

Finnishness, Whiteness and Coloniality

An Introduction

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“It’s just different here,” is a common way in the Nordic countries for relativizing—that is, eschewing responsibility—for racism. “It’s not our fault we are so white, it’s just the way it is.” These commonly held justifications were presented by the anthropologist Kristín Loftsdóttir during her keynote speech at “The ‘Great White North’? Critical Perspectives on Whiteness in the Nordics and its Neighbours,” a conference held at the University of Helsinki in August 2019. But racism is not relative, Loftsdóttir emphasized, nor is it erased by adopting a stance of innocence. The Nordic countries are in a curious position when it comes to issues of colonialism and racism. Located in the farthest reaches of Europe, there is a sense among many Nordic citizens that they have always “been” there—and that, furthermore, the people who have been

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there have always been “white.” The notion of whiteness is an extremely complicated view of reality, one that is contested throughout history. This theme is addressed at length in this book, which does not presuppose a stable definition of whiteness: it grapples with the complexities, fluidities and multiple meanings this concept can acquire and communicate. Rather than positing whiteness as a category, this book explores whiteness in its various guises, and as it is defined in various disciplines. The view that there is an unbroken historical thread of permanent whiteness in the Nordic countries is what Loftsdóttir calls a “restitching” of the historical threads, willfully overlooking the colonization and longstanding historical mobility of people in and out of the region. While much has been written and researched on colonialism and race in Europe and the Nordic countries, the topic has been underexamined within the specific context of Finland. In this 12-chapter volume, based on a collection of papers from the conference, a set of themes specific to the Finnish context are treated by a range of scholars representing different fields of study. The key question explored in each of the chapters is: What is the relationship between Finnishness, race and coloniality?

A few months after the conference, racism emerged at the forefront of public consciousness in Finland. The Black Lives Matter protest movement, a six-year effort initiated in the United States after the murder of a Black child, Trayvon Martin, became a global movement after the murder of George Floyd, a Black man who was killed by white police officers. Global protests erupted following the murder of Floyd, reviving widespread resistance against the systemic racism imbuing the levels of so-called civilized (which is to say: colonized and colonialized) society. The subsequent Black Lives Matter and related protests raised anti-imperialist reactions globally. Also in Finland, Black Lives Matter protesters filled Senate Square in the heart of Helsinki, with thousands of peaceful protesters demonstrating against racism and police brutality, while promoting equality, justice and change (Kajander and Siironen 2020). During this time, Finland’s complex role within the racial and colonial systems emerged again in public discourse, debated by academics, politicians and reporters (see e.g. Keskinen 2020; Nuuttila 2020a; Nuuttila 2020b). The complex spirit of these debates was summarized by reporter Ndéla Faye, who made the following comments in a segment for the Finnish broadcasting company YLE:

The most interesting thing is that in Finland, the debate is stuck on the level in which Russia and Sweden have oppressed Finland for centuries. Discussions always return to this, but no one wants to talk about the role of white Finns as oppressors, for instance, in relation to the forced Finnishization of the Sámi. (Faye quoted in Nuuttila 2020b)¹

Faye’s remarks summarize the ways in which different power relations are set in motion in synchrony, drawing from different perspectives where (white) Finns are simultaneously defined as the oppressed and the oppressors. However, as Faye continues, these roles do not exclude one another, highlighting the inter-related yet contradictory character of these debates. Keskinen, Skaptadóttir and

Toivanen (2019a) note that investigation on the Nordic countries adds “powerfully to a body of critical scholarship on race and ethnicity that shows how entangled they are within repressed histories of internal and external colonization and imagined nationhood.” Keskinen (2019: 179) has further emphasized the importance of including a regional perspective in the study of Nordic colonialism, as well as “a multi-level model that focuses on the relations among the global, regional, state, and local levels.” She holds that Finland is “a case *par excellence*” to investigate the role of regional aspects in colonial and racial histories as Finnish histories are situated in the “triangle of Nordic/European colonialism, racial thinking, and modern state building” (ibid.: 164, 178). Therefore, the notion of whiteness is a useful lens through which to understand contemporary Finnishness and its paradoxes, as the chapters in this volume demonstrate.

