Russian. Bearing this in mind, the head of the Tana project expresses concern about “further stigmatisation of Russian women because of the recurring cases of violence”. Ironically, in the next sentence this expert subjects Russian women to symbolic marginalisation herself. In particular, the project head points out that Russian women “contribute to their situation”: Russian women “marry men whom Norwegian women have avoided”; they “help men that the Norwegian society has given up on”. Thus, the expert creates a distinction between “successful” and “liberated” Norwegian women who marry progressive “normal” Norwegian men, *and* Russian women who enter into relationships with male traditionalists, abusers and “outsiders” in the Norwegian system of gender equality.

The above-mentioned case of the media coverage of a murder of a migrant woman is an example of a politicisation of gendered violence. The incident is used to discuss gender relations in Norway and Russia and to create a homogeneous image of the Norwegian nation as a collective in which people live their lives according to the value of gender equality. The murder of an immigrant woman could have been an invitation to discuss the situation of family migrants, raising questions about such issues as living conditions and social and legal protection of the new residents of the welfare state. Did the murdered woman have to continue living with an abusive husband for fear of being deported, a fate probably other female family immigrants share? Instead of addressing the problems of migrant women’s social and economic empowerment, the expert puts the incident into the context of the discussion on “cultural differences”. Russian women,

the majority of whom have good education and professional skills, are presented in sexist terms, as housewives that can only contribute to the Norwegian society as carers of the “failed” men. The limited space the newspaper article gives to the problem of violence against migrant women was used to discuss gender equality in Norway *contra* the assumed traditionalism of Russian women. The expert who is positioned as a public figure championing women’s rights is actually contributing to the creation of homogeneous images of Norway and Russia and creates boundaries for Russian and Norwegian women. The speculative discussion on “progressive” or “patriarchal” properties of Russian *contra* Norwegian women overshadows real issues of migrant women’s empowerment. Similarly, Suvi Keskinen criticises the practices of overusing the concept of “culture” in court cases to explain violent behaviour within ethnic minority (or mixed) families and to represent migrant women as either victims of patriarchy or despairing figures. In particular, she points out that the discussion of the gender violence in ethnic minority families (in the Nordic media) does not aim to contribute to a better understanding of the concrete life situation of the women involved. Rather it serves as an excuse for negotiating the meanings of “race”, ethnicity and gender and creates specific subject positions: “our” normative subjects of gendered and sexual relations living in correspondence with the ideal of individual freedom, and deviant cultural “others” who arrange marriages and control women’s sexuality. Referring to de los Reyes, Molina and Mulinari (2003) and Yuval-Davis (1997), Keskinen operationalises feminist criticism on using women and sexuality to create a homogeneous image of the nation as “gender equal”, while at the same time demonising gender relations and sexuality of cultural “others”.

### **Essentialisation of victimhood: escaping economic woes**

In the following, I will analyse interviews with the policeman, coordinator of the team dealing with family violence and a crisis centre staff member, and reveal how these experts stigmatise Russian women as “economic victims”. I will show that the image of “economic migrant from Russia” is present in the experts’ reflections on violence, and that this produces a specific context in which the discussions on “problems in other countries” overshadow the thematisation of difficulties which women encounter in the

host county. In my material, the experts present migrant women according to the most common academic descriptions of migrant gendered subjectivities: as “contested identities”. The underlying factors are global economic gaps and the subsequent processes of social marginalisation of people on the move (Daugstad and Sandnes 2008). In the context of global/European welfare and economic divides, women’s migration is often explained in terms of economic push and pull factors. According to these interpretations, the interviewed experts perceive Russian family migration and the related problems of gendered violence as a direct consequence of social instability in Russia. Violence is explained as an intrinsic part of migrant women’s “turbulent” biographies. The following judgement of the policeman is one of the typical examples where an expert associates violence in culturally mixed Russian-Norwegian families with economic difficulties in Russia:

*I believe that many Russian women actually realise the danger themselves, about the risk of domestic abuse, but for various reasons they count on it going well.*

-What reasons?

*They could be economic reasons, poverty and things like that, that make them take a chance. And again, these are only my own reflections. It’s nothing that can be documented.*

*Policeman, coordinator of the team dealing with family violence*

Finding oneself in trouble is interpreted as an anticipated element of migrant women’s lives. Violence is seen as the result of the interplay of two factors: a) the economic collapse in Russia and b) the consequent decision to marry inappropriate Norwegian men. As it implicitly follows from the stories we have looked at, the problems of domestic violence have their roots in the necessity to put financial concerns first when deciding whether or not to get married. The utterance above is based on the belief that the main concern of migrant women is economic survival, escaping poverty and providing wellbeing for their own children, rather than securing personal happiness (i.e. marrying the “right man”). The interviewed experts portray migrant women as

representatives of the most vulnerable social groups in Russia: divorced women, single mothers, young girls from poor families. The experts construct the image: “economic victims from a poor country” and complete it with the idea of women’s victimhood. Representations of migrant women as “traditional femininities” together with the characteristic of “economic victims” function as an explanation for the occurrence of violence. Thus, when reading the following utterance, one is left with the impression that female victims of violence are used to living in accordance with a patriarchal family structure, where the male partner is the bread-winner and the woman is “attached” to the man:

*We’ve had women, Russian women who have been married in Russia and have children or are divorced. And they came here to marry a Norwegian man, met someone and got married. We’ve had many of them. But there were also some who were single but living at home with their family, but in such poverty that they came here to Norway.*

*Crisis centre staff member*

The assumed quality of Russian women as “gender traditionalists” and their “despair” in the face of economic hardships creates a stable context in which judgments about violence are made. The widespread representation of Russian women as “economic victims” and at a higher risk of domestic violence makes it possible to place Russian women in the discursive zone of “others”, contrasting them with “strong” and “successful” Norwegian women (Longva 2003). As Longva points out, the cultural ideal in Norway is “gender neutrality” and de-sexualised public life. In reality, this gives prestigious status to male qualities (such as physical strength, resilience, autonomy) and creates the image of the Norwegian “super-woman” (Longva 2003). Thus, as some interviewed experts point out, although they also experience violence at home, native women belong to another group of clients. Norwegian women find themselves in difficult life situations because of “an unfortunate string of circumstances”. In the reviewed material, the fact that Norwegian women are abused is considered to be an “exception from the rule” rather than a “natural state of affairs”.



Thus, the interviewed policeman admits that although Norwegian women may also turn to crisis centres, they do not belong to the same risk group:

*There are a great many Norwegian women who are being abused. But I believe that Russian women are at more risk of finding themselves in such a situation.*

*Policeman, coordinator of the team dealing with family violence*

Interestingly, patriarchy is used to explain abuse, both when the male perpetrator or the female victim represents ethnic minorities. But whereas in the discussions on ethnic-minority perpetrators it is natural to highlight such qualities as being dominant and aggressive, the reflections on female minority victims of gendered violence seem to centre on notions of victimhood and subordination. The reason for this is the gender binarism in the discussions on violence (Carmody 2003), as well as ethnicism in the multicultural social work practices (Brah 1992).

Researchers such as Brah and Tonkens notice that there is a significant tendency towards “ethnicism” (Brah 1992: 129) or “culturalisation of citizenship” (Tonkens 2009<sup>16</sup>) when approaching social problems faced by migrants. As Evelien Tonkens points out, in the present societal and sociological debates, the emphasis when discussing citizenship (and respectively, contested gendered citizenship) has moved from attainment of social, economic and legal rights towards values, standards, customs and traditions. On the individual level, citizenship, inclusion and agency are associated with the development of migrants’ and ethnic minorities’ sense of feeling at home. Whereas Tonkens and Peter Geschiere argue in favour of the positive aspects of culturalisation, scholars inspired by postcolonial theories (Brah 1992) express concern about implicit processes of a rhetoric that devalues migrant subjectivities and closely associates cultural or ethnic difference with “problems”.

In the analysed material, a clichéd representation of the “poverty” and “traditionalism” of Russian women makes it possible to exaggerate general gender binarism in the

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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.graduateschoolofsocialsciences.uva.nl/gsss\\_news/news.cfm/600096C0-1321-B0BE-A4E3CE41548E7870](http://www.graduateschoolofsocialsciences.uva.nl/gsss_news/news.cfm/600096C0-1321-B0BE-A4E3CE41548E7870) (01/11/2011)

explanations of gendered violence. This clichéd representation based on gender, i.e. women's patriarchal dependency on men, is reinforced through an image of a "migrant trying to escape from economic problems". As in the previous example, such derogatory constructions of clients as: "coming from a poor country" and "traditional femininities" reveal sexism and ethnicism in social work practices. The crisis centre staff member strips women of their agency as independent economic actors; the professional is simply unable to assume that battered women could have married for love, were not "poor" and had been living ordinary lives in Russia.

Experts' judgements about cases of violence where foreign women are involved contribute to the creation of "privileged" and "less advanced" women's subject positions. In recent years, researchers inquiring into women's cross-border, Russian-Norwegian migration have criticised the prevalent tendency to portray post-Soviet women as "economic victims" who are searching for a better life abroad (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2010). As post-colonial feminist writers point out, migrant women in general (and also Russian women) have heterogeneous identities, and have different class, status and educational backgrounds. The personal lives of migrant women are in each case unique and represent a result of complex and specific circumstances and situations, on the one hand, and women's free choice on the other (hooks 1997; Mohanty 1988). Migrant women often come from among their native countries' most resourceful and successful citizens. As research on international border crossing shows, migration is an empowering process for women. According to the last United Nations World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, women often migrate away from patriarchal authority.<sup>17</sup> Economic dependence on spouses and interruptions in self-development that impedes successful trans-cultural awareness (Castles and Davidson 2000: 139) are conditioned by structural discrimination and "grey zones" in the Norwegian/Nordic system of integration and equality policies (de los Reyes 2002; Saarinen and Sverdljuk 2006; Sverdljuk 2011). Migrant women display the ability to take independent decisions, provide resources for their own lives and the lives of their children and manage to establish harmonious relations with their partners (Sverdljuk 2009).

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Global-migration-trends-for-women-A-review-of-the-latest-United-Nations-World-Survey-on-the-Role-of-Women-in-Development> (12/02/2011)

### **Women's sexual submissiveness: The Russian post-order bride**

In the experts' stories, women's passivity or victimhood is also interpreted in terms of sexuality. Professionals use such associations as woman's submissiveness to men's dominating sexuality. The sexual submissiveness of women is interpreted as part of the general system of patriarchal domination. Problems Russian women encounter are then connected to their positions as "prostitutes" who are "selling their own bodies" to rich Norwegian men to gain access to the country. Marriage is viewed as a commercial contract in which the woman is represented as a victim and the man is depicted as a consumer. Thus, the interviewed policeman and the staff member at the crisis centre thematise how Russian women become acquainted with their partners, seeing it in a context where the borders between prostitution, internet contact and Norwegian men's tours to nearby Murmansk become blurred:

*-Do you know how Russian women get to know Norwegian men?*

*Actually in a way, I don't really know. In a couple of cases, in which I have been involved myself because I have investigated the cases, it has been in connection with prostitution. That they come here as prostitutes. But this doesn't mean that I believe that all Russian women who come here are prostitutes, not at all. It could also be that men go to Murmansk, for example, and meet someone there. In addition to this, there are certainly a lot of internet agencies which provide contacts between Russian women and Norwegian men, and Russian women and foreign men. Thus, I believe that there are many different ways, but most common is certainly through the internet.*

*Policemen, coordinator of cases of family violence*

The types of contact mentioned above, both prostitution and internet contact, imply that the women have known their partner for a short period of time. To the extent there is an obvious tendency to stigmatise prostitutes, the policeman transfers the meaning of victimhood from prostitutes to marriage migrants. The interviewees create implicit meanings about the subordinated sexual circumstances of Russian women who happen

to marry “bad” dominant men and activate this context when explaining cases of violence:

*They know very little about the men they marry. And the man they marry could have been married to many other Russian women. So, it could be there that the problem lies.*

*Crisis centre staff member*

The main reason for abuse is defined in terms of women’s sexual submissiveness, and as a part of the image of a “post-order bride”. Abuse is itself associated with women’s sexual victimhood, which complements the constructed image of a victim of economic instability. The interviewed experts explain troubles in migrant women’s lives not through a critical scrutiny of the specific circumstances of the occurred events, but by constructing images of exotic cultural “others” who deviate from the established “norm” of morality in intimate relations. In particular, judgements about the victimhood of Russian women are incorporated into the popular Norwegian discourse about “respectable Norwegian femininity”, which, as Annfelt (2007) and Stenvoll (2002) show, underpins ideologies of the Norwegian welfare state. As Stenvoll underlines, within Norwegian sexual policies and throughout the history of public approaches towards sexuality, there is a clear tendency to supplement the image of the liberated woman with the quality of being “honourable”. Buying/selling sexual services or “obscure” relations, such as marriage with a “post-order bride”, are all constructed as “abnormal” (Stenvoll 2002: 159). The identity of the respectable Norwegian civilised women is contrasted with a fallen migrant, immorality and self-sacrificing femininity. Dividing lines are drawn between those who manage to assimilate into the politically correct imagined collectivity of gender and intimate relations (not too much promiscuity, not mixing money and intimacy) and those who are constructed as gendered and sexual “others”. When constructing their own identities contradicting the notorious “stigma of prostitution”, Russian migrant women define themselves as women who have a conscious relation to sexuality (Sverdljuk 2009).

## **Conclusions**

After having studied the selected interviews of welfare state employees, I came to the conclusion that the interviewed experts have a limited perception of Russian women's gendered identities. They fail to take into consideration women's agency as a capacity for autonomous and purposeful action, self-development and the ability to make independent choices and impose those choices on the world (Lister 1997: 36–40). The interviewed experts approach the concept of migrant women's agency as a “conditioned freedom”, or freedom to become “like us” (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2010). There is a lack of awareness of the fact that the agency of these migrant women emerges from specific cultural and social contexts of their home societies/Russia. A one-sided perception of Russian migrant women as victimised gendered “others” tends to lead to the symbolic exclusion of migrant women from the imagined collectivity of “native” citizens. Values of gender equality, which are high on the political agenda in Norway, and in the Nordic countries as a whole, serve as rhetorical tools for symbolic exclusion of cultural “others” and the creation of “us-them” divisions. When trying to assist migrant women who are victims of violence, some experts fail to take class and structural issues into consideration, such as shortcomings in the legislation and integration policies that put migrant women in difficult life situations.

Behind this I have found the process of ideological and discursive construction of nation using the categories of gender and ethnicity. Thus, Keskinen (2009: 258) writes: “Gender, sexuality and family relations play a central role in the symbolic formation of the nation and its boundaries, as well as that of ‘Europe’ and its ‘others’”. Ideas about gender can bind together the imagined collectivity of the nation and can therefore contribute to the exclusion of the subjects who belong to other ethnic, cultural or national collectivities (Yuval-Davis 1997). The analysis suggests that nation-based concepts of gender equality need to be readdressed while introducing intersectional issues into multicultural social work practices.

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## **TRANS-NATIONAL CARING MASCULINITY: TOWARDS INCLUSIVE SOCIAL COUNSELLING**

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The article examines the process of producing images of migrant men in education and practices of cross-cultural social work in Norway. How do the analytical tools of intersectionality and critical discourse analysis enable us to see how masculinity and ethnicity are intertwined with the professional efforts to provide ‘worthy help’? Do the intentions of students to practise inclusive, non-discriminatory social work open for the transformation of the widespread gendered representation of migrant men as patriarchal ‘others’? The empirical material comprises qualitative interviews with social work students and participant observations of education in ‘multicultural social work’ at two university colleges in Norway. I argue that students produce different images of migrant men, depending on their ability to enter into an open discussion about gender equality in diverse societies. Gendered and ethnicized representations of migrant men result in the symbolic marginalization of migrant male users. At the same time when trying to understand the organisation of gender relations in the migration context, students suggest an alternative image of the trans-national caring man. That allows students performing best practices of trans-cultural social work. In multicultural societies, plurality and the gendered nature of masculinities should be discussed in relation to the divergence in doing gender equality.

**Key words:** Masculinity, migration, gender equality, social work, social inclusion, marginalisation, analysis of discourses.

Social workers can be seen as mediators of the universal value of inclusion, and as actors who have a normative and professional obligation to help (Clarke 2004; Debesay 2008; Leseth and Solbrække 2011). Recently, the multidimensional or intersectional approach to inclusion has become an important part of the social work practices and education. Heydt and Sherman (2005) ask how it is possible to work or help effectively in cross-cultural situations. They emphasise self-awareness and knowing how fears, ignorance and the 'isms' (racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, ageism and classism) have influenced social workers' attitudes.

Bearing the latest developments in the multidimensional approach to social inclusion in mind, Nordic researchers of the welfare state and social work have turned a critical eye on how several axes of discrimination (e.g. gender, ethnicity and sexuality) interact and produce distorted images of the users of social services (Keskinen 2011; Leseth and Solbrække 2011; Mattsson 2010). Feminist researchers of professional practices and some feminist researchers of migration have especially criticised the growing trend towards social marginalisation, conditioned by combining and reinforcing sexism and racism (Jensen 2009; Keskinen 2009; Mattsson 2010).

The focus of this article is on the idea that gender and ethnicity work together to construct people as 'others'. In particular, the argument of Nordic post-colonial feminists has been that public discourses in the Nordic countries cultivate images of the liberalised majority and traditional gendered minority subjects (Keskinen et al. 2009). Representations of the traditionalism of migrant women and attachment to the patriarchy of migrant men, lead to processes of social alienation and symbolic and structural oppression of people with an ethnic minority background (de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005; Mohanty 1988; Razack 2008). Within masculinity research, the parallel argument is that the image of ethnically homogenous Nordic 'progressive' masculinity has been created (Johansson 1998; Holter et al. 2007). Ethnic majority men are normally represented as loyal to gender equality, progressive, modern and good fathers who take an equal share in family responsibilities. This image is then contrasted to

traditional hypermasculinity, which nowadays is mostly related to foreign men (Gottzén and Jonsson 2012; Hearn et al. 2012; Jensen 2010; Walle 2003).

This raises three interrelated questions, namely: First, are there tendencies towards a gender/masculinity and ethnicity conditioned stigmatisation of migrant male users? Secondly, how do the ideas of masculinity interact with ethnicity and the professional views on users as respectful individuals? Lastly, are there productive overlaps between the discourses on the respect for an individual and representations of migrant men? In attempting to answer these questions the article aims to contribute to the discussion on masculinities as gendered and plural subject positions (Connell 2005; Kimmel 2000; Lorentzen 2011). I argue, in accordance with Kimmel (2000), that closer attention should be paid not only to qualitative variation but also to status-related differences in masculinities. Specific contracts and discourses on gender can produce under-privileged masculinities. When power is transformed and associated with civilization and loyalty to gender equality, new sophisticated mechanisms of ‘othering’ and new types of under-privileged masculinities emerge (Gottzén and Jonsson 2012). At the same time, the meaning of masculinity as a position written into the equality discourse comes under question. When actors are guided by the concern to guarantee the inclusion of all, irrespective of their gender, ethnicity and class, they discover that there are different ways of being an accepted and powerful (in a good sense) man. Transforming societal stigmas and negotiating the meaning of gender equality, the students introduce an alternative image of the trans-national caring man. Although this representation implies different types of equality and care, it brings to mind the accepted image of masculinity in Norway. Therefore, I argue that in the contemporary migration context, the issue of plurality of masculinities should be approached in a broader context of the discussion on different meanings of gender equality. When positively evaluating users’ masculinity, the students accept migrant men as respectable individuals and manage to practice social work in the best possible way. In relation to the theory of multicultural social work, the main argument is that non-discrimination and self-awareness of one’s own prejudices (Heydt and Sherman 2005) should be complemented by a reflection on the variety of gender relations and identities.

### **Nordic ‘caring’ masculinity and the foreign ‘other’**

Researchers of masculinity have pointed to the fact that in the public space in the Nordic countries, most popular representations of men depict them as caring fathers who are loyal to gender equality (Brandth and Kvande 2003; Holter and Aarseth 1993; Johansson 1998; St.meld.nr 8 2008–2009). In a Swedish setting, Gottzén and Jonsson (2012) point out that in public discourse Swedish men are typically produced as the world’s ‘most gender equal’ men. The image of Nordic ‘progressive’ masculinity is created by using a counter-image of a foreign, traditional masculinity (Gottzén and Jonsson 2012; Hearn et al. 2012; Jensen 2010; Walle 2003). As Keskinen (2009) points out, in Western societies, qualities that are typically ascribed to ethnic minority men are violence and playing the role of the leader in the family. The tendencies to create a ‘scary’ image of the migrant man in the West have been criticised by, for instance, bell hooks (2004: xii) who points out that the stereotype of Black masculinity, which was first articulated in the nineteenth century and ‘holds sway over the minds and imaginations’ of people in our contemporary time, ‘is the image of the brute – untamed, uncivilized, unthinking and unfeeling’. This confirms the idea of Connell (2005) about plurality of masculinities, as well as Kimmel’s (2000) claim that masculinity is always constructed in relation to power, to which it is subordinated in a gendered way. Symbolic marginalisation of migrant men collides with the main principles of inclusion and non-discrimination in social work.

### **Inclusive counselling: A complex task**

In social work theory and practice ideas of humanism are pivotal. This implies that social workers should treat users with respect and should be able to provide the best possible help in order for the users to overcome difficult life situations. The idea about having a respectful attitude to users is further developed through the concept of ‘worthy help’ (Schulman 2008). According to this notion, social workers should not stigmatise users of the welfare services as powerless or helpless individuals but rather perceive them as actors in charge of their lives. Therefore social help is thought to have a

temporary character and is aimed at providing stimulus for change. Ideally, help ceases when the user of the welfare services has managed to solve his problems and is able to lead a so-called 'normal' life. Social assistance is often referred to as help to self-help (Schulman 2008).

One of the important aspects of cross-cultural social work is the principle of non-discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, gender and other social characteristics (Heydt and Sherman 2005). There is a danger of developing a more paternalistic or other kind of stigmatising attitude to the user due to the possible ethnocentric tendencies in the attitudes of social workers. The main argument of several feminist researchers has been that spreading rhetoric on the gender traditionalism of migrants and ethnic minorities can lead to ethnocentrism and even racism (Gressgård and Jacobsen 2002; Gullestad 2002; Gullikstad 2010; Keskinen 2009). In the face-to-face interaction during social consultancy the 'othering' process conditioned by gender and culture might increase the power hierarchy between the social worker and migrant user (Mattsson 2010). This may result in the social worker being unable to consider the needs of users and thus unable to provide 'worthy help'.

### **Studying the intersections of popular and professional discourses**

Bearing the above in mind, I was interested in how students learn about and manage to practise inclusive social help. To answer the questions about processes of social 'othering', i.e. exclusion and inclusion, I have used analytical tools from the theory of intersectionality and critical discourse analysis, CDA (Fairclough and Wodak 1997; van Dijk 1993; Wetherell et al. 2001). The theory of intersectionality suggests that marginalisation and inclusion are conditioned by an interplay of several social characteristics and can be classed, gendered and 'cultured' (Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1991). My approach is from an open social constructivist perspective to study the interplay of categories and their impact on practices of inclusion (Lewis 2000; McCall 2005). Gender and ethnicity have to be viewed as discourses, or social constructs, which are not stable but contingent. Discourses based on these categories can take different forms depending on the concrete situations and the agency of the speakers (Butler 1999;



Fairclough 1997; Fraser 1997). To enable an open approach to the inquiry about how different categories and discourses act together, I use the *intra*-categorical understanding of intersectionality, where the positions of individuals are understood as something constructed or ‘done’ under concrete circumstances (Berg et al. 2010; Lykke 2005; McCall 2005; Phoenix 2006).

An open approach to intersectionality allows one to explore whether masculinity, when combined with ethnicity (and class), can be produced as a marginalised social position. In this sense Kimmel’s (2000) theory about masculinities as diverse social positions which are situated differently in relation to power is relevant. The open view also means that it is not merely possible to focus on the mechanisms of discrimination and ‘othering’ on the grounds of gender and ethnicity. I am inquiring into whether gender and ethnicity can be combined in a productive way (Berg et al. 2010; Kristensen 2010).

To strengthen the open approach in the analysis of the data, I have used analytical tools from critical discourse analysis. An important discourse, which guides the process of production of meanings in student’s utterances, is the professional discourse on ‘worthy help’ and respect for an individual. I explore how discourses, based on gender and ethnicity, are transformed, and how they transform professional ideas about ‘worthy help’. Ideas about providing ‘worthy help’ and showing respect for the individual are the main professional guidelines for the inclusive communication with users. As a semiotic resource, professional ideas about ‘worthy help’ can also be seen as a discourse. Here a broader definition of discourse as a semiotic part of social life is relevant (Fairclough 1992). I refer to the concept of the ‘order of discourses’, i.e. the way in which different semiotic resources are structured and related to each other. Therefore, I ask how the students combine or ‘chain’ different discursive possibilities, e.g. those that come from popular gendered and ethnicised discourses on migrant men and from the professional ideas about ‘worthy help’ and respect for an individual. The point here is to explore how social work students construct migrant users as ‘worthy’ and respectful individuals and how gender/masculinity and ethnicity can be used as productive semiotic resources.

## **Data**

The data comprises 12 semi-structured thematic individual and group interviews, transcripts of several lectures and seminars and field notes taken during participant observation. I conducted the field work at two Norwegian university colleges where I contacted students attending courses in multicultural social work. In particular, I interviewed students who met migrant users in their professional practices during the last year of their education programme. The students shared their impressions about face-to-face meetings and consultations with persons who had a migrant background. I also observed educational training in cross-cultural social work as a participant. The educational training takes a practical approach in the classroom, where first-year students and the teacher analyse possible social-counselling situations. I have chosen here to concentrate on two cases, which were most informative when it comes to discursive constructions of user-migrant men. In the first example, a third-year social-work student tells about her experiences of conducting her professional practice at a multicultural youth club. The student, Helga, helps one of the youths to overcome disruptive behaviour, better succeed at school and obtain recognition from other members of the youth club. In the second example, first-year students participate in a training session where they role played situations between an imagined social worker and migrant user. In the example given by the teacher, the migrant user was a refugee who required assistance with housing and establishing himself in his new country of residence.<sup>18</sup>

## **'Just a little worse': Foreign masculinity and the production of difference**

Let me begin with Helga, a third-year student who has been working with a group of young people at a multicultural youth club:

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<sup>18</sup> The research was conducted according to the requirements concerning informant anonymity, as laid down by the Norwegian Data Protection Guidelines for Research: <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/en/index.html>. All informants have signed a letter of informed consent and have willingly participated in the research. All mentioned names are fictive.

*So there were many nationalities. Some were European, others were from Asia; some were from South America.*

The international environment in the youth club provides a suitable situation for the student to practice a non-discriminating social work. Helga interprets her professional task as being *a mediator* between young people and contributing to a good atmosphere in the club. As she put it, she wanted to 'take care of everyone'. In addition to defining the role as social mediator, Helga wants to help one of the boys with minority background to solve his psychological problems. In this capacity she presents the figure of Ahmed whom she refers to as an example of a disruptive youth:

*He was living in an institution because he didn't function well at school or at home.*

Helga tells us that Ahmed took a special course in mastering feelings of anger and aggression and overcoming disturbing behaviour, and for this reason she wanted to look closer into his problems. In the following analysis, when reflecting on Helga's pedagogical efforts to help Ahmed and become a social mediator in the youth club, I will show how an ethnic minority male user is constructed. I approach both tasks, i.e. to help young people to establish good communication and to help Ahmed, as the challenges, which are connected to the necessity of solving psychological and communication problems. In the 'text' of the interview, Helga perceives these tasks as closely connected to each other. Thus, Ahmed's polite behaviour is perceived as one of the necessary components of the good social environment in the club. Using the mentioned analytical tools of critical discourse analysis I will examine how discourses on masculinity and ethnicity, and a professional discourse on providing 'worthy help' interact in the main 'text' of Helga's story. First I will analyse, how Helga manages the role of social mediator. As Helga tells, there were conflicts and misunderstandings among the young people in the club. According to her perception of the situation, the conflicts stemmed from the negative attitudes to gender equality that 'one of the boys', Ahmed, had:

*Ahmed was from somewhere in Africa and felt that it was ridiculous that a man and a woman should be gender equal.*

While willing to help young people to overcome conflicts and establish a good environment in the club, Helga immediately sees the conflicts as being caused by the problem of cultural differences and conflicting perceptions of gender. The contraposition is created between the 'good' young Norwegian men and women who are loyal to gender equality and the 'bad' patriarchal foreign male 'other' represented in the image of the ethnically different Ahmed. In this context, which is pre-defined by the distinctions between these unequal subject positions, Helga decides to initiate a joint discussion on gender equality. In her eyes, an open dialogue between individuals who represent different cultures and gender traditions will contribute to minimising the conflict between young people. But can the complex problem of conflicts between young people be reduced to a discussion on 'cultural differences'? I argue that by accentuating the issue of 'cultural differences' when trying to solve conflicts, Helga does not manage to draw the young people's attention to the values of friendship and mutual respect and only partially succeeds in being a good social mediator. Most likely because she was trying to practise professional qualities of non-discrimination and inclusion, Helga prefers to take a 'careful' approach to the young man who implicitly was defined as a source of conflict. The student emphasises that for her it was important 'to accept what he (Ahmed) stands for, his values and attitudes', even though she 'probably did not share them'. According to Helga, instead of criticising Ahmed, she and some of the other members of the group (some girls) 'defended him':

*...but if you moved to Africa, would you have done it in a day: changed norms and rules? [...] what you have grown up with cannot be changed over one night.*

When connecting the problem of conflicts in the youth club to disagreements on gender equality, and positioning Ahmed as 'culturally different', Helga tries to think in accordance with the professional prescription to respect users as independent individuals. At the same time she transforms this prescription into the idea about tolerating cultural differences. Helga's intention to 'tolerate Ahmed's difference' is controversial as tolerance does not imply full acceptance but signals a non-aggressive,

peaceful perception of the 'other'. As Gressgård and Jacobsen (2008) point out when referring to Wendy Brown's (2006) reflections on tolerance in liberal societies, tolerance is an intention towards the representatives of minorities, which is based on the fundamental 'us' and 'them' division. It is necessary to tolerate someone because differences are found to be so essential that they can provoke rejection or hostility. Implicit in the rhetoric on tolerating we can find cultural tendencies towards 'othering'. Although the young user with an ethnic minority background is included in the group of the members of the youth club, he is also constructed as an object of criticism and exclusion.

Ahmed's views on gender equality were a highly volatile issue among the members of the youth club. Helga is also critical in relation to ethnic Norwegian boys:

*But from time to time other boys identified a little with him... that they had to in a sense be the one who was dominant and the one who was authoritarian, the one who provided for the family and things like that.*

However the male Norwegian views on gender were not highlighted as a special topic of discussion. According to Helga, 'native' masculinity is constructed as transitional, and from the traditional to the progressive, a 'modern' type of gender conduct. Therefore, the student in social work mentions that Norwegian boys support Ahmed 'a little', 'from time to time'. According to Helga, in Norway it is still unusual for the wife to have a better job than her husband:

*If there is, for example, a woman in the family who has a managerial position and her husband is someone who does not have such a position, then you can see a dynamic there that in a sense has not quite been confronted in Norway yet.*

According to Helga, foreign men have pronounced anti-feminist views. In the gap between a light tendency towards and an open insistence on gender inequality a specific position of the masculine 'other' is created. In line with Gottzén and Jonsson (2012), it can be concluded that in the studied example, masculinity is constructed in relation to gender equality. We learn from the student's utterances that, to her, gender equality

implies the particular type of gender relations most accepted in the Nordic countries and that they are associated with ethnic Norwegians. When linked to the majority population exclusively it becomes a tool for creating subordinated positions for minority men. Ahmed's gendered image does not have connotations which express positive values and which imply any accepted ways of doing masculinity. To express her attitudes of acceptance and respect for the migrant user, Helga does not speak openly about attractive aspects of the masculinity of foreign men. The migrant user is defined as the masculine 'other'. As Jensen (2009) points out, the process of 'othering' implies that there is no focus on fascination of the 'other' rather he/she is thought of as inferior and less powerful. Foreign masculinity becomes a symbolically devaluated position which is marginalised in relation to both 'native' men and women. Therefore, the theory of Kimmel (2000), that masculinity is not a neutral position but is constructed in relation to power, takes a new turn. When power is associated with civilization and gender equality the equality discourse can also function as a marginalisation tool.

In the same way as she treats the conflicts, Helga also approaches Ahmed's behaviour as related to the issue of gender and cultural differences. Helga points out that during the joint discussion on gender equality Ahmed 'showed good behaviour' and 'listened quietly' to the arguments of other young people. Helga considers Ahmed's quiet behaviour to be her professional achievement:

*I think it was because there were also others who defended him. He was included even though he was still criticised. And he was allowed to express his opinions about Norwegian culture.*

The student in social work feels that she succeeded in helping Ahmed to overcome troublesome behavioural conduct, basing her approach on the idea of 'cultural tolerance'. At the same time, in the cited text, the expression 'defending someone' functions as a marker of the tendency towards social differentiation. The user with an ethnic minority background is constructed as 'different' member of the youth club. When characterising the student's attitude to the ethnic minority user, one can apply the theoretical concept of 'subordinated inclusion', which implies both intentions of acceptance and rejection of the person as a member of society. There is a complex

interplay and co-presence of anti-discriminatory and racial attitudes, what Gail Lewis (2000) has called an 'elusive visibility' of racial discourses in the practices of the welfare state experts.<sup>19</sup> Devaluing attitudes are difficult to discover as they are part of the best intentions to help. Problems ethnic minority users have are not approached in the context of psychological and social issues, but are rather reduced to the discussion about gender and cultural differences. This then limits the possibility of providing proper assistance, as in this case when attempting to help the young man overcome his disorderly behaviour.

### **'Helping Hussein': Confronting challenges in communication**

In the second case the students learn in class how to practise productive communication with a migrant user when participating in a practical training programme in the classroom. The practical training took place during the first year of studies as a supplement to introductory lectures on the theory of multicultural social work. The students had to assume the roles of social worker and a 'refugee', Hussein, who in the example created by the teacher was described as follows:

*Hussein is thirty years old. He has been staying in Iraq, Pakistan and Turkey before coming to Norway. He has a wife and six children in Afghanistan with whom he wants to seek family reunification.*

Hussein has been granted an official residence permit in Norway and is in the process of moving from a reception centre to his own apartment. He has been granted financial state support to buy a refrigerator and washing machine ('white goods'). The task of the social worker was defined as helping Hussein to purchase the 'white goods' and ensure that this benefit would be allocated in a proper way. In the background text the social worker is not aware that Hussein was going to send part of the money granted for the

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<sup>19</sup> Gail Lewis has undertaken research on the entry of black and Asian women into professional social work for the local authorities in the UK (Lewis 2000). The concept of elusive visibility of racial discourses was applied in relation to the interaction between ethnic majority and ethnic minority social workers. I apply this concept in relation to the prospective social worker's practices of communication with the minority users of welfare services.

household goods to his family in Afghanistan, and rather buy 'second-hand' goods. The impeded communication is presented by highlighting Hussein's silence:

*Hussein comes to the meeting as agreed. After you have greeted each other, you open the conversation by asking him if he is looking forward to moving out of the reception centre. He nods slightly. You continue and tell him that now you want to discuss how to help him make his purchases. You inform him about the county authority's procedures for purchasing white goods. Hussein is quiet, and you notice that you do not achieve the desirable cooperative tone.*

To provide the students with challenging tasks, the teacher introduces difficulties and gaps in the communication between the imaginary social worker and user. According to the lecture in multicultural social work, in cross-cultural situations, gaps in communication might occur. Difficulties might be conditioned by different statuses of social workers and users and the hierarchies in the relation between a 'common' person and the representative of state authorities. Misunderstandings might also be caused by the lack of language skills. Another factor, which the teacher adds to the following situation, is differences in the formal mandate of the social worker and the real needs of the user. Policies of integration of refugees imply providing the newcomers with the financial assistance to secure their integration into host societies. It is forbidden to use state's benefits for any purpose other than integration into local communities. In this context, the students were challenged to interpret Hussein's quiet behaviour and overcome gaps in communication with the user, paying special attention to his feelings. Will the future social workers be able to adequately interpret the feelings of the imagined migrant user in the context of the problem of communication gaps?

### **Gendered clichés or an unbiased attitude to the user?**

The aim of the professional training was to learn how to solve a complex professional task, which implied the ability of taking into consideration several dimensions and challenges in communication. When interpreting the students' utterances, I will study the order of the discourses, i.e. the way in which the discourse of helping an individual



and taking his feelings into consideration is related to the discourses on masculinity and ethnicity. I connect the idea of paying attention to the user's emotions with the professional values of respect for an individual and providing 'worthy help'. How do gender and ethnicity enter the interpretation of the user's emotional state? In the following dialogue, some of the immediate students' reflections about Hussein's feelings are analysed. In the cited excerpt, a persistent motive in the students' descriptions of the emotional image of Hussein is expressed:

Lars: *Aggressiveness.*

Teacher: *It could be aggressiveness. Open, you think? Right.*

Lars: *Yes, but a little like this (showing).*

Teacher: *Glance. Folded arms. Well, fine. [...]*

Mette: *Arrogance.*

Teacher: *What does a person do when he is arrogant? Looks away, right [...]*

Teacher: *[...] other things, which you discovered?*

Lotte: *Silence.*

The students point out that there is a hidden aggression and feelings of superiority or arrogance behind Hussein's silence and that folded arms express unwillingness to communicate. Why do the students choose emotional characteristics, which describe Hussein as a 'bossy' and dominant person? A closer examination of the utterances shows that behind the described image of the migrant user we find some widely believed characteristics and qualities of macho men. In Norwegian society the most common discourse on masculinity is a representation of men as loyal to gender equality. The characteristics of domineering masculinity are most often prescribed to men with a minority background. This leads to the stigmatisation and demonization of minority men. Gendered and ethnicized discourses exclude the possibility of another description of Hussein's silence that would highlight such feelings as shamefulness and confusion.

Probably, Hussein was aware, that his intentions, to send a part of the received money back home, differ from the authority's prescriptions. The popular discourse on foreign traditional masculinity limits professional ideas of 'worthy help' and prevents the students from becoming aware of the real problems, which the user encounters in his everyday life. The students fail to interpret Hussein's feelings as a result of the incompatibility between the user's and the social worker's plans and differences in their statuses. As a consequence, the majority of the students decide that Hussein's silence is an expression of the user's stubbornness and unwillingness to accept help. One of the students whom I interviewed after the seminar summarises the situation as follows:

*In the example, it was mentioned that he was quiet. But it could have been because he couldn't speak the language. You could also have interpreted the situation in the way that he was very happy to receive help, if you wanted to. Yes... But everybody supposed that he didn't want help. This was the reason why he was silent. I think all the groups have chosen this way of seeing it.*

The students could discuss the situation of social consultancy suggested by the teacher in the political context of the issues of global inequality and economic hardships experienced by refugees from poor countries. The phenomenon of remittances, migrants' transfers to their countries of origin, is a contested political issue in Norway and in Europe. On-going conflicts in the countries of origin exert rising pressure to send money home (Erdal 2012). However, as several scholars have observed, in the countries of destination the political focus is not on the migrants' remittances and structural problems, but rather on culture, practices of gender inequality and religion (Erdal 2012). As in the previous example, in this case the students do not manage to provide the user with proper help. In the case with Ahmed, a subordinated position of a masculine 'other' was constructed that led to symbolic marginalisation of the young man as a member of a social group. In the current example, the emotional image of Hussein was constructed by using gendered and ethnicized discourses on migrant men as 'others'. This prevented students from seeing a complex psychological palette of the user's feelings. As a result, students were not able to help the user solving his economic problems.

## **Trans-national caring masculinity and alternative interpretations of Hussein's silence**

Can gender, ethnicity and professional ideas about providing 'worthy help' and respecting the user co-work productively? Can foreign masculinity become a part of the attitudes towards inclusion? The following analysis shows how an alternative image of the ethnic minority user is constructed. Students in social work who have migrant backgrounds were especially helpful in trying to solve the challenging professional task satisfactorily. In the excerpt below Hussein appears in a different light:

*Alicia: Hussein did not feel secure... that the social worker wanted to help him, did not mean anything for him [...] Hussein was going to move from the asylum reception centre... he is concerned about his family, which is in Afghanistan. He is in Norway [...] So, if the social worker wants to understand Hussein's feelings he cannot speak about white goods, which the social worker wanted to help Hussein with [...] Now he starts to think: probably now is the right time for my family to come and live with me here in Norway. But this is not what the social worker wants to help him with.*

When also using discourses on masculinity and ethnicity the student no longer assigns 'scary' characteristics to Hussein. Hussein's silence is interpreted as a sign of uncertainty and insecurity. Probably, in this interpretation, the imagined Hussein is aware that the social worker does not intend to provide necessary support for his family. Hussein is described as a 'caring family father' who came to Norway to provide for his family which he had to leave behind in the country of origin. In contrast to the popular representation of foreign men as self-reliant and aggressive, the student outlines an alternative image of a migrant who is kind and concerned about the wellbeing of his wife and children. According to the new interpretation of Hussein's gendered image, the user has trans-national identity:

*Teacher: So, Hussein is a refugee. [...] Hussein has been, and is in a migration process. He clearly belongs to a group which is a part of a transnational network. This is a new concept. What do you have in mind when I say: transnational network?*

Aisha: *Network across the border.*

Teacher: *Across the border, certainly. And what does that mean? He, Hussein comes from Afghanistan. He came here alone. He certainly has family there which he left [...] The transnational network is spread out. They're not just in Norway. They're not just where I am, but they're everywhere. So, then we have knowledge about a group... That can certainly be important in order to understand problems and resources they bring with them.*

Hussein is now considered to be the source of new 'knowledge' rather than a 'difficult user' who does not want to receive help. When constructing an image of a migrant man, the students discover the phenomenon of transnational family network. According to the image drawn from Hussein, the user not have daily contact with his wife and children, and does not participate in the household activities as 'good' Norwegian men are expected to do. An additional difference factor is Hussein's economic responsibility for the family, which contrasts with the Nordic social contract of two breadwinners in the family and where men no longer are looked upon as the main providers.

In spite of the obvious differences between Nordic ideals of masculinity and the produced image of a foreign man, there are some affinities between the two projections of masculinity. Both types of masculinities contain connotations of love and care for the other, which appear as essential qualities of a 'good man'. There is a discursive assimilation of the migrant user into the modern common representation of 'caring masculinity'. At the same time, the ideal of caring masculinity is flexible, as the students leave room for reflection over what it means to be a 'good man'. In this case, masculinity is also defined in relation to power and the place it occupies in relation to the gender equality contract (Connell 2005; Gottzén and Jonsson 2012; Kimmel 2000). But the new image of masculinity emerges from negotiating over the accepted understanding of gender equality. In the first example, the case with Ahmed, perception of gender equality was limited by the typical ways of doing gender in the Nordic countries. In the current example, a plurality of the doing-gender equality is assumed. In this context, I argue that the plural subject positions of men could be studied in relation

to the diversity of forms of gender equality and various types of family patterns in the globalised world.

In its interplay with ethnicity, gender ceases to be a marker of difference and a cause of discrimination, becoming the ground for the positive perception of the migrant user. Discourses on masculinity and ethnicity, and the professional discourses on providing help interact in a positive way. The concept of respect for an individual, which underpins the idea of 'worthy help', is re-actualised, and reinforces the professional intentions to help him in the best possible way. It became more natural for the students to pay attention to the real needs of the imagined user, allowing him to buy second-hand white goods. General professional guidelines on respecting the user acquire new meaning when they are re-interpreted in concert with the actual situation and the specific needs of the migrant. The new image of a migrant man allows the students to become aware of the 'gaps' in the social worker's mandate when the ready-made patterns for providing social help do not correspond to the actual challenges confronted by the migrant. When appealing to masculinity and ethnicity, the students managed to interpret Hussein's silence in the context of the discrepancy between the social worker's and user's intentions. Professional values of 'worthy help' and respect for an individual, were taken into consideration and productive communication was established.

## **Conclusions**

My focus in this paper was to examine how discourses on masculinity interact with the professional ideas about providing 'worthy help' that are found in multicultural social work education. The analysis has shown that the practice of inclusive multicultural social work is a complex and challenging task. Depending on the ability to discuss the ideal of gender equality in multicultural societies, the students construct migrant men as aggressive and patriarchal or kind and caring. This then produces positions of marginalised and included users of the social services. *First*, when led by the idea of gender equality and an ethnically homogeneous Norwegian society, the students construct migrant male users as 'different' from the majority population or less

advanced in their ways of doing gender equality. This impedes their ability to practise inclusive social help. In both cases, the main reason for this inability to provide proper assistance stemmed from gender and ethnicity prejudices. In this respect, like Gottzén and Jonsson (2012), I find that being a man can put one in an under-privileged subject position which is constructed through interacting characteristics of masculinity and ethnicity.

This observation sets the ideas about masculinity as plural and engendered subject positions in a new light. Several researchers on masculinity have argued that it is not a neutral position but rather something that is embedded in gendered systems in the same way as femininity is (Kimmel 2000; Lorentzen 2011). The main idea here has been that men, and women, can be detrimentally affected by the dominant social expectation of performing as aggressive, strong, ambitious and self-reliant. According to Connell, hegemonic masculinity is the most socially endorsed, although not the most widespread expression of men's behaviour (Connell 2005). However, as the analysis has shown, discourses on gender equality and 'kind family fathers' can also function as tools for marginalising men. Migrant men who do not belong to the ethnic majority population and who do gender relations in different ways can be considered as 'wrong' masculinities.

*Second*, as the analysis has shown, the students are also open to ethnic plurality in the definition of a 'good, caring man' who contributes to gender equality. They have discussions and open reflections on various ways of practising gender equal relations and the subsequent attempts to destabilise the dominant patterns of gender equality in the Nordic countries. The students propose alternative images of migrant men in terms of 'trans-national caring masculinity' and underline that men can enter into different 'contracts' for practising gender equality. Apart from following the Nordic ideal of 'caring masculinity', which implies, for example, parity in taking part in child care, it is possible for men to be caring fathers in a migration context when they are separated from their families. The image only partially corresponds to the Nordic ideal of a 'good man', but is still considered as accepted male behaviour. This transforms the current ideal of 'kind man', making it heterogeneous. Bearing this in mind, more research

should be conducted on the new types of masculinities and new ideas of gender equality that emerge in the current globalisation and migration contexts. What qualities and concrete gender practices of individuals are required to successfully build a gender equal and inclusive society? This implies that the issue of plurality of masculinities (Kimmel 2000) should be approached in the context of the discussion on the divergent ideas of doing gender equality.

*Third*, a new discourse on ‘caring trans-national masculinity’ interacts productively with the general inclination to provide ‘worthy help’, allowing the students to practice inclusive social work. Their notions of an ideal man, good person and worthy social assistance user are intertwined and as such create a topic for discussion. Bearing this in mind, I maintain that social workers cannot simply be guided by an abstract respect for an individual or by self-awareness as a way of avoiding sexism, racism and other types of social discrimination (Heydt and Sherman 2005). Respect can easily be transformed into the toleration of the cultural ‘other’. Self-awareness might imply that categories of gender and ethnicity would be approached separately. Gender is usually associated with the discrimination of women. Racism is viewed as an abstract problem, which emerges as a result of devaluating attitudes based on skin colour. At the same time, as discussed in this article, men were marginalised subjects, where it was not gender discrimination, but gender equality that constructed minority men as ‘others’. Indeed, racism was based not on skin colour but on the subject’s ‘cultural difference’ introduced through gender. Therefore, categories of gender and ethnicity cannot be perceived separately from each other when discussing the issues of social exclusion and marginalisation of welfare service users. What is at stake is the necessity to have an intersectional approach to marginalisation that takes into consideration the concrete social discourses and the relations the individual users are embedded in. Therefore, in multicultural social work practices self-awareness should be complemented by the ability to acquire insight into the variety of social relations and types of social identities in diverse societies. It is important to develop sensitivity to the most popular ways of organising gender relations and to further explore whether the subjects are practising variety and plural ways of performing these relations.

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## **CONTRADICTING THE 'PROSTITUTION STIGMA': NARRATIVES OF RUSSIAN MIGRANT WOMEN LIVING IN NORWAY**

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### **Introduction**

This chapter aims to create a narrative image of women who have moved from Northwest Russia to live in the Northern provinces of Norway after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of borders between 'East' and 'West'. As the title suggests, in the centre of attention are women's own stories and self-presentations, which challenge and resist the widespread media image of a Russian migrant prostitute. The softening of the border regime between Norway and Russia gave rise to a trans-national prostitution business, which involved men buying sex and pimps, traffickers and women from Russia making mostly sporadic and short-term visits to Norway to sell sex. As the local media and public consciousness had a tendency to associate the emerging trans-national prostitution activities solely with 'Russian women', the derogative and vulgar 'stigma of prostitution' rapidly came into being. Russian migrant women in Northern Norway, including the so-called marriage migrants and students, have experienced whore-calling, sidelong glances and insults in everyday life (the so-called 'stigma of prostitution'). In the background there is the long history of ideological confrontation between Norway and Russia during the Cold War, when the Russian neighbour was represented as a soldier equipped with weapons and ready for attack. After the end of the Cold War, in the documents of popular cultural production, the image of the soldier has been replaced by a picture of impoverished Russian women who come to the rich 'West' to sell their bodies.

The aim of this chapter is to show how Russian women themselves react to the notorious ‘prostitution stigma’. What are their attitudes towards the extensive media coverage of Russian prostitution? How do women oppose exotic sexist images of Russian femininity and what are their own stories about migration, marriage, partnership and love? And how can an analysis of women’s narratives concerning the ‘sensitive’ issue of stigmatisation contribute to the feminist criticism of the orientalisation, eroticising and victimisation of the gendered and culturalised ‘other’?

One of the central arguments of Norwegian researchers inquiring into feminine migration across the borders between Norway and Russia has been that journalists and politicians tend to represent migrant women as victims of miserable conditions in the transitional Russia, failing to see them as ‘self-creating and choosing individuals’ (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2007). According to the ‘mainstream’ scholars of Russian and Eastern European studies in Norway (e.g. Hønneland and Jørgensen 2002: 55–57), the construction of the Eastern European ‘victimised other’ is conditioned by the need to cultivate a positive image of one’s own people and represent oneself as a ‘helper’ or ‘charity-giver’.

The main theoretical inspiration for this kind of criticism has been the post-colonial tradition of thought that goes back to the writings of Edward Said, especially his book ‘Orientalism’ (1978). Said has problematised Western perception of the ‘East’ (Arabs, Islam and the Middle East) as inherently ideological and preoccupied with self-congratulation (when one discusses one’s own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the ‘other’) (Said 1978: 325). According to Said, the false and romanticised image of other cultures (Asia) is not dangerous in itself. Problems begin when it becomes an ideological tool, or justification for Europe’s and America’s colonial ambitions. Although Said has placed Russia and the Soviet Union among the colonising powers (alongside England, France and later the United States), a range of scholars have observed that orientalising discourses are being used in relation to Russia and Russians who have moved to the West. The Russian ‘other’/woman is represented in sexist, immoral and submissive/dependent terms in contrast to the emancipated and self-conscious Western gendered subject/woman<sup>20</sup> (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2007; Leontieva and Sarsenov

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<sup>20</sup> Sarsenov and Leontieva have also shown that there are certain limitations to the use of Said’s theory in relation to Russian women and to Russians in general. The break of the Soviet Union provoked post-imperialistic nostalgia connected with the loss of the former Soviet empire. Another contra-argument relevant in the context of the Nordic countries is that throughout the history of the countries, Russia has had colonial ambitions in relation to Finland.

2003).

When trying to present alternative images created by women themselves, I will first give a brief overview of the background of the ‘prostitution stigma’, showing how it came into being in media and political discourses in Norway. After that, I proceed to the analysis of women’s stories in the context of the most widely spread Nordic/Norwegian accounts of multiculturalism, family and sexuality. The whole analysis will be structured according to the main modes of women’s self-identifications, such as: ‘travelling women/women on the move’, ‘women family migrants’, ‘working/professional women’, ‘women actively spending their leisure time’, and ‘women who have a conscious attitude to sexuality’.

### **Materials and method**

Thematic individual and group interviews with Russian women who have moved to Norway in the period from 1991 to 2004 were the main source of the analysis. The interviews have been conducted within the Nordic collaboration research project: ‘Russian Women as Immigrants in the Nordic Countries – Finland, Norway, Sweden – Gender Perspectives on Everyday Life, Citizenship and Social Justice’ in 2004–2006. The project has been carried out in collaboration with Aino Saarinen and Kerstin Hägg who have been collecting interviews in the Northern provinces of Finland and Sweden. My special task was to meet and talk to Russian women living in Northern Norway (Tana region, Tromsø, Kirkenes) and analyse the whole Nordic interview material through the ‘prism’ of social justice. In this article I was mainly relying on the Norwegian part of the collected material.

The interview themes touched upon different sides of migrant women’s lives, such as the moment of migration, first period of adaptation, attending language courses and looking for a job, studying, organising the family life and leisure, personal happiness etc. Special attention has been paid to ‘sensitive’ issues such as the coverage of Russian prostitution in Norwegian media and how migrant women negotiated these representations. From this angle, it was especially important to listen to individual approaches and group discussions concerning the ‘prostitution stigma’ when trying to understand how women cope with derogative public images of Russian femininity, what alternative images they use to maintain a basic positive relation to oneself and how they oppose or challenge the public images.

When analysing women’s stories, I was approaching them as discourses, narratives, self-



presentations or documents of an active self-creation through language and the act of storytelling. As the interviews had an open character and left much room for initiative and free reflection, it was easy to see them as the acts of self-construction on the basis of dominant societal perceptions and beliefs. After I completed transcribing and summarising women's narratives, I gained a complex impression of the issues and concerns articulated by women whom I have met. The main task of analysis consisted of systematising and making analytically sharp the different images created by the interviewed women and at the same time making explicit what common views, discourses and beliefs they were referring to.

### **'Russian prostitute' or the 'mail-order bride'**

Sex traffic across Russian-Norwegian borders after 1991 gave occasion to a number of sensational articles in the Norwegian media and attracted the attention of local activists and politicians. According to an overview of the history of the development of the 'Tana case', in the beginning of the 1990s there occurred a change in public perception and representations of the previously little known traditional fishery communities in Northern Norway (especially of the Tana border-region) (Størset 2003). In the eyes of many Norwegians the region has been transformed from a nature idyll and a home of Sami people culture to the world-famous 'Norway's brothel'. A specificity of lifestyle in Northern Norwegian provinces (these are sparsely populated small places, in which all life is very visible) made Russian prostitution an 'extraordinary event'. Prostitution was occurring in unusual settings: women were coming from the big Russian cities to the small rural communities in Northern Norway. As Russian prostitution disturbed the common way of life of the local people, social activists and ordinary women and men came out with protests and demands to put an end to the undesired phenomenon (ibid.). Protest demonstrations and concerts against prostitution were organised. Youth and men's activists created special groups to stop organised sex traffic.

The newspaper articles, which covered 'Finmark prostitution', used to have a highly ambivalent and moralising character. Journalists used sensational headings such as: 'Sex sale destroys the village'; 'Russian whores can be deported'; 'More money to combating whores' etc. (ibid.) Although some actors have been warning against stigmatising Russians as criminals and 'whores', political campaigns turned to being directed against the women selling sex. Politicians have used some of the most strict paragraphs of the immigrant

legislation, which allowed the deportation of foreign citizens who ‘disturb public order’, and the notorious camping site in Skipagurra, which was known for being a shelter for Russian prostitution, has been closed because of ‘sanitary reasons’.

Simultaneously, in the early 1990s, aside from the trans-national sex-traffic, ordinary people-to-people contacts along the 200 km long Russian-Norwegian border became possible. This resulted in an increasing number of marriages, typically consisting of a local male ‘reference person’ and a woman from neighbouring Russia. According to statistics, Russians became the third biggest group of family migrants in Norway in 1991–2004 (after family migrants from the Philippines and Pakistan) and the second biggest group in the period from 1999–2003. All in all, in the period from 1991–2004, some 3000 persons from Russia came as family migrants, the majority of which are women (Daugstad 2006).

As a number of researchers studying media representations of Russian women have observed, in popular everyday and media discourses the distinction between the Russian prostitute and the Russian wife is blurred. Russian women married to Norwegian men are often described as man-hunters or ‘cheaters’ who marry Norwegian men to get access to prestigious Western consumption (Flemmen 2007; Saarinen and Sverdljuk 2006; Sogn 2003; Stenvoll 2002). An entertaining literary ‘echo’ of the stereotype ‘Russian mail-order bride’ is the novel ‘Russian wife’ of a Russian speaking writer living in Norway, Natalia Kopsova. Kopsova draws a portrait of Olga, an extraordinarily well-formed little brunette with dark skin and big black eyes who attracts everybody’s attention by dress and appearance unusual for Norway. After having been left by her Russian husband, Olga decides to start a new life by marrying a Norwegian woodcutter, whom she meets through a marriage-agency in Arkhangelsk. But like a Slavic woman-slave taken by Vikings to the ‘unknown Nordic lands’, she will not be able to live happily in a strange country. Her story ends in a bright scene of violence, in which the pregnant Olga herself, her Russian ex-husband and her Norwegian husband Gunnar are the main characters (Kopsova 2003). The conclusion of the novel is highly moralistic, attempting to reveal an easily predictable fiasco of transcultural marriages arranged through the Internet/marriage agency. The notions of ‘native culture’ and true love between two country-mates are being implicitly contra-positioned to the presumably artificial and unnatural character of relations between persons with different cultural backgrounds.

My experiences of communication with Russian women living in Norway made me understand that women are well aware of the dangers and ‘traps’ which are hidden behind the

talk about culture differences and typical descriptions of Russia as a poor and exotic country. Especially in group interviews, the image of the Russian prostitute or mail-order bride leads to jokes, self-irony and criticism of the narrowness and one-sidedness of local popular culture. Interviewees say that ‘people of low culture’ can use the derogative image of a prostitute as a tool for humiliation. But most interesting is that Russian migrant women are active in creating alternative narratives of Russian migrants by appealing to what is recognised and socially accepted.

### **Woman on the move/travelling woman**

The most typical self-image presented by women who were informants/interviewees in our project was a ‘woman on the move’: the international student, worker or family migrant who moved to the Nordic countries/Norway thanks to opening of the borders and settled down to live an ordinary life. When describing the event of their border-crossing and settling down, the majority of my interviewees have appealed to the imaginary of the Barents cross-region, characterised by the geographical proximity of the Nordic and Russian Northern provinces, similar climatic conditions and historic roots. This imaginary has been actively cultivated by the Norwegian politicians who emphasised the importance of a regional and not simply nation-based approach to geopolitics (Stokke and Tunander 1994). After the opening of the borders, Northwest Russian and Northern Norwegian areas have been romanticised as a single space in which inhabitants of the Eastern and Western parts have a similar way of life, resisting the severe climate. Research has been made into the Russian-Norwegian Pomor trade that lasted for nearly two centuries until the Russian Revolution, Sami people culture on both sides of the border and other related themes (Hønneland 1998). In continuation of these discourses, many Russian migrants say that they ‘dared’ to move because they could easily travel back to their homes and parents. As Saarinen puts it:

*at best, in Northern Norway, a migrant can see the chimneys of her old home town from her new home town, visit it on weekly basis for shopping and entertainment, for meeting with the parents or the grandchildren or checking out that the flat still owned by her is in order and intact (Saarinen 2006b).*

Aside from using the metaphor of geographical proximity, women presented their stories of border-crossing and trans-national marriages as part of economic and cultural cooperation, grassroots civil activism and widening trans-national networks of acquaintances, neighbours,

friends and relatives. The rhetoric on common people's communication and the increasing interdependence of Russian and Norwegian economies became a 'must' in official Norwegian speeches on relations with Russia. Among my interviewees there was one exchange student who graduated from a Norwegian high school and has been employed at an international firm for several years, now continuing to study and work in order to have legal grounds for her stay in Norway. Another woman had contacts to Norway and Norwegians through her work in Russia and moved to Norway as a family migrant after having become acquainted with her future husband at a workplace. Those who have married using private networks exclusively emphasise that people across borders have simply developed interpersonal ties not regulated by the state and that it was 'natural' to come to Norway.

Many women talk about the feelings of excitement connected to travelling to another country. They are eager to learn about the new culture, history, museums and food traditions. During my fieldwork in one of the northern Norwegian towns one of the interviewees made a walking tour around the city with me, telling me about the history of the most prominent buildings and museums. The interviewed women often invite their Russian friends and relatives to a tourist trip around Norway. All in all, aside from the imaginary of cross-border cooperation, women actively play the role of a 'curious tourist', which can be transformed over the years into a sense of transcultural belonging and a more profound knowledge of both Russian and Norwegian cultures.

The imaginaries of Russian-Norwegian cultural meetings in the Barents region and mutual curiosity about the neighbour living on the other side of the border make the 'stigma of prostitution' a smaller fragment in the local, Norwegian production of culture. That allows Russian women to feel welcome and recognised. Northern Norwegian areas construct themselves as the most multicultural parts of the country. There is an interest in Russian culture among the local population. Norway has officially adopted a policy of multiculturalism, which implies a fundamentally positive and encouraging attitude to cultural diversity; securing language and culture rights to national minorities, as well as active support of their religion (St.meld.nr 49). The policy of multiculturalism has been extensively criticised as it contributes to 'locking' persons with migrant backgrounds in the narrow frames of 'culture', failing to see them as equal members of local societies (Salimi 2004: 33). In spite of this, many Russian women say that they benefit from the supportive attitude of the majority. For example, they are satisfied with the help provided with arranging native language lessons

for their children. Introduction programmes into Norwegian society and the services of special pedagogues for children with migrant backgrounds are highly appreciated as well.

At the same time Russian women tell about vulnerable experiences connected with the border-crossings. Those women who are living in Skipagurra avoid talking about those experiences to people and feel very uncomfortable when having to report to the toll controllers where they are going. There are stories about women having difficulties inviting their mothers from Russia to help with babysitting as the police thinks ‘they will be doing something else’. Some women find it humiliating to go to an interview at a local police station to explain the nature of their relations with Norwegian partners – a measure that has been introduced as part of policies to prevent cases of fake marriages and domestic violence.

### **Woman marriage migrant**

Another image that opens horizons for social acceptance and recognition is that of the family migrant who lives in legal marriage/partnership relations. In many ways this image intersects with the picture of a travelling woman. Women say that an international workplace or common voluntary activities become an opening gate for new acquaintances and love stories. The decision to marry to a Norwegian is made after several years of contact and dating. Some women openly say that they have been actively looking for a partner abroad. One woman who has been left with two children was looking for a father for her children and is now living with a man who is much older than her. There are single mothers who have married single fathers and share work connected with the childcare in their new families, women who married for the first time and women with grown children living in Russia.

Many underline that they have found personal happiness in Norway, put an end to single life, and are happy about their new families, even when they have to take care of the children of their new husbands.

*– Are you happy with your private life? – Yes, I am very happy with it. For a long time I was single, because I lost my husband early (a woman in her thirties). I did not feel myself absolutely lonely, because I still had my son, relatives, friends, and my work, but I still hoped to find personal happiness. Now I feel myself complete. It seems to me, that for a woman the most important thing is family, at least for me it is so. I always dreamed to have a happy, kind and reliable family. My heart always hoped for it!*

Especially those who came to Norway as marriage migrants were appealing to the commonly accepted and normative ideals of heterosexual partnership and family life. The Nordic states cultivate their own images of welfare paradises for women and children, meaning that extensive state family support gave women the possibility to participate in paid labour and get rid of economic dependency upon the husband (Haavind and Magnusson 2005). Due to active state measures fathers have become more involved in family and childcare, which allows talk about 'supportive' Nordic masculinities.<sup>21</sup>

In many ways, Russian migrant women's narratives reproduce the ideal of gender equality in family relations. Many women draw a positive image of a Norwegian man who is a reliable and responsible partner and a good father. They say that the most positive thing is that Norwegian men are not afraid to adopt children. They do not drink and try live up to the ideal of gender equality in family relations. In some cases, 'gender equality' is being substituted by a more traditional 'harmony' and 'balance' in everyday and family life. This image can be supplemented by a contraposition between 'cold', 'rational' and 'selfish' Norwegian women on the one hand, and 'family oriented' Russian women on the other hand. Norwegian women are said to only think of themselves whereas Russian women can love truly and be self-sacrificing.

To maintain a positive image of Russian-Norwegian couples, women and their partners are trying to resist the undesired marginalisation of Russian-Norwegian marriages in public discourses, protesting against exaggerated facts and the sensational tone of newspaper articles. Sometimes women directly confront journalists trying to make them aware about the effects their articles produce on the majority of Russian-speaking migrants. The result of such confrontation can be a little remark published in small letters on the next day, which does not improve anything as 'the article has already achieved a certain effect'.

But family values can also be turned against women as a disciplining tool. For example, Norwegian husbands can use prejudices about 'immoral Russian women' in family conflicts. Another controversial issue is the tension and suspicious attitude within the Russian-speaking community. In the narratives of some women-family migrants, prostitutes or women who marry with mercantile purposes in mind constitute a kind of internal 'other' who is real

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<sup>21</sup> All this does not, however, stop feminists from taking up such problems as women's unstable connection to labour market, lower wages, taking care of home more than men, women's vulnerability in regard to domestic violence.

(woman travelling in the same bus with prostitutes and saying hello to them on the streets) but also invented and covered by rumours and stereotypical representations. There are stories about desperate women who 'do this' because of the necessity to 'feed their children', rumours about 'young pretty women marrying sick, old and ugly men' or those who have 'successfully divorced', 'married the right ones' and moved to the South.

Sometimes women use the image of a loving wife and caring mother as the means of exclusion of another, 'bad' group of Russian woman. For example, one of my interviewees was telling a story about a friend of hers who 'had a negative experience' with a woman 'of doubtful behaviour'. From her point of view, 'night clubs and bars were not right places to look for a wife'; 'normal' Russian women seldom visit such places.

*A decent woman harries home after work to cook dinner and look at homework with her children. I had to explain that Russia is a country with a multimillion and multinational population and that the majority of Russian women are very honest and self-sacrificing, they are devoted wives and caring mothers.*

In the eyes of some women-family migrants, prostitutes 'deserve negative attitudes' as they spoil the impression about the majority of decent women. All in all, a common strategy of self-identification is distancing oneself from a prostitute, thus reproducing stigmatising attitudes towards prostitution as well as the normative heterosexual ideals. On the one hand, women lean on the ideal of the heterosexual couple and a 'decent' or 'normal' family, where gender equality within family relations is a part of this ideal. On the other hand, the interviewed women themselves contribute to the construction of the excluded 'other': Russian prostitute or mail-order bride.

### **Working/professional woman**

A strong marker of decency is, aside from the positive image of a family migrant, participation in meaningful paid labour as opposed to a prostitute's desire for rapid and easily earned money and her unwillingness to find proper work. Independent from social status, single, divorced, with or without children, the majority of my interviewees represented themselves in line with the most widespread image of a woman in post-Soviet Russia – a working woman who is active both at home and at work trying to integrate into a new social and professional life after immigrating to a new country. According to Anna Temkina and Anna Rotkirch (1997), in the Soviet and post-Soviet period the most typical social role played

by women was that of a 'working mother', which had been formed in the 1930s and dominated during Soviet years. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, in spite of the structural changes and evolving of new gender practices (such as e.g. patriarchal renaissance and the formation of the housewife image) the gender contract of the 'working mother' is still prevailing.

The majority of women I met were mostly concerned with problems of professional self-realisation. They emphasised that coming to Norway was connected with fulfilling the dream of getting a worthy social position. I met businesswomen, shop managers, nurses, state and civil society employees, and some temporarily unemployed housewives. Those who have not been working at the moment were studying to get better job positions in the future. Among my interviewees I met only one woman who was temporarily unemployed, staying at home with her children. To oppose the popular representation of the Russian woman as dependent or a 'sponsored woman' who is co-habiting with a male provider and fulfilling mainly a sexual role and image (Temkina and Rotkirch 1997), my informants emphasise that many of them have to work to keep the household and that migration has helped women to maintain only the minimum standard of living, without even coming close to the widespread image of a careless existence secured by a rich Western 'sponsor'.

The most common ideal is of a professionally active woman who devotes the first period of adaptation to learning the language, starting a new education or acquiring a new profession. Russian women emphasise that they use all available opportunities to develop themselves, go to courses, participate in voluntary activities, etc. The majority point out to a positive experience of communication with language teachers and their supportive attitude. Also, doing work practice at enterprises is presented as an accessible way of being integrated into local society and establishing contacts with other migrants. The majority of women describe their everyday life in Norway as 'ordinary' or 'normal', meaning spending the day at work and then coming home, '*as it is in Russia*'. Through their stories women show that they have been integrated into local working places and approved of by their surroundings. Many tell about positive experiences of being respected by colleagues and not feeling like a stranger in a new country.

*Not so long time ago I met a former colleague of mine, who is also Russian, she is working in the operation unit. She told that everybody asks about me. During Christmas I get phone call from them, they do not forget me. I want to say that I do*



*not feel as a stranger in this country already for a long period of time.*

At the regime level, this type of self-identification, as working women, appeals to the two-breadwinner model common in the Nordic countries, a norm of gender relations that became possible due to women's influence in decision- and policy-making, facilitating child- and elderly care by the state and the development of individual taxation systems (Haavind and Magnusson 2005). In spite of obvious historic and regime-related differences, the Nordic welfare regime resembles the Socialist Soviet model well known to Russian women. Both systems allow (or in the case with the Soviet system, force) women to work outside the home and participate in public life.

In official state policies, the inclusion of migrants into labour is inseparably connected with gender justice. The social-democratic welfare system in the Nordic countries is meant to be egalitarian in its nature and provide all members of the society, independent from race, gender, ability, or social status, the possibility to get work and the social benefits connected to it (Brochmann and Hagelund 2005). In practice, however, there are many controversies and complexities connected with the process of inclusion, such as discrimination and the racial segregation of migrants and foreign women working in the unprestigious domestic sector of economy. Yet the idea of migrants' integration guides the activities of responsible state employees, at least on the level of discourses. In interviews with co-workers of the Norwegian labour agencies and welfare services, Russian women are often characterised as one of the 'ideal' migrant groups who are eager to get work and become an 'active' part of the welfare system. This representation, again, allows Russian women to reduce the harmful effects of the 'prostitution stigma'.

At the same time women tell about episodes of sexual harassment at work interviews. In the eyes of local men, 'Russian woman' seems to be equated with 'sexual entertainer' irrespective of the fact whether she is openly selling sex or has an 'ordinary job'. For example, a Russian woman applying for a job at a private enterprise was offered the job of a secretary and provider of sexual services for the chief of the firm. After having refused, she missed the opportunity of being employed there:

*One firm wanted to employ me. They have nearly promised me a position of social economist. By the director of this firm wanted, so to say, to use me in other qualities as well... Maybe he thought of me as of specialist, but also as of woman. He even did*

*not hide this. For example, he said: 'Well, we will go to trips together. You even don't have to tell it to your husband.' Of course, I refused.*

### **Woman actively spending her leisure time**

Aside from emphasising their own participation in paid labour, women present themselves as persons who actively spend their leisure time. This part of the life of migrant women is, to a great degree, defined by belonging to several cultural traditions. Here, again, women try to use official support aimed at promoting policies of multiculturalism: send applications to local authorities to teach private Russian courses, get support for opening a Russian Orthodox Church etc. An inseparable part of life of the interviewed women was organising Russian cultural and religious celebrations and 'samovar'-evenings that, aside from the women themselves, are being attended by their Norwegian husbands, children, relatives and friends. Through Norwegian family members women learn about local traditions as well. Women emphasised that normally they did not feel any suspicious attitude, a lack of trust, in the circles of close friends. Typically women had certain networks of communication with people who 'knew who they were and judged them according to their personalities'. The interviewed women said that the 'stigma of prostitution' did not disturb them on a personal level. As one woman put it, she was 'not ashamed to look in people's eyes' as she had not been involved in prostitution. But obviously, here women position themselves in relation to the prostitution discourse by trying not to be affected by it.

Women say that travelling, sport and tourism, visiting new places in Western Europe and in Russia, going to ski resorts (which is so popular in Norway and Scandinavia) is a typical way of spending free time. These activities celebrate 'culture' and transculturalism in many ways, either through acquiring more knowledge about their new countries of residence or travelling back to Russia. But 'culture' can play unpleasant tricks on Russian women as well. Especially in the public spaces of Northern Norway (bars, restaurants, sports clubs), there is the danger of being confronted with sidelong glances and 'dirty propositions'.

*If I go somewhere... yes, to the sport gymnasium, and there are such proposals, such sidelong glances. And these dirty proposals, yes, disturb me to some extent.*

Often the very fact that women speak Russian makes men behave in an 'unacceptable way', causing women's feelings of embarrassment, perplexity or indignation.

*I have been walking along the streets and I was asked... First we have just started talking in a common way, and of course after hearing my accent the person asked where I was from. I said that I was Russian, and he immediately put his hand on my shoulder. Of course it is unpleasant when you are at once being considered as a woman of a certain profession. Sometimes I feel that I want to say: 'Yes, I am Russian but I am not a prostitute.' Yes, such situations happen. And this is unpleasant, I should say.*

Some stay indifferent, trying to distance themselves, and do not pay attention to others' opinions:

*Let them think whatever they want, it is their, not our business!*

Sometimes it can be problematic to visit a night club as the few places in town have been 'marked' by Russian prostitutes. Thus a woman in her 50s told that being Russian and going to certain places could automatically be taken for willingness to sell sex.

*This Saturday girls and me decided to go out to the town and dance a little, but we did not take a risk to go there, just in order not to imbrue ourselves. Should we show our passports... that we already have a stamp? We went to a dancing place at the midday, and then just left and were just walking in the town. We wanted to dance very much as there was a big dancing hall there, but we just did not go...*

Some women feel a pressure to adjust to the unisex norms of style of outlook or to the image of 'respectable Norwegian womanhood', which in its turn is based more on patriarchal than feminist imaginary (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2007). As Jacobsen and Stenvoll point out when comparing images of Russian women selling sex and Muslim women, there is a certain norm of sexual behaviour that is accepted by Norwegian (Western) women: 'Women should have enough clothing and sexual restraint not to be considered sluttish, but not too much closing and enough sexual initiative to be considered free' (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2007). This normative challenge seems to be even more demanding for Russian women. A desire to look attractive and feminine, wearing high heels, using make-up and bright clothes, can be taken for willingness to sell sex. As Stenvoll has pointed out, the 'stigma of prostitution' has had a disciplining effect on all Russian (but also Norwegian) women living in the region (Stenvoll 2002).

Women might feel that they are restricted by the narrow frames of the choice: either you are a prostitute or a decent woman with no space left for simple flirting, not committing to anything. It would not be easy for a Russian woman to say that she got to know her partner through the Internet or in a bar, whereas this would be normal for a local woman. Sometimes women comfort themselves by representing Norwegian society as 'gender neutral', i.e. a society in which flirting and romance is not a part of 'doing gender' because of the danger of projecting women as objects of eroticism and desire. Some of the interviewed women describe the assumed gender neutrality in positive terms, as a moderate way of sexual relations allowing Norwegian women to make their own sexual choices.

### **Woman who has a conscious attitude to sexuality**

Russian women represent Norway as a country with a greater degree of gender equality, emphasising that even if they sometimes experience men's obsessive behaviour and 'whore'-calling, normally they feel comfortable; 'there is nothing extra demanded from a woman'; 'I don't need to put on make-up every morning or to sleep with curlers on my hair.' Women describe their intimate and partnership relations as 'moderate' and 'giving much freedom to a woman'.

*– Does everything suite you in your intimate relations? – Well, I think that yes, everything suites me concerning sexuality. Because if I compare Russia with Norway... The women's struggle against discrimination... led to the situation that men became very careful in revealing their sexual interests. And this suites me... I had many negative impressions and experiences in Russia, where men are very active and very importunate and obtrusive. In this respect, of course, I consider in Norway a woman has a more favourable position, when she can decide what she wants and what she does not want.*

The interviewed women describe Norwegian men as those who would not try to persuade a woman to have sex. However, they seem to forget the events of harassment and abuse they talk about in other parts of the interviews. At the same time gender neutrality as a presumably dominant sexual norm in the Norwegian society disappoints women as well.

*In Norway, I have become just a human being, a neuter gender.*

Romanticised nostalgia for an old-fashioned, 'Russian' way of doing gender is dominant in comparisons between Russian women and the population in Norway. Some women are complaining over the fact that they have to carry heavy bags and shift car tyres. They like when men are performing a 'gentlemanly' kind of behaviour: giving women flowers, opening the doors in front of them etc. As some women say, trying to adopt the dominant sex-neutrality is the 'price' they pay for living in a 'free society'.

Wencke Mühleisen (2007) makes a nuanced observation about the phenomenon of the 'neutralisation of gender' in post-traditional Western and especially Scandinavian societies. According to Mühleisen, a developed welfare system and a state feminist tradition that works against gender discrimination resulted in greater openness for destabilising gender in the Nordic countries. There is a tendency to approach individuals as bearers of roles (citizens, patients, pupils, customers), instead of primarily as women and men. Men have started to be more active in childcare, and gender stereotypes are destabilised through acts and appearance, such as hair and dress style, make-up, perfume, accessories and greetings (Mühleisen 2007: 110). However, typical masculine and feminine images are still reproduced in many areas of life, including family, labour market, policy making, etc. Some women, especially for example in the media world, resist gender stratification by reproducing stereotypic feminine images in an ironic way, using them as an instrument of power and pleasure.

Similarly, Russian women-migrants show their ability to challenge gender stereotypes, resisting the stigma of prostitution. An idealistic nostalgia for the past or self-disciplining are not the only ways to react to the cliché of 'non-emancipated' and 'old-fashioned' women. Some Russian migrants derisively reproduce the image of a prostitute (e.g. by wearing a miniskirt), making a notorious stereotype an object of mockery. Others can use the stigma in their own favour by appealing to the positive connotations attached to the image of a prostitute. As Temkina and Rotkirch (1997) point out, women from the post-Soviet Russia partly interpret being a prostitute or a sponsored woman as a critique of the Soviet regime and a sort of generational protest. After 'perestroika' and the collapse of the Soviet ideology, women living in Russia gained better possibilities to openly realise themselves as gendered and sexual subjects (Zherebkina 2003). Post-Soviet women rejected a traditional interpretation of gender based on fear of the body and biological and reproductive sexuality, where the body and sexuality have been substituted by 'spiritual love' and 'spiritual gender'. An open appeal to sexuality became a new, honest demand of the post-Soviet subjectivity, a

kind of aspiration for the better.

## Conclusions

After having studied women's narratives, I came to the conclusion that *first*, Russian women see the 'stigma of prostitution' as an odd, distorted and inadequate image, a manifestation of the 'primitive' and 'tabloid-like' thinking of journalists. The sensational tone of the newspaper articles bears witness to xenophobia and fear of the unknown or can even be considered a 'conscious policy of the Norwegian state'. Women do not have problems with presenting themselves as Russians or the bearers of a special history and culture. Rather, they find it unpleasant when difference is being seen as a deviance from a 'norm', i.e. from the local, Norwegian ways of doing gender, when 'Russian' is being equated with 'barbaric' and 'uncivilised'.

*Second*, when opposing derogative public attitudes, women actively construct positive self-representations by appealing to the commonly accepted or 'legitimate' understandings of trans-national communication, family/partnership relations and sexuality. If negative public representations of the Russian feminine 'other' are caused by collective 'fears' or cautions, such as concern about the nation's health, maintaining public order and preventing moral degradation (Stenvoll 2002), migrant women's self-presentations tend to seek the available channels of recognition through appealing to what is accepted and commonly approved – the personal right to maintain one's own culture and ethnic traditions (supported by the official policies of multiculturalism), as well as the growing popularity of travelling and the new types of 'nomadic' ways of life. Russian migrant women reproduce discourses supporting the 'normality' of heterosexual marriages based on love and structured around childcare and both parents' involvement into paid labour and try to live up to the ideal of gender equality in intimate and sexual relations.

*Third*, in trying to oppose the 'stigma of prostitution' migrant women pursue different subjective strategies, or intentions, such as simple distancing from the prostitute-image, simply shifting the negative focus from oneself to the 'other' Russian women, or choosing conformity as a means of overcoming the stigma (by leaning on the common ways of life presumably practiced by the majority). And last but not least, the women come out with a direct criticism of the dominant discourses, performing acts of public rebellion or e.g. using

irony as a tool to reveal the narrowness and one-sidedness of the public perceptions of the 'other'. The aim of the analysis has not been to judge which of the possible reactions are better or criticise any of the subjective responses of the interviewed women. I do not state either that I have managed to make an overview of all ways of dealing with this intricate issue or that the 'stigma of prostitution' is the only concern of Russian women living in Norway. However, it seems important to approach dominant discourses of the 'other' by showing how migrant women themselves negotiate discourses and present alternative images.

Speaking more generally, the conducted study is another testimony to the complex and multifaceted nature of power relations in contemporary multicultural societies in Europe. The analysis of how migrant women resist discrimination reminds us that today women's struggle against oppression is intrinsically connected with resistance to racism, i.e. manifestations of cultural or ethnic domination. As a range of feminist scholars have shown, racism has to do not only with the skin colour. Persons can be 'blackened' by means of symbolic, or moral devaluing, creation of dichotomies such as 'enlightened – traditional', 'progressive – underdeveloped' and 'Western – Eastern'.

If caught in this way of seeing the world, paradoxically, Western liberal ideas of justice and gender equality can become tools of oppression and thus keep us away from equal and non-authoritarian ways of social interaction. Gains of gender equality in the Nordic countries, if approached uncritically, can create a division between local and migrant women while failing to recognise gendered and culturalised 'others' as fully worthy members of Western societies.

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**APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDES**

**APPENDIX 2**



## Expert interviews

The research questions/ main themes	The interview questions	The specifications
Introduction	The questionnaire	
Relevance	1. How often do you meet/have you met Russian immigrant women and in what kind of situations?	
Problems (to be specified in relations to the institution in question)	2. In your opinion, what are the main problems concerning Russian immigrants? - And female immigrants especially?	- What about their children? - Their partners? - By the way, how do these contacts between Russian women and local men start in the first place? (here or elsewhere – for immigration officials?)
Instruments	3. Can these problems be solved in the short run? - What is your institution doing about this?	- What would be your personal advice? - Do you ever feel that you are in a controversial situation due to some discrepancy between the formal instructions and the needs of the migrants?
Injustice	4. Have you ever noticed that Russian female immigrants (and their children, families) have been treated badly by some other institution or in the community?	- Would you define this country – and this village/town – as migrant friendly or hostile?
Positive effects of immigration	5. What are the positive effects of Russian women migrating in this country? - In this village/town especially?	- Would you welcome more migrants from Russia here?
Integration, participation	6. What should be done to integrate the Russian female immigrant here to make them to feel “at home”?	- Do you ever have the possibility of helping them to work or act together with each other? - Do your institutions have contacts with their organisations?
Collaboration	7. Is there much collaboration between the authorities – or	- Can you give some positive / negative examples?

	between your organisation and the authorities – in solving problems that Russian female immigrants have?	
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Sensitive problems/violence	8. If you have to confront the fact that your client is a victim of violence in a close relationship or at work, or school, what can you do to help her?	- Have you ever been in such a situation?
Sensitive topics/prostitution and recognition	9. When it comes to Russian women, there is a lot of talk about prostitution - how do you feel about this from the point of view of your institution?	- What can be done by actors like your institution to combat these kinds of problems?
Organised crime	10. Have you ever noticed in your work some signs of organised crime here?	
Immigration policies	11. What are your views on immigration policies in general?	- Is this country living up to its reputation as a welfare country? - What does the significance of human rights norms mean in this context?
Own positioning	12. Do you have some close contact to immigrants – and Russian female immigrants – socially, privately?	- What is your personal view about them? - Have you been travelling in Russia yourself?
OWN QUESTIONS		
	13. Have I forgotten some important question? What would you like to discuss yourself?	

## Students' interviews

<p><b>About student's choice of specialisation in multicultural and international social work</b></p>	<p>1. Why did you choose social work education? Do you find that inter-cultural social work has been a good study program?</p> <p>2. What was decisive for your choice of place for professional training? Is there a theme within the program or a client group that interests you the most? Why?</p> <p>3. Can you tell us briefly about your training in the second year? What was the main idea of the project and the training that took place? Has your training in the third year been different? How?</p> <p>4. Have your perceptions of the social work profession been changed during the studies, and during the training?</p>
<p><b>Social work with ethnic-minority clients, power and ethnicity</b></p>	<p>5. Can you tell me about the first time you met a client?</p> <p>6. Are there any skills that you acquired during your social work studies programme with specialisation in intercultural communication that you had special use for during the training period?</p> <p>7. The study program has been focused on ambivalence to performances and power relations between social worker and client. Students in the first year had exercises and role play on this theme. Have you experienced any of the dimensions from this in your training?</p> <p>8. Have you been confronted with some unique challenges in your communication with ethnic-minority clients? Have there been any particular communication difficulties that you have experienced with the majority Norwegian clients?</p> <p>9. Have you in some ways been challenged by ethnic-minority clients, or felt uncomfortable in a conversation situation? Have there been any gaps between the needs of ethnic-minority clients and what the social worker/trainee had to offer?</p> <p>10. Is there anything that has been particularly meaningful to you? Is there anything that you learned in your encounters with ethnic-minority clients?</p> <p>11. Did you find that intercultural communication is fascinating, in what way?</p>
<p><b>Intercultural communication and gender</b></p>	<p>12. Have you worked with both male and female clients? Does gender difference have anything to say in your meetings with ethnic-minority clients?</p> <p>13. Is this different when you worked with the Norwegian majority? Have you ever experienced that your ideals of gender equality collide with the values of ethnic-minority clients? Is equality a good idea?</p> <p>14. If you would think back to the exercises with prior events and ambivalence, were some of the performances affected by gender?</p> <p>15. Have you ever felt the power game between the social worker and the client has been influenced by gender?</p>

	<p>16. Have you learned anything new in terms of interaction between both sexes in your meeting with ethnic-minority clients?</p> <p>17. What do you think about 'saving' ethnic women from patriarchal conditions in their home?</p>
<p><b>Communication between students: gender and ethnicity</b></p>	<p>18. Do you have friends among students from ethnic-minority backgrounds? Women or men? Do you get any personal benefit from contacting students from different ethnic backgrounds?</p> <p>19. Do you have any friends who use a veil or dress differently in another way?</p> <p>20. How do gender differences play into your communication with ethnic minority students? Have you been in a situation where your values and beliefs collide with others on the basis of cultural differences?</p> <p>21. Can you tell us about skills training related to cooperation in the group, especially when you consider that the group is multicultural? How has training in skills training helped to create better conditions in student groups?</p> <p>22. Have you been in situations where you have to help students from ethnic-minority backgrounds, for example because of language? How do you deal with these situations, when one thinks of the controversy: helping versus accepting help?</p> <p>23. How could you articulate common ground for communication across boundaries between ethnicity and across gender differences? What is it that unites or do you have set lines?</p> <p>24. What do you think about concepts: e.g. ethnic minority? Could you possibly suggest a better idea?</p>

## Individual interviews with Russian women

The research questions/ main themes	The interview questions	Specifications
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	0. The questionnaire	
Life in Russia	1. Please tell me a little about yourself and your life in Russia.	- First family – parents, sisters, brothers? - Education, work etc.?
<b>ARRIVAL</b>		
Practicalities	2. What did you know about this country when you moved here?	- How did you learn about this, get information? - Did you make any prior visits?
Reasons, motives, hopes and aspirations	3. What were your hopes and expectations? What made you make this move?	- For education, job? - For partnership? - Did you have some sort of income or job when you arrived?
Resources on arrival	4. Did you know the local language? Did you know some local people on arrival personally?	- 'Natives'? - Other Russians?
First impression	5. What were your first impressions?	
'Civil education'	6. How did you learn the norms, values and rules e.g.?	- Did you attend the 'integration' course arranged by the national/local authorities?
<b>TODAY</b>		
Comparing life	7. What do you miss most living here? What do you like best?	
Everyday life course	8. Please tell me about your everyday life here – one day, one week, annually.	
Obstacles	9. What is most difficult for you to handle nowadays?	- Is this related to you personally or someone close to you? Children? Your partner?
Basis for independence - work, school, training	10. Do you (now) have a job here? How did you find the job? Any difficulties? How is it going? - Do you lack some necessary qualifications? Are you studying now for an examination, job qualification?	- Is your income sufficient for sustenance? Or are you dependent on your partner, relatives? Or do you send money 'home'? - Do you have experiences of being excluded, even discriminated at work or in education?
Social life	11. Neighbourhood, relatives - Are you in contact with other persons outside your family daily or weekly here?	- Can you get informal help if needed? - Do you have friends here, 'natives', other Russians?
Encounters with social institutions	12. What do you think about the welfare services here? - Social and health services? Labour office? - What about the school and day care?	- If you have problems, from whom you will get information and help?



Integration, citizenship, networks, participation	13. Do you belong to any associations or informal groups here? - Did you take part in any political activities in Russia? Do you take part here? - Are there some other important communities for you here?	- Have you voted in local and/or national elections? - Have you been running for nomination in any organisation? Would you like to do that? - Do you know about any Russian women who have been nominated? Other immigrant women? - Are you part of a church community?
Leisure time, culture	14. What do you do in your leisure time? Do you attend some cultural events here? - How do you spend your holidays?	- Russian or 'local' events? - Going back to Russia? Alone or with the whole family? How often do you visit your relatives there? Have they ever visited you? - Travelling in this country? Abroad?
The private sphere – personal happiness, family life	15. What is your view of a good life? - Do you yourself feel happy here? - How is life going for your children? - The relationship with your partner?	- What do you wish for them here? - Division of work? Trust? Sexuality? - Do you often hear someone saying that Russian women come here and get married to just to get a residence permit?
Sensitive topics/violence	16. We know from our own experience that women suffer from violence, directly or indirectly. What would you do if someone close to you were in such a situation?	- Do you know about crisis centres and hot lines (in the Russian language)? - About the obligations of the authorities?
Sensitive topics/prostitution, recognition	17. There is also much talk about prostitution nowadays. Have any of your friends or people you know been involved in such things? - What do you think about the representation of Russian women in the media?	- Have you been intimidated yourself? - Do you discuss this with other women, Russian female immigrants? - What can you do together?
Identity – otherness vs. Integration	18. How do you define yourself now according to your identity? - What language do you speak with your partner, children? Friends?	- A Russian living abroad; a Russian living here; A Finnish/Swedish/Norwegian person? - What's it like with your children? Other relatives?
Positive experiences	19. What has been the most positive experience for you here?	- How does it look from the point of view of your children?
Views and attitudes concerning Russian women	20. What about attitudes to and ideas about Russian women among ordinary local people?	
SUMMARY/FUTURE		
Evaluation in personal terms	21. What did you want to change in your life by coming here? Has it happened?	- How does it look now from the point of view of your children?
Return?	22. Do you have plans for returning? Under what circumstances would you return?	- Divorce, separation? - If it is not going well for your children?

	- Would returning be a great life-change for the better/worse?	
Spatial significance	23. Would you like to move to another region here? Why?	- If yes, will you do so even if your children would resist? What about your partner's opinion?
Lessons	24. What kind of advice would you like to give to some other women moving here from Russia?	- What would you warn them about? - Not to move here at all?
Integration	25. What about citizenship – do you want to be naturalised (Why did you want to be naturalised)?	- If yes, how would it change your life? (How has it changed your life?)
Evaluation of life in general	26. What is your perception of Finnish/Swedish/Norwegian life and culture in general?	- Especially from the woman's point of view: What do you think about the thesis of "Norden" as a woman's paradise? - What would you like to change here? - Do you read Finnish/Norwegian/Swedish newspapers, do you watch television?
Views on the 'native' society, integration	27. In your opinion, what is an important issue here in general, at the moment? What do you discuss with you work colleagues, neighbours?	
Looking to the future	28. What do you think your life will be like in the future in 5-10 years?	
OWN QUESTIONS		
	- Have I forgotten some important questions? What would you like discuss yourself?	



## Group interviews with Russian women

The research questions, main themes	The interview questions	The specifications
Looking back; the positive things left behind	1. What do you miss (from Russia) here? - Did you value these parts of life when living in Russia?	- What would you like to 'take with you' from Russia and bring here?
Evaluation of personal life here	2. What do you appreciate here? What is the most positive/difficult thing here?	- What makes you feel at home/a stranger here?
	3. Any important differences in organising everyday life for you here compared to when you are in Russia?	
Identity – otherness contra integration	4. How would you define yourself today?	- A Russian living abroad? A Russian living in Finland/Sweden/Norway?
Basis of independence – in working life	5. How is working life here and in Russia different? - What is your opinion about the system for unemployment and social support here?	- Is it easier/more difficult to get a job you want here? Sufficient social guarantees and income? - How about the working culture? - Maternity leave? Sexual harassment?
And in private life	6. Personal independence for women - What about the right to decide about yourself and your body – do you feel freer or more constraint here? (contraceptives, abortion, rape)?	
Participation in political and religious institutions and communities	7. If you want to take part in decision-making how can you make your voice as an immigrant women heard in society? - In your own organisations? - With local people?	- What are the ways and means of having contact with each other? - Would you like to become integrated into the networks of 'natives'? - Would you be stronger together with other immigrant groups? - Is participation in formal politics (parties, voting) an option? - What does the church mean to you?
Sensitive topics/violence	8. Violence against women is widespread even in the Nordic countries – what would you do in case you or someone close to you (a friend, child) were to be exposed to violence?	- Are there ways and means to help each other informally? - Would you seek help from the authorities? Crisis centres? Russian hot line?
Sensitive topics/prostitution, recognition	9. What is your opinion of prostitution in general? - What do you think about debates on prostitution in relation to female immigrants? Especially those from Russia?	- What do you think about "case Sweden", criminalising the buyer? (Should Finland and Norway make the same decision?)
Evaluation of life here in general	8. What are the most evident	- In lifestyle?

	problems here in general – in your opinion?	- Alcoholism?
The native society in relation to immigrant women, and women from Russia especially	9. Especially from the women's point of view? - What are the differences between native women and immigrant/Russian women? In female identities, behaviour, situations?	- What do you think about the division of home chores? - Upbringing of children? - Family planning? - A women-friendly welfare state? "Norden" as a "paradise" for women? - Are the native women privileged in comparison with immigrant women?
Specific issues	10. Feminism is often associated with Nordic women. - What is your own definition of feminism? How do you feel about feminism? - Other specific issues in this society? What was the most striking individual arrangement concerning the relationships of women and men here?	- (Same-sex marriages?)
Immigration policies	11. What are your views regarding the immigration policies? - What are the obstacles, impediments? - Tell me if you have come across some fundamental difference between formal policies and practice in real life?	- Would you rather like to live in some other Western country?
<b>OWN QUESTIONS</b>		
	12. Have I forgotten some important questions? What would you like to discuss yourself?	