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'My skin is hard' - adult learners' resistance to racialization and racism

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes experiences of racialization in stories of adult learners with refugee experience who attend a basic education program at a Finnish community college. Throughout a two-year ethnographic study, several students shared stories and thoughts on racialization and racism with the white researcher on site (the author). This article tells and theorizes their stories to gain a deeper understanding of the workings of everyday racialization and racism in a Finnish educational context. Theoretically, the article draws on a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework, which recognizes the inherence of racialization and racism in society and underlines the importance and legitimacy of BIPOC's "experiential knowledge" (Solrzano, 1997, p. 7). Specifically, I use Yosso's (2005) framework of community cultural wealth to understand three interactions that address racialization and everyday racism. As I examine the data excerpts, I am guided by the questions, How do students experience racism and racialization? and Which capitals/knowledges do they display in their dealing with racism and racialization? Findings illustrate how racialization is understood and resisted in interaction, offer new research avenues for expanding Yosso's framework, and have implications for serving students from minoritized groups, particularly students of color.

Introduction

What are the experiences of racism and racialization young adults with refugee backgrounds share at school? Asking such questions, or seeking answers to them, challenges a general ethos of color-evasiveness and exceptionalism, both of which persist in educational discourses in Finland (Alemanji, 2016). My use of color-evasiveness draws on work by Annamma et al. (2017), who have pointed to the ableist connotations of 'color-blindness' and explain that color-evasiveness more accurately depicts the 'racial ideology of denying the significance of race' (p. 154). According to Rastas (2012), exceptionalism constitutes the 'idea that some people or countries – or some phenomena – are entitled to exceptional treatment' (p. 89) and certain rules do not apply to them. In Finland, this kind of 'moral superiority' (p. 89) is particularly salient in regards to the school system, which has gained international acclaim as globally unique and excellent, an image that has been fostered not least as a profitable commodity (, in preparation). Paradoxically, such perpetuation of constructed innocence and excellence, particularly in the context of systemic racism that has been shown to be at work in Finland (e.g. FRA/EU Midis II, 2018) and its schools (e.g. Hummelstedt et al., 2021), is in itself a mechanism of Empire in Motha's (2014) sense. In reference to Hardt and Negri (2000), she defines Empire as 'contemporary

… power relationship, one that is less willfully intentional [than imperialism] and more subject to economic rather than overt governmental forces' (p. 31). It is the less intentional or less overtly intentional character of Empire that allows for ideologies of innocence. Challenging ideologies that aim to uphold Finland's image as 'innocent and pure – disconnected from practices of colonialism, racism, and exclusion' (Kallio-Tavin & Tavin, 2018, p. 70), this article understands racialization based on Hochman (2019), as the processes by which people are 'understood to constitute' (p. 1248, emphasis removed) a racial group. Although such processes lack any biological basis, their social, cultural, and political implications are vast and persistent. Racialization 'can be applied to groups, individuals, social structures, and other phenomena' such hairstyles and dance (Hochman, 2019, p. 1251). This paper uses racialization to describe processes that occur at the level of individuals and groups and include other phenomena, such as the wearing of hijabs (see Gotanda, 2011).

I follow Alemanji (2016) in his definition of race as a 'socially constructed concept born from the activities of othering based on skin color, in particular, as well as other social factors like religion, gender and sexuality' (p. 7). As he points out, racialization, the process of constructing such categories and identifying people with them, is intertwined with processes of othering based on a variety of social factors. The

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Table 1. Operationalizing community cultural wealth: analytical questions and examples.

	Analytical question	Example
Aspirational capital	How are hopes and plans talked about? How are perspectives for the future opened up implicitly or explicitly?	Participants mention their plan to graduate.
Linguistic capital	What linguistic (and other semiotic) practices are used in the interaction? What language ideologies are addressed (directly or indirectly)?	Participants draw on a variety of linguistic and semiotic resources when they interact, including several languages, registers, and gestures.
Familial capital	What familial resources, responsibilities, and knowledges surface in the interaction?	Participants who are siblings divide up their homework assignments.
Social capital	What social networks, resources, and knowledges surface in the interaction?	Participants organize their way to school so they do not have to wait for or ride the bus alone.
Navigational capital	How do the participants navigate social contexts and institutions as part of their interaction?	Participants are informed about test dates and plan their attendance strategically.
Resistance capital	How is resistance expressed in interaction explicitly and implicitly? What larger societal discourses are refuted/challenged?	Participants refuse to respond to questions that are based on stereotypes.

importance of addressing racialization and racism as part of Empire has been underlined by many scholars in Finland and, more broadly, the Nordic context (e.g. Alemanji, 2016; Hübinette, 2012; Keskinen, 2019; Keskinen et al., 2021; Seikkula, 2020; Vuorela, 2016). This study builds on this body of work.

Data for this paper come from a two-year ethnographic study in a Finnish community college that offers a basic education program which is populated by refugee-background adults from mostly West Asian and African countries. Throughout the two years, several students shared stories and thoughts on racialization and racism with the white researcher on site (the author). This paper tells and theorizes their stories and conversations to gain a deeper understanding of the workings of everyday racialization and racism in a Finnish educational context. The article is situated within Critical Race Theory (CRT), which, as some of its main tenets, centralizes race and racism and underlines the importance and legitimacy of BIPOC[1]'s 'experiential knowledge' (Solórzano, 1997, p. 7), particularly of the 'lived experiences of Students of Color' (p. 108), which take centre stage in this article. I analyse these experiences through a theoretical lens of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), which identifies knowledges/capitals of minoritized communities that are not typically recognized at school.

Theoretical background and contextualization

Critical race theory – the centrality of racialization and property

Drawing on critical legal studies (CLS) and radical feminism, CRT originated in the US of the 1970s in the context of legal studies (e.g. Bell, 1995; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013) and extended to an interdisciplinary scholarly community. In the 1990s, educational scholars, (e.g. Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) used CRT to push for a desegregation of US American schools, an elimination of racist content from curriculum and educational theory, and a centring of the experiences of BIPOC in education, among other things. As three foundational principles of CRT, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) propose that (1) race is central to inequity in the US, (2) the US society is organized around property rights, and (3) the intersection of race and property is a useful lens to understand inequity in education. (In a similar vein, Delgado and Stefancic (2017) later outlined their 4 tenets of CRT.) As a contribution to the growing body of literature on race and racialization in Finland, I use these three principles to show that CRT, although it originated as a counter-movement to US liberal civil rights legal discourses, is applicable to the Finnish context. Adopting and adapting CRT (and other frameworks) to European/Finnish scholarship is an important practice to make related dynamics visible (Möschel, 2014). In the case of Finnish education, the application of CRT and other power-sensitive theories can uncover inequities that remain otherwise obscured.

I argue that the main tenets of CRT relate to the Finnish context in (at least) the following ways: (1) Centrality of race: While Finland has a long history of understanding itself as culturally homogeneous and racially neutral or innocent (Keskinen et al., 2019; Rastas, 2012), there is ample research that shows that Finland is in fact a racially stratified society. The myth of cultural homogeneity (Keskinen et al., 2019) as well as widespread color-evasiveness (Rastas, 2012) are symptoms of what Rastas has termed 'Finnish exceptionalism'. Out of a large body of research challenging such exceptionalist ideologies, a particularly powerful one is the EU-MIDIS II (FRA/EU Midis II, 2018) study, which identified Finland as one of the EU countries with the highest rate (63% of respondents) of experienced racist harassment and violence motivated by racism (14%). In addition, research on ethnic and racial profiling has shown that racialization plays an important role in how BIPOC navigate the public spaces of urban Finland

(Keskinen et al., 2018), the job market has proven to be biased against people with names that are perceived to be non-white (Ahmad, 2020), and systemic racism is deeply ingrained into the Finnish society, extending into schools and teacher education contexts (Alemanji, 2017; Alemanji & Dervin, 2016; Alemanji & Mafi, 2018). In all, ample research exists that documents the central role racialization plays in social injustices that exist in present-day Finland, thus making CRT applicable to this context.

(2) Property rights: As Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) state, 'the ability to define, possess, and own property has been a central feature of power in America' and 'social benefits accrue largely to property owners' (p. 53). They go on to explain how property rights shape educational advantages, for instance, through the availability or absence of opportunities to accrue intellectual property depending on socioeconomic status of an individual or community. In Finland, similar trends can be observed. For instance, although on paper all students in public schools should have the same access to education, research has shown that choices that lead to advantages in college acceptance processes are made mostly by socioeconomically advantaged families (Kosunen et al., 2020). In other words, educational access is also stratified in Finland (Kyckling et al., 2019) and the comprehensive school system that is often praised for promoting educational equity has severe shortcomings that have systematically failed students from minoritized populations, including children and youth with migration background (Nordberg, 2017). These are not recent developments but rather manifestations of an ongoing historical process of exclusion that has been an intrinsic part of Finnish identity formation, including, for instance, the systematic erasure of Sámi, Romani, and Karelian languages from/through education (e.g. Nyyssönen, 2019; Pulma, 2006; Sarhimaa, 2017; Siivikko, 2019). Although the near-absence of private schools in Finland helps cushion the effect of social inequities seeping into the education system, differences in what schools (can) offer (e.g. resources they are allocated by their municipalities) and how they (can) support students and teachers persist. Thus, the following statement also applies to Finland: '[I]ntellectual property must be undergirded by "real" property, that is, science labs, computers and other state-of-the-art technologies, appropriately certified and prepared teachers' (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 54).

(3) Following from the first two points, I argue with Ladson-Billings and Tate that the educational inequities in Finland can be understood through an intersection of racialization and property, particularly intellectual property. I operationalize such property as legitimate knowledges (Ennser-Kananen, 2019), in this case in the form of stories and exchanges of

young adult learners with refugee backgrounds in a Finnish basic education context. To do this, I draw on Yosso's (2005) theory of community cultural wealth, which is situated within CRT and understands itself as a critique of Eurocentric, ethnocentric, classist interpretations of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), which diagnose minoritized communities with a deficit of cultural and social capital. Instead, Yosso (2005) offers 6 types of capital as a tool to uncover the plethora of knowledges that exist in minoritized communities, such as communities of color and migrant communities: 1. Aspirational capital, which refers to the ability to maintain resilient hopes even in the face of adversaries; 2. linguistic capital, which acknowledges the vast resources of languages and linguistic practices that exist in the community (including, for instance, styles, registers, and metalinguistic awareness); 3. familial capital, which points to the extended family as an important source of knowledge, including building nurturing connections, assuming responsibilities, and religious, moral, and professional learning that spans multiple generations; 4. social capital, which extends beyond the family and refers to the ability to build a social network that offers, for instance, emotional and academic support; 5. navigational capital, which speaks to the 'skills of maneuvering through social institutions' (p. 80) such as schools, which are often inherently racist; and 6. resistance capital, which 'refers those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality' (p. 80). This article expands on this framework by applying it to an adult education context in Finland and pointing to new types of knowledges for further investigation.

Racialization in Finnish schools

There is a growing body of literature on racialization and racism in Finnish schools that resists discourses of exceptionalism and perceived educational excellence and aims to challenge problematic ideas, including that 'race' talk is or should be taboo (Alemanji, 2016; Arnesen et al., 2007; Mansikka & Holm, 2011), and that racism is a matter of individual acts rather than systemic (Alemanji & Dervin, 2016). For instance, Lappalainen (2006) has studied the cultural practices in preschools of claiming and establishing Finnishness, which was closely related to whiteness, gender, and flexibility in adapting to perceived 'Finnish' discourses and behaviours. In addition, in their study in a 6th grade of a Finnish elementary school, Hummelstedt et al. (2021) observed that racialization as non-white was an obstacle to students' agency, belonging, and perceived Finnishness, but was also resisted and rejected by some. Although racialization processes played an

important role in school and classroom interaction, the teacher reframed and mitigated these processes, for instance, by referring to students' 'choice' and his concern with other 'pedagogical tasks' (p. 12).

Important work on racialization and antiracism in Finnish education has been implemented and analysed by Alemanji. The title of his dissertation (Alemanji, 2016) 'Is there such a thing?' reflects the scarcity of work around racialization and antiracism in Finnish schools, but also the importance of his pioneering efforts. Based on their study of discourses that surround an antiracism workshop at a Finnish school, Alemanji and Mafi (2018) warn against watered-down and celebratory approaches to multicultural education, and instead propose a power- and history-sensitive approach for antiracism work, which, for example, works through the connections between present-day systemic racism and Finland's colonial complicity. Part of antiracism work in Finnish educational contexts is also a recognition of whiteness and the associated harm its discourses and practices do in educational context. For instance, I have analysed the discourses of whiteness I reproduced while teaching English to adult learners (Ennser-Kananen, 2020). In all, prior research shows that 'the multicultural education taught in Finnish teacher education needs a stronger critical and social justice-oriented approach' (Hummelstedt et al., 2021, p. 156).

An understanding of multicultural (teacher) education that aims for an equitable distribution of power and resources among all members of society has to centre the experiences of those who have historically been excluded and marginalized in educational spaces. This group includes members of BIPOC communities, families with migration experience, and learners whose formal schooling and learning has been interrupted and therefore does not align with the timing of the public school system that is considered the norm in Finland. This piece foregrounds the experiences of individuals from exactly these groups: adult learners at a community college who came to Finland as refugees and whose schooling was either not recognized by Finnish authorities or inhibited by wars, conflicts, or their familial situation. As such, it aims to contribute to critical and anti-oppressive perspectives on Finnish education.

Methodology and context

The data for this article stem from a larger ethnographic project that investigated the linguistic legitimacy (Ennser-Kananen, 2018) of adult learners with migration backgrounds at a community college in Finland. Designed as a critical ethnographic study, it sought to 'enunciate and clarify the obscurities of injustices' (Madison, 2011, p. 109) and offer

directions towards increased equity, specifically linguistic equity. The students typically stayed at the school for two years to complete their basic education degrees, which would enable them to go to professional or secondary school. The two cohorts (first and second year) I worked with consisted of about 25 students each (numbers fluctuated), mostly young adults from Afghanistan, Somalia, Iran, and Iraq who had been in Finland for 1–4 years and were admitted to the school based on written applications and interviews. I collaborated with four teachers at the school, three of whom were language teachers (Finnish and English). As a participant observer, I engaged in school and classroom activities in a variety of ways, including as teacher aid, fellow learner, lunch company, and cultural broker. When given permission by my participants, I audio-recorded interactions, and took notes whenever it seemed appropriate to capture contextual information including descriptions of places, movement, body language, and voice.

As mentioned above, the larger study I conducted examined linguistic legitimacy, which I understand as the value and acceptance of a linguistic practice that is discursively negotiated. My prior work examined how legitimacy of linguistic practices is claimed, withheld, granted, rejected – in short, discursively negotiated. For this article, I apply the framework of legitimacy to knowledge by bringing together Yosso's framework of community cultural wealth, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) notion of intellectual property, and my concept of legitimacy. In other words, I examine how the legitimacy of knowledge is discursively negotiated in the context of one community college. I collected fieldnotes of about 190 observed hours and about 90 hours of audio recordings. For this paper, I selected the excerpts that explicitly spoke to the topic of racialization as told from the students' perspective. I included only instances that led to a story or conversation between students, teachers, and/or myself. These criteria applied to three data excerpts, which I present in this article.

I applied Yosso's framework of community cultural wealth to deeply understand the three student interactions that share and make sense of the students' experienced racialization and everyday racism. During multiple close readings of each transcript against Yosso's 6 types of community capital, I noticed how these capitals featured in the data, or were implicated in indirect ways. To this end, I posed analytical questions that I derived from Yosso's framework and applied to the context of my school (deductive approach). The examples in the table 1 below stem from situations that occurred in my fieldwork but serve a solely illustrative purpose here. In addition to identifying the capitals that constitute community cultural wealth in my data, I also asked

'How is the value of this type of capital negotiated?' in order to identify instances of epistemic legitimacy. In addition to this deductive approach, I also noted instances in the excerpts that did not fit within my analytical lens (inductive approach) .

In reading this article, it is important to keep my positionality as a white, relatively wealthy, educated, European woman in mind. All the excerpts have to be understood as sociocultural spaces which are permeated by power dynamics that, to some degree, can be discursively negotiated (e.g. Anyan, 2013), but yet never escape the systemicity of oppression that surrounds them. Although researcher positionalities always matter (Ennser-Kananen, 2020b) and 'are intricately and inextricably embedded in the process and outcomes of education research' (Milner, 2007, p. 389), they play an especially important role when the topic is racism/racialization, and the researcher is white. The fact that racial, citizenship, linguistic, educational, and socioeconomic privilege was unevenly shared among participants, and especially between the research participants and me, shaped the way in which we interacted (e.g. what was said and what remained unsaid), related to each other (e.g. as mothers, migrants, or as people in very different professional situations), and made sense of our lived experience (including that of school). As I examine the following three data excerpts, I am guided by the questions, How do students experience racism and racialization? and Which capitals/knowledges do they display in their dealing with racism and racialization?

Findings and discussion

The first incident is an exchange that took place during a Finnish class between two second-year students who I call Tahiil and Fatimeh. Tahiil, a young male adult from Somalia had been in Finland for 3 years at the time of this exchange. Fatimeh, a young female adult, had arrived from Iran 2 years prior to this conversation.

My skin is hard: A story of resisting and surviving

The teacher passes out a handout with information about a practicum students participate in with the goal of experiencing work life. At the bottom of the handout, there is a picture of five interlocking right arms with different skin colors that form a pentagon. The black-and-white copies do not bring out the colors very well, and the darkest skin tone looks almost black. The copying process seems to have affected the quality of the image, so that the darkest arm looks somewhat blotchy and distorted.

Fatimeh, who sits in the first row, in front of Tahiil and me, begins to laugh when she sees the picture. She turns around when the teacher is in the other half of the room, points at the picture, and the following exchange begins. (R=Researcher, underlined = translated from Finnish)

F: This is bad, look, very bad picture. [laughs, covers her mouth with her hand] This is like your hand. [points at Tahiil, points at the picture. Both laugh.] So bad, so ugly. [laughs] […]

R [to Fatimeh]: Hey but this isn't nice.

T [not laughing anymore, with emphatic and serious voice]: You know, I have dark skin. My skin is hard, hard. There is five skin group, first, first, very black, black, so, maybe like [looks around, points at another student, looks at teacher, lowers voice], then me, me, look [takes some skin from his arm between his fingers], very hard, hard, tough, you know [looks at me]. No sun, water can make it broken, very tough. Very hard. Then three is three so is like you [points at Fatimeh].

F [with eyes wide open]: Ahh.

T: [With comforting voice, smiling] Is okay, pretty good.

R: And me?

T [laughs]: Yours is very white, not hard, totally uhm uhm sof- soft, very soft. [All laugh quietly] But [open hand gesture] okay [smiles].

(Recording and fieldnotes, February, 2017)

Seen through Yosso's (2005) framework, Tahiil's and Fatimeh's exchange, probably the most direct incidence of racialization that I witnessed during my time in the field, is a textbook example of resistance capital. In the middle of class, on the sidelines of the main arena of the classroom, Tahiil proposes a racial hierarchy that is in contrast to the societally dominant one, where lightness and whiteness tend to be associated with power and privilege. When Tahiil turns racial hierarchies on their head, suggesting that 'the Blacker the better', he is doing this in an ideological context where Black male bodies are oftentimes considered a disruption (Milner et al., 2013) or a threat (Wilson et al., 2017), face systemic discrimination at school (for the US context, e.g. Fashola, 2005; Noguera, 2009) and outside of school (Keskinen et al., 2018). In this context, using his own body as an example for persistence and resilience has implications beyond that exchange. He is resisting not only Fatimeh's racializing mocking but also the

larger discourses and violences that he navigates and survives.

In addition, Tahiil responds to Fatimeh's rather hurtful and racialized comment of 'ugly' by racializing her, which, judging from her facial expression, took her by surprise. He goes on to explicitly racialize several students in the classroom, based on perceived categories of skin tone, and consoling me and Fatimeh for our weak light/white skin. In this, he is not only resisting traditional racial hierarchies, but also color-evasiveness. In a national context where teachers tend to be underprepared and uncomfortable to address racialization at school (Hummelstedt et al., 2021), Tahiil's very physical acts of racialization can be considered a radical taboo break – if not for him personally, definitely in terms of the classroom, the school, and the larger educational and social context. Because of this break, it is possible for him to enjoy a moment of pride in his Blackness (equated with resilience and toughness), a moment where hierarchies are subverted. Thus, guided by the discourse of a Black man, the non-Black women around him (Fatimeh and me) are offered a glimpse into an alternate reality.

His resilience and ability to open this alternative reality in the face of being mocked and racialized could also be seen as pointing to his aspirational capital. Between the lines, the exchange further offers evidence of social and navigational capital, even though less explicitly: Tahiil shows how to keep a conversation in the marginal spaces of the ongoing lesson, which enables him to unfold his theory without being cut off by the teacher or his peers. His occupation and efficient use of the 'offside' of class is an important aspect of navigating an educational and societal context where members of racialized and marginalized groups are often barred from access to centerstage positions. Last but not least, Tahiil balances his comments about Fatimeh's and my skin as inferior with consolation and smiles, thus ensuring the maintenance of positive social relations and displaying his social capital.

In terms of linguistic capital, Tahiil's translanguaging, his strategic drawing on multiple linguistic resources to get his points across (García & Wei, 2014), is noteworthy. Referring to García and Wei's groundbreaking work, Celic and Seltzer (2013) explain that rather than imagining multilingual speakers as having a set of distinct languages, '[t]ranslanguaging posits that bilinguals [and multilinguals] have one linguistic repertoire from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively' (p. 1). Tahiil does not only draw on English and Finnish, he also switches between voices that index different roles, including a serious tone for authoritative lectures, a comforting tone for building rapport, and a quiet and secretive tone of a student talking during class. To navigate such complex information and roles and match them with the appropriate linguistic means is evidence of high-level linguistic capital.

It's not racism, it's the rule: a story against victimhood

The second story is a conversation with a young male student from a Central African country that occurred one afternoon while we were working on the school newspaper every graduating class publishes. My data (fieldnotes and transcript of the recording) from that day state:

> Martin [a pseudonym] told me [during class] that he wanted to write an article about racism and asked me to help him with the writing part. He added that he already knew what to say but that he struggled with writing ("En osa kirjoittaa" - I can't write). I suggested that I could be his secretary and write down whatever he would tell me. After class, we moved into the hallway of the school between some bookshelves and couches, and I set my tablet on the table and got ready to start typing. He reminded me, "Kirjoita mitä minä sanon [write what I say]" before he began to speak. (Fieldnotes, April 2017).

M: Well, life is good, is [unintel.] peace [unintel.], wellbeing, you can do [work?], but sometimes you cannot get good service [laughs] service. Because sometimes I don't get good service, maybe because I have a green passport, I am a refugee because I don't have citizenship. Not the right ID. But soon it will come.

R: Is racism a problem?

M: Sometimes it's the rule and sometimes it's racism. You know what I noticed about racism sometimes? If I go to a store, I want to buy for example, a phone, I want to pay, someone says that 'you can't'. Why? "Because in your passport it says that you are not graduate and you can't, it is not an ID. I say okay. I went to another store and I can pay. Well what is that? That is racism, that is not a rule. […] But sometimes, for example, one grandma fell from the bus and I tried to help but she said 'God dammit!' [literally 'Devil', Finnish swear word]. I didn't know what it means I haven't heard this word and she yelled at me the bad word. I didn't know that I can't touch. It is the rule that you can't touch, you can't do anything, just call an ambulance.

R: Ahhjaah.

(Recording and fieldnotes, April, 2017)

Martin's first story shows how he intertwines resistance with navigational capital, specifically regarding strategies he has developed to negotiate ways of belonging and legitimate knowing in the social

context of public spaces. His interpretation of the incident allows him to position the older woman as non-racist, thereby shielding himself from an identity as a victim of racism. Framing the woman's aggression as his own lack of knowledge of the law enables him to reject victimhood and instead maintain an agentive position as someone who has noticed and filled his knowledge gap, which, in contrast to potential micro-aggressions, are within the realm of what he can control. For her definition of navigational capital, Yosso (2005) draws on Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2000) definition of resilience as 'a set of inner resources, social competencies and cultural strategies that permit individuals to not only survive, recover, or even thrive after stressful events, but also to draw from the experience to enhance subsequent functioning' (p. 229, as cited in Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Martin displays such resilience through his rejection of victimhood and his focus on his own learning rather than the hostility he encountered. In this situation, his navigational capital relates to the sphere of public life rather than to a specific social institution.

Martin offers quite a different interpretation of his story of buying a cellphone. Given that he was able to buy a phone without showing the 'right kind' of ID in the second store, he concludes that racism was what kept him from purchasing one in the first one. Also this story is evidence of navigational capital. Identifying and naming instances of racism may enable him to emotionally detach himself from the experience, make future purchases in stores that he trusts, and thus 'draw from the experience to enhance subsequent functioning' (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000, p. 229). Martin's positive comment 'But soon it will come', referring to his hope for 'the right kind' of ID, may point to his aspirational capital, and the way he approached me and involved me in his story-telling process is evidence of his social capital, which allows him to use existing resources and relationships to achieve his (e.g. communicative and academic) goals. This social capital was amplified by his high proficiency in English (linguistic capital), which allowed us to have fluent conversations in a shared language. In addition, his ability to reflect on his experiences, and analyse them as evidence, from which he draws a conclusion, may point to another form of capital that surfaces in his story (reflective/analytical capital).

It is important to note that while the first mention of the word 'racism' in this interaction came from me, the researcher, this harks back to Martin's explicit desire to share experiences of racism earlier that day. While my question likely shaped our conversation, the way Martin approached our interaction suggests that he shared his stories quite intentionally.

We just laugh and speak Dari: a story of solidarity and legitimacy

The third exchange occurred during a break in the school day, when several students ran out of their classroom and school building during their break to – literally – air out some frustration. In the fieldnotes of this day, I wrote:

Juste [the teacher, a pseudonym] had barely said the word "tauko" [break] when several students jumped up, opened the classroom door, and pushed each other into the hallway. I followed them as they were running through the entrance door, laughing, hugging, and moaning excessively. Outside the group came to a stop on a little patio, where I ended up standing with Fatimeh and Mariam, two second year students from Iran. I had had several lunches and after-lunch coffees with them and we had bonded over fitness advice they gave me and music videos they liked. As we were catching our breaths, we were joined on the patio by Mariam's younger sister Zahra, a first-year student. (Fieldnotes, April 2017)

F: Aaahhh, so boring, boring. [researcher's name], he only talks, he only stands and talks!

[laughing, dancing, hugging each other]

Z [joins the group with her backpack, looking ready to leave]: I'm going home. [to Mariam] Are you coming with?

R: You are going home?

[conversation in Dari]

R: Are you going home? Is school out?
Z: Yeah but the lesson is the lesson is -
M: Boring, it is boring! […]

[conversation in Dari]

Z: I don't like the other bus because because [continues in Dari]
M: uhm [driving motion]
F: drive, to drive?
R: Driver?
Z: Driver?
M: Yes, yes, driver.
M [translates for Zahra]: This driver, this driver, bad is bad [laughs, holds hand over nose and mouth].
R: Ahh, it smells bad?
Z, M: Yes! [laugh, nod]
R: Is it the bus or the driver?
M: The driver, he is fat! [laughs]
R: Have to say, say to him, hey, go have a shower.

[laughing, speaking in Dari]

M: You know, [name of researcher], you know what he says.
F: He go away, bye bye [waves] you can walk.

[discussion in Dari]

M: No, no, you know what he says, what happens if she says that the driver smells? He says that I am at work and you are a student. I pay for your school!
R: What??
M: Yes, because, you know, that tax, tax, Finns he pays tax and I give tax uhm tax. Why? Because I take uh uh is tax tax money comes and it pays school.
R: Aaaaah. So tax – he says?
M: He he ah yeah but doesn't doesn't matter he [handmotion]. I just laugh. [discussion in Dari, laughter]
F: Everyone just laugh, everyone, uh uh.
R: Ah everyone laughs? And what- ?
F: And speak Dari [name of researcher], you know, Dari, Dari, my language, everyone speaks.

[Laughter]
(Recording and fieldnotes, April 2017)

Shortly after this conversation, Zahra took off towards the bus stop, and Mariam, Fatimeh, and I walked back into the classroom. What the three young women tell us about is a story of racialization. Fanon (2008) has theorized the subjectivities of colonization with his own lived experience as a starting point. He reflects on his becoming Black in the face of the white gaze, describing processes of racialization, during which white and Black categories are formed, as projection of what is undesirable onto the Other. As Nielsen (2011) explains:

> Fanon emphasizes how the history of black people is simultaneously erased and rewritten by the white imagination. This revisionist history defines what a black person is – intellectually inferior, in need of a (white) master, culturally incapable of contributing something of value to (white, European) society and so on. (p. 367)

In reference to Fanon's work, Al-Saji (2010) explained how such projection applies to the Muslim veil, which becomes 'the negative mirror in which western constructions of identity and gender can be positively reflected' (p. 875). When I met them, Fatimeh, Mariam, and Zahra lived in a small village 30 kilometres outside of a mid-sized Finnish city. With Fanon and Al-Saji, I argue that in this predominantly white, Finnish-speaking, Christianity-informed context, incidents like the encounter with the busdriver serve to identify the women as a negative mirror in which 'Finnishness' is reflected and the three women's identities are rewritten as inferior and incapable Others by the busdriver's imagination. The busdriver's comment on his funding of the women's education is an example of how racialization works in complex and intersectional ways. Constructing an image of 'Finnishness' and positioning the women in opposition to it enabled him to make his social superiority explicit through a claim about their financial dependence on him. With its implications of positioning the young women as 'other' vis-à-vis Finnish society and identity, the busdriver's comment could also be seen as an expression of what Keskinen (2016) has termed 'welfare nationalism', 'welfare chauvinism', or 'welfare exclusionism', which tend to co-occur with (or act in the disguise of) anti-migrant and xenophobic attitudes and often goes hand in hand with processes of racialization (Keskinen, 2016). In this way, racialization – intertwined with assumptions about socioeconomic status, citizenship, and belonging – form a powerful tool to reinscribe Finnishness as whiteness, non-Muslim (or non hijab-wearing), Finnish speaking, and working in a salaried job (rather than attending school) at adult age. In their reaction to the busdriver's comment, the women did not merely reject his racialization and disdain, they rejected and dismissed an ideology of Finnishness that consistently others and excludes them. This is, at minimum, an instance of navigational capital as described by Yosso (2005), with public transportation being the space that they navigate. In addition, with their rejection of an exclusive and racist ideology of Finnishness, their resistance reaches beyond the particular moment of their racialization.

Yosso (2005) notes the different registers, linguistic practices, styles, and languages that may be at play when linguistic capital is enacted. Laughter has been recognized as a lot more complex than merely an expression of being amused (e.g. Glenn & Holt, 2013). It can support identity building processes (Clift, 2013) and is a well-documented tool of resistance, which co-exists with many other interactive moves that reject imposed identities and power structures. As Herwig (2017) has noted in her study with Syrian female refugees in Turkey,

> Humor was and is used by oppressed peoples as one form that Hewitt (1986) describes as 'reverse-humor'. It picks up an attached stereotype, mocks the oppressor, and transforms racism 'into a plaything, in an attempt to acknowledge its social presence while rendering it meaningless' (ibid.).". (Herwig, 2017, p. 186) (p. 237)

While prior research has also identified laughter as strategy of coping (Van Ramshorst, 2019) and, for language learners, as tool to claim legitimacy for their language use and balance different social investments

and relationships (Ennser-Kananen, 2014), the story presented here shows that it can also be used to claim legitimacy as a member of a social micro (bus) or macro (society) context. Their linguistic capital thus powerfully complements their navigational capital as a tool of resistance and resilience. In addition, their social and familial capital surfaces in their ability to provide closeness and safety to each other, which they have learned to generate and draw on in situations that threaten their integrity.

Conclusions and implications

This paper offered an analysis of three stories and exchanges of racialization of young adult learners with refugee experience at a Finnish community college that were analysed through a CRT framework, specifically Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth. What insights can be gained from this?

First, even in as little as three data excerpts, the wide variety of ways in which racialization can operate becomes evident. Racialization can work explicitly and implicitly, it can directly refer to physical characteristics, or not mention them at all; it can (and often does) intersect with other social factors and assumptions, for instance, about religious affiliations, gender, nationality, or social class, or professional status that amplify the processes of othering. Importantly, the data presented here is also evidence that resistance to oppression is possible, and a variety of knowledges that support such resistance exists and can be developed with BIPOC communities. Fostering this ability to resist, I argue, is the charge of public education.

Relatedly, it is important to note that all the instances of resistance extended beyond the moment in which they occurred. Besides providing agency and safety in the situation, all participants displayed knowledges that undermine larger ideologies and systems of oppression. An important task for education would thus be to make these dynamics visible, amplify stories of resistance, and leverage the cultural wealth in them for social change. Through my data analysis and interpretation I have shown ways in which racialization operates and can be resisted. Such examples and analyses of racialization and resistance can drive curricular and pedagogical development as well as research in the service of racial equity.

Second, the framework of community cultural wealth proved to be a suitable tool to highlight the wealth of knowledge in this school community. All data presented here offer evidence of resistance and navigational capital. In addition, aspirational, linguistic, familial, and social capital were clearly displayed

and acted and interacted in effective ways. Future research could investigate the possibility of expanding Yosso's (2005) framework. For instance, Martin's ability to analyse his own experiences in different contexts calls for an investigation into analytical/reflective capital. Students' strategies for rejecting victimization included breaking taboos, discursively subverting existing hierarchies, analysing their experiences, defining racism, and forming a small group to resist attacks. Such display of intellectual property, or legitimate knowledges, has to be supported by material property (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), for instance, as funded initiatives of curricular reform, professional development for teachers and teacher educators (see also Solórzano, 2019), and targeted training for researchers.

In all, the data and analysis in this article offer a plethora of opportunities for addressing racialization at school. For example, Tahiil and Fatimeh's exchange could serve as a segue into deep learning experiences about the impossibility of making racial categories and the sociocultural and historical processes that produce and uphold such categories. In other words, members of classroom and school communities could be equipped with tools that identify and address those processes and see them as opportunities for learning and change and as entry points into discussion about systemic inequities. To instigate real change, Finnish education and teacher education have to critically examine their socially and societally constructed innocence, recognize the harmfulness of exceptionalist and color-evasive ideologies, and their complicity in it, and commit to anti-oppressive education, which includes the strategic hiring of BIPOC into positions of educational practice and decision making and the development of policies and practices for their retainment. This is not a call for cosmetic changes and surface-level adjustments, but rather, a significant change of direction that implicates all levels of the education system and thus stands very much in the tradition of culturally sustaining and decolonizing pedagogies (e.g. Alim & Paris, 2017; Lorenz, 2013).

Note

1. I acknowledge that the term BIPOC – Black, Indigenous, People of Color – risks homogenizing a large group of people. Whenever possible, I use more descriptive and more accurate terminology.

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