This volume carries the debate about minoritization and oppression in Finland beyond the familiar narratives of the oppression of “Finns.” Here, “Finns” is in quotation marks because the volume calls into question exactly what is meant by “Finns” and “Finnish,” problematizing and questioning a status that, while seemingly straightforward to many, begs for critical investigation. The debate is by no means entirely defined by race: culture, language, politics, and issues of individual choice are serious considerations when it comes to defining Finnishness (one’s own, or others’). But the specter of racial categorization haunts any conversation in which brown curls prompt questions of “where are you *really* from?” or lifestyle articles in which some are assumed to “just know” what it is like to be “Finnish.” For this volume, we therefore center our investigations solidly on uncomfortable questions of race—and particularly to get below the surface of what is often experienced as a non-racialized identity, or the “invisible” color: whiteness. Unmarked, unquestioned, and unnoticed by who inhabits it, whiteness often flies under the radar in discussions about ethnic identities, while issues of migration and suppression are forced to center stage. Such discourse establishes whiteness in Finland as a seemingly neutral presence that is at the same time both invisible and ubiquitous. Despite changing social realities, whiteness therefore continues to appear to some as the “normal” state of Finnishness to which all other articulations of identity are compared and also condemned.

Finnishness

It is tempting to understand the ambiguity of contemporary Finnish identities as a recent phenomenon, the result of a globalized world in which movements like Black Lives Matter echo around the world, cities become increasingly “multicultural” and various forms of migration and displacement disrupt the perceived homogeneity of communities. But as a number of authors in this volume point out, negotiations over Finnishness and whiteness, and their intersection, are nothing new, nor are they ever fully established. A growing body of research on multiculturalism, whiteness and colonialism has emerged in recent years to examine both Nordic and Finnish contexts (see e.g. Aaltonen and Sivonen

2019; Hübinette et al. 2012; Kivisto and Wahlbeck 2013; Keskinen 2019; Keskinen, Skaptadóttir and Toivanen 2019b; Kujala 2019; Kuortti, Lehtonen and Löytty 2007; Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012; Lundström and Teitelbaum 2017; Ranta and Kanninen 2019; Tervonen 2014; Wickström and Wolff 2016). As many of these studies have shown from different perspectives, in a similar manner to other Nordic countries, Finland has never been a culturally or racially homogeneous country or nation, nor is it an outsider to colonial systems. These realities, however, have affected and have also been strongly affected by the development of national identities and the enduring myths around them (e.g. Tervonen 2014).

Traditionally, Nordic countries have struggled to acknowledge their participation in global colonial histories, something characterized by the notion of “exceptionalism” (Keskinen 2019; Rastas 2007; see also Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012), or being an “innocent outsider” in the history of colonialism (Keskinen 2019; see also “white innocence,” as per Keskinen 2019 and Wekker 2016). The position of Nordic countries, including Finland, within the colonial system has been described with the concept “colonial complicity” (Keskinen 2019; Keskinen et al. 2009; Vuorela 2009), as although they were not major actors in overseas colonialism, they nonetheless “actively participated in and benefited from the unequal economic, political, and cultural relations developed during European colonialism ... When these histories are combined with Nordic colonialism in the Arctic, it becomes clear that the Nordic countries were in multiple ways involved in colonial endeavours, both as ‘accomplices,’ but also as ‘active colonial powers’” (Keskinen, Skaptadóttir and Toivanen 2019a: 5).

To fully grasp the notion of Finnishness, Finland’s “colonial complicity” in the intersections of past and present, east and west, local and global is central to any discussion. Prior to its independence in 1917, the area which today forms the independent state of Finland belonged to the Swedish kingdom until 1809, after which it formed the Grand Duchy of Finland as part of the Russian Empire. Finland’s position as part of two empires and the emanant national narrative of the emancipation from a subordinate position, economic hardships, wars and independence struggles to the glorification of nationhood and economic prosperity is often credited to the resilience of its people. This everyday wisdom, however, has often “resulted in bypassing the role of Finns and Finland in colonial histories” (Keskinen 2019: 164; see also Lehtonen and Löytty 2007; Tervonen 2014).

The multiplex role of Finns in the colonial system is also translated into the racial histories of Finns and Finland (Keskinen 2019). First, the contested character of the Europeanness of Finns within the hierarchical understandings of 19th-century ethnographers and anthropologists was ambiguous from the beginning. Finns were, for example, perceived to be of Mongolian descent with Turanian heritage/Asian roots (Kemiläinen 1993; Keskinen 2019; see

also Chapter 12 in this volume), yet they also appeared as explicitly “white” in the 20th century, straddling divides between east and west in their bodies, practices and language as they appeared both as white Europeans and as hailing from primitive eastern people into part of the Nordic and Western regime. Even as the Finnish nation-state became more established, Finnishness remained an intrinsically multiplicitous identity, split along linguistic divides between the Finnish- and Swedish-speaking population (see e.g. Tägil 1995) and expression of national, cultural and ethnic modes of belonging. Second, the colonial and racial histories of Finns are tied to the modern state- and nation-building processes, which in addition to notions of homogeneity, also created “‘Others’ of the Indigenous and minority populations, who were perceived as biologically and/or culturally inferior” (Keskinen 2019: 178). Therefore, the state is also a powerful player in how ethnicity, race and nation become manifested (Keskinen, Skaptadóttir and Toivanen 2019a). The myth of homogeneity created within these processes has left the varied histories of migration, the longstanding presence of ethnic minorities and Indigenous people in the region ignored in dominant narratives such as history-writing (ibid.; Tervonen 2014).

In the latter half of the 20th century, Finland has rapidly risen from a poor agrarian country to a developed welfare state (see e.g. Koponen and Saaritsa 2019). Today, Finland can be defined as a “global winner”: a modern Western welfare state ranking high on global indexes such as freedom of the press, gender equality, PISA and even happiness. In 2018, Finland was selected as the “goodest” [sic] country, topping the Good Country Index, which measures what each country in the world contributes to the good of humanity. These rankings serve to further the notion of homogeneity and the hegemony of whiteness in defining Finnishness, and ultimately overlook that these notions have direct consequences for migrants (especially migrants of color), racialized minorities and the country’s Indigenous Sámi population (Keskinen, Skaptadóttir and Toivanen 2019a). That is, these notions feed into a sense of Finnish exceptionalism and a self-image as a country outside of colonial involvements or of the historical burden of racism. This sense of exceptionalism, coupled with the tendency of many Finns to see themselves as the oppressed in exclusion to being an oppressor, has a consequence of feeding directly into racism and xenophobia (e.g. Rastas 2007). Indeed, racism in Finland is well documented. For example, a 2018 EU report called “Being Black in the EU” concluded that Finland was the most racist country out of 12 countries in the study (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2018). At the same time, these realities give rise to emerging counter-narratives of Finnishness and what it means to be Finnish. One example is the *Ruskeat tytöt* [“Brown girls”] collective, who have brought into the broader public the voices and narratives of non-white (i.e. Brown) Finns, and draw attention to a whole range of racialized groups in Finland.²

Whiteness

The concept of whiteness has been described as “a dominant and normative space against which difference is measured” (Dyer 1997: 10), a constantly shifting boundary of power and privilege (Kivel 1996). Yet the meaning of whiteness is not static, and it does not follow a historically continuous line; what is considered “white” is relative. Following Steve Garner (2007: 1), “[t]he meanings attached to ‘race’ are always time- and place-specific, part of each national racial regime.” “Race” or whiteness is not only a matter of skin color or other physiological features; it is socially constructed and ever-changing, depending on who is in power and how power structures relate to one another. Racial definitions are entangled with other markers of relative inferiority and superiority, such as being Nordic or European (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012; Lundström and Teitelbaum 2017). As a Nordic nation, this ideology also applies to Finland. One of the outcomes of this trope of dominance is that whiteness affords privileges to individuals who are fortunate enough to fit with its definition in a certain time and place: when viewed as the “norm,” such people can afford to take for granted their own skin color and position of power (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012).

The connection between Finnishness and whiteness is constantly contested, but also under constant reification, as different competing narratives pull at the threads that seem to bind them. On the one hand, historical notions of Finnishness, created through practices of categorization, construction, contestation and exclusion, claim space in contemporary narratives of belonging under the guise of “tradition,” or how the community is imagined. On the other hand, contemporary understandings of an ethnically diverse Finland jostle for that same space, both underlining and disrupting modern meanings of Finnishness. For this reason, Suvi Keskinen and others (2019a) emphasize the importance of addressing the treatment of both migrant and Indigenous communities together, as it advances understanding on how difference is imagined and represented.

The multifarious and fluid definitions of Finnishness revealed in the research of many of the authors in this book point to a complex and perhaps uncomfortable truth: while Finnishness and whiteness are not, and have never been, perfectly synonymous, they have often been presented as such. From 19th-century theories about “the whitest race in the world” (Chapter 12) to contemporary ideas about who qualifies as “beautiful” in Finland (Assulin 2019; see also Chapter 5 in this volume), many discourses and practices of Finnishness are unconsciously entangled with, or politically invested in, whiteness. These entanglements, both historically and in the present, have largely been made possible by the elasticity of both concepts. If Finnishness is a complex category, stretching to contain multicultural multitudes and global migration while also contracting to exclude many for their language, citizenship or culture;

whiteness is perhaps even more slippery as a concept. Rather than trying to artificially pin it down, we have opted to allow for the exploration of the inherent variance of these concepts in the chapters of this volume. Different chapters therefore include somewhat different definitions of what looks at first glance like the same issue.

One of the main goals of this volume has been to demonstrate the inherent complexity of whiteness, a concept that is often understood in the Nordics as an American import that cannot be applied to countries with very different connections to colonization and the transatlantic slave trade. However, as many chapters in this volume demonstrate, Finland's involvement with the (post)colonial world is neither new nor superficial. As recent research on Indigenous histories and coloniality continues to show (see e.g. Chapter 11), settler societies are often unaware, or unwilling, to recognize the colonial foundations of state formation, policy and politics. Attempts to decolonize Finnish history, cultural traditions and practices are as necessary as they are fraught with difficulty. Decolonizing efforts are currently being made in activism, society, governance—and scholarship. The insights gained in studies of whiteness elsewhere in Europe, Africa and the Americas are therefore highly valuable to researchers delving into questions of intersecting Finnishness and whiteness, and the work of scholars like Sara Ahmed (2007), Kalwant Bhopal (2018) and Gloria Wekker (2016) has been fundamental to the research in this book. Theories and analyses of the fluidity, multiplicity and sociocultural invisibility or unmarked nature of whiteness are mobilized in several chapters to critique models of Nordic exceptionalism, genetic romanticism and even discourses of equality and multiculturalism. They also play an important part in decolonizing narratives of Finnishness.

(De)Coloniality, Continuity and Change

Acknowledging the endurance of racial hierarchy, and the complicity of higher education and scholarship in upholding that status quo, need not lead to apathy or complacency, however. As Nelson Maldonado-Torres stresses in his “Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality” (2016), universities have been spaces both for (mostly youthful) agitation against racialized hierarchies and for its suppression. As we have learned, again, with the recent BLM protests, “breathlessness is a constant condition in the state of coloniality” (Maldonado-Torres 2016: 5). Universities, too, represent contexts where “many students feel choked and breathless” (*ibid.*), but they should at the same time be places where new practices and radical ideas can be given the oxygen they so desperately need. This volume therefore aims toward an approach that gives space to both decolonization and decoloniality, and that critically analyzes both colonization and coloniality. In other words, it attends to both continuity and change in the

formation of our current, “post-colonial” reality, and relies on critical studies of the past alongside social, cultural and political analyses of the present.

It is useful to clarify some concepts and vocabulary that will be mobilized throughout the book, beginning with the distinctions between colonialism, coloniality, decolonization and decoloniality: “colonialism and decolonization are for the most part taken as ontic concepts that specifically refer to specific empirical episodes of socio-historical and geopolitical conditions that we refer to as colonization and decolonization” (Maldonado-Torres 2016: 10).

This perspective risks presenting the structural violence and inequalities connected to colonial regimes in the past, as if they no longer have any bearing on the present. By placing historical research next to contemporary analyses, we hope to disrupt notions of a problematic past having no relevance for a more progressive presence, and to draw attention to the continuation of coloniality:

coloniality and decoloniality refer to the logic, metaphysics, ontology, and matrix of power created by the massive processes of colonization and decolonization. Because of the long-time and profound investment of what is usually referred to as Europe or Western civilization in processes of conquest and colonialism, this logic, metaphysics, ontology, and matrix of power is intrinsically tied to what is called “Western civilization” and “Western modernity.” (Ibid.)

This description requires, as suggested at the beginning of this introduction, an engagement not only with histories of internal colonialism and the current benefits reaped from colonial complicity, but also a willingness to delve into the contemporary presence of settler colonial realities. In the context of Finland, this means allowing linear narratives of change and temporalities of settlement to be disrupted (on settler coloniality, see e.g. Moreton-Robinson 2015).

One of the most obvious outcomes of the constant tension between continuity and change in thinking about coloniality and race is the vocabulary we use to talk about issues of structural inequality. Language can empower and subjugate, and the implications of a particular language, words, acronyms and phrases depend heavily on who uses them, in what context and at what time. Most of us have experienced such shifts in meaning in our lifetimes, and will do so again, contending with the constant social and political negotiations that decide which words are considered offensive, which cause pain, which are reclaimed with in-group pride and which manage to clarify or nuance our discourse. The chapters in this book detail the use of vocabulary to engage with notions of identity, belonging, inequality and ethnicity in a number of different contexts. It is therefore impossible to provide a clear introductory glossary of how such terms are used throughout this book. Nevertheless, some collective choices have been made: slurs and hateful or otherwise hurtful vocabulary present in the data analyzed in some of the chapters in this volume have not been

reproduced in the text, but do sometimes appear with their original context in the notes. Overall, we have elected to use the terminology different communities use to identify themselves, rather than the appellations found in, for example, historical documents (with the exception of instances where the analysis of these appellations is central to the research question). Choices on how to identify oneself or one's community are as fluid as identities and communities themselves are, and the chapters reflect that. Attenuating toward contemporary stylistic choices, we use upper-case Black and Indigenous and lower-case white when describing ethnicity.

By drawing attention to its inherent multiplicity and fluidity, the chapters in this volume reveal that whiteness—like other categories of hegemony and privilege—is a “sticky” category (Berggren 2014): it has an almost unailing ability to shift and adapt to changing contexts and still hold on to its social power and political sting. This explains, perhaps, why despite our efforts and those of the authors to disrupt racialized structures, the discourses and practices of whiteness are present in this volume, too, dictating the scholarly conventions and academic hierarchies that inevitably become part of the production of a research-based, peer-reviewed book. There certainly is diversity (social, cultural and ethnic) in this book, and the contributors and editors live out the realities described in these chapters, of shifting notions of whiteness and its intersections with Finnishness, transnational identities and citizenship. However, at the same time, the composition of this volume's authorship reflects the limits of the editors' practice of scholarly interaction and that of the academic world in general. Researchers who do not identify or pass as white and/or Finnish remain a minority in the university landscape and, consequently, that minority often carries a heavy burden of representation, being called upon to speak for their communities, cultures or traditions—again and again and again. We have sought a balance, in these chapters, between the need for representational justice and a fair distribution of emotional and social labor—and while we believe each of the chapters included is necessary and important, that balance has remained imperfect. In its modest way, the book aims to contribute to uncomfortable discussions about the necessity to decolonize the university and the academe, too. Or rather, it points, perhaps painfully, to the continued difficulty of including different perspectives on European and national identities in academic work. This lack of diversity within academia affects its formal structures, its mundane practices of organizing and distributing research, and the way in which researchers conceptualize and categorize the world. As Sara Ahmed has pointed out, “[w]hiteness is only invisible for those who inhabit it, or those who get so used to its inhabitance that they learn not to see it, even when they are not it” (Ahmed 2007: 157). A critical perspective on whiteness therefore not only requires analysis or theory, but above all the cultural and political work of diversifying the communities in which we live, work and do research (Smith, Funaki and MacDonald 2021).

Chapters

In this book, we have aimed to address both the norms and ideals that underpin concepts of race, citizenship and belonging, as well as the embodied and affective practices through which they are given shape on a day-to-day basis. To that end, the book is made up of four parts, elucidating the normative cultural work of creating Finnishness, the construction of ideals and norms surrounding race, modes and practices of belonging and, conversely, the discursive and physical violence of colonization and minoritization.

In Part I, *Imaginations of Finnishness*, the authors contest the imagined ethnic (white) homogeneity of Finns by exploring the constructs of “Finnishness” and ethnicity in different contexts, approaching the topic from medical, heritage-related and gendered perspectives. In Chapter 1, Aaro Tupasela establishes the role population genetics has played in producing visual representations of difference and similarity, problematizing how such representations are often employed as “evidence” in the construction of Finnish nationhood and national identity. However, Tupasela highlights that “genetics is always relative,” and various choices affect these representations, such as excluding minorities from consideration. Heidi Henriikka Mäkelä continues on the theme of assumed homogeneity and the role of visual documentation in creating such assumptions by investigating the reproduction of normative white, heterosexual and middle-class Finnishness in photographs published by the National Inventory of Living Heritage, in Chapter 2. The results of a visual discourse analysis illustrate in particular that the photographs reproduce normative notions of femininity and masculinity, nature and naturalness, whiteness and “otherness.” In their chapter based on survey data, Saga Rosenström and Barbora Žiačková zoom in specifically on one of these imagined binaries: that of gender. In Chapter 3, they investigate the role of the symbolic “Viking woman” in the construction of national identities in the Nordic countries, focusing on the perceptions of Finnish participants. Offering both a historical insight in the role imaginations of white femininity have played in the process of nationbuilding, and a contemporary look at how such historical myths continue to haunt the present, their chapter investigates how the narrative of history itself can be coded by gender and race—and how such narratives can change. While Finnish respondents brought up many themes relevant to the Viking-Scandinavian history, the respondents overtly rejected the Viking woman symbolism as irrelevant to Finnish identity.

Part II, *Doing/Constructing Whiteness in Finland*, shifts attention to the cultural work of understanding and presenting one’s self (and others) as white in Finland. Constructing and doing identity is a matter of simple, often unconscious, daily practices, and the chapters in Part II show how inconspicuous practices like going to school, reflecting on life memories or chatting on Facebook help to construct and bolster understandings of race, difference and

multiculturalism. Chapter 4 delves into young people's understandings of difference and (in)equality in Finland. Focusing on the intersection of whiteness and masculinities, Marja Peltola and Ann Phoenix explore 12–15-year-olds' understanding of multiculturalism. With interview data, the authors demonstrate that young boys often overtly described egalitarian “color blind” ideals when asked about multiculturalism, a notion with which many participants were seemingly unfamiliar, allowing them to detach themselves from racial or ethnic inequalities, which were nevertheless present in their discourse. In Chapter 5, the entanglement of Finnishness with sexual identity comes under scrutiny. With a mixed methods approach, Riikka Taavetti tracks traces of ethnicity and race in Finnish sexual autobiographies from the early 1990s. While ethnicity and race are rarely directly referenced in these autobiographies, Taavetti demonstrates how the authors implicitly construct their own white Finnishness by pointing out differences between themselves and perceived “others.” Encounters with such “others” are described as exotic, often in a seemingly positive fashion, nonetheless in a style distinguishable from descriptions with fellow white Finns. Chapter 6 looks at the self-perception and presentation of Estonian migrants in Finland. With an ethnographic approach, Jaanika Kingumets and Markku Sippola investigate the construction of whiteness in Facebook group discussions by Estonian migrants. While discussions about whiteness are not prevalent in the Estonian context, the authors demonstrate that whiteness becomes more salient when Estonians migrate to other countries, where they might become perceived as “racialized minorities.” To avoid this, Estonian migrants employ whiteness to distinguish themselves from less privileged, non-white migrant groups.

Part III, *Representations of Belonging and Exclusion*, reflects on similar questions of identity and difference, specifically focusing on the often strategic practices of minoritized groups in the Nordics to mobilize or resist narratives of whiteness. In this part, the fluidity of “Finnishness” as a category of identity comes to the fore, as does its precarious connection to Finland as a geopolitical space. In Chapter 7, Tuire Liimatainen examines representations of Finnishness and whiteness in Sweden-Finnish social media campaigns and online activism, showing how the mediatization of discourses and images of Finnishness continue to construe identity at the crossroads between nationality, ethnicity and culture. By examining social media posts of both white and non-white Sweden-Finns as well as Sweden-Finnish minority activists, Liimatainen shows how the relationship between Finnishness and whiteness in the Swedish context is a highly fluid, situational and often contradictory way of boundary-drawing. The next chapter shows that the situational and fluid character of Finnishness and whiteness also applies in the context of Finland's capital and its urban landscape. Jasmine Kelekay examines the discursive construction of East Helsinki in Afro-Finnish rappers' music in Chapter 8. Adopting a framework for territorial stigmatization, Kelekay demonstrates that the

rappers utilize various alternative narratives to resist the pervasive racial and class-related stereotypes associated with East Helsinki. In Chapter 9, Riikka Tuori shifts the attention to a longstanding minority in Finland, and the influence of their rich heritage on contemporary identities. With recent interview data from the research project *Minhag Finland*, this chapter investigates the construction of Jewishness among Finnish Jews along with their experiences with antisemitism and racism in Finland. While cognizant of their “difference” as a minority group, the participants’ responses demonstrate that the Finnish-Jewish community has evolved into a multicultural community embracing many markers of Finnishness as well.

Part IV, *Imperialism and Colonization*, offers a clear empirical contestation to the myth of Finnish white homogeneity as well as its colonial innocence. The chapters investigate the mechanisms and effects of colonization from socio-cultural and linguistic perspectives. Different groups of “others” are brought into discussion, illustrating that indigeneity and migration are messy categories to apply to various inhabitants of Finland, rather than simple delineations of types of “otherness.” Much like the classification of “Finnishness,” the classification of “others” is a matter of cultural work, of canonization and of contestation. It is also an important part of Arctic colonialism, both historical and contemporary.

Chapter 10 explores Finnish discourses about identity and ethnicity, and particularly the role English as an (acquired) language plays in practices of self-identification and ethnic belonging. In this chapter, Elizabeth Peterson demonstrates that skills in English, often considered something positive and even a source of pride among Finns, carries direct connotations to colonialism and class-based distinctions that run counter to the perceived social equalities in Finland. In Chapter 11, Rauna Kuokkanen outlines the role of the Finnish state and nation in ongoing practices of settler colonialism. Understanding Sámi communities as mere cultural entities or even “problems” rather than as holders of geopolitical sovereignty has shaped and legitimized histories and practices of nation building. Kuokkanen investigates how whiteness and its experience has contributed to both the ethnicization and colonization of Indigenous peoples in Finland. Drawing from various historical sources, including newspapers, letters and poetry, in Chapter 12, Ainur Elmgren examines the racialized perceptions of Finnish and Turko-Tatar intellectuals from the 19th century onward. As longstanding minoritized groups, they held a position of both (relative) subordination and privilege, and developed sophisticated vocabularies hybridizing narratives of the Mongol Empire, intellectualism and Finnishness to construct their own identities. The chapter shows how shifting ideals, representations and beliefs led to changes in self-representation and belonging, too, as they struggled to represent their Mongolian heritage as desirable in a modern European context.

Finally, Suvi Keskinen reflects, in her afterword, on the colonial nature of Finnishness and its histories and heritages. Keskinen's work has been one of the formative influences in the emerging conversations, both scholarly and public, about Finnish colonialism and its historical trajectory. This book both attests to the powerful challenges to myths of homogeneity and neutrality she and other scholars have formulated recently, and attempts to chart out a territory beyond the state of the art. In her afterword, Keskinen looks back at how debates around colonial complicity and racial justice have emerged and changed in the last two decades, in Finland. She also gestures at the future, imagining a way forward into new scholarships and politics of hope.

In conclusion, this contribution can be seen as a response to a call to action to critically examine the relationship of race, whiteness, colonialism, Finland and Finnishness. Because this contribution is the first volume of its kind on this combination of topics, the chapters in the volume necessarily take a wide and general perspective. In this volume, our approach is to address what we see as the most significant and informing topics that apply to the context of Finland and Finnishness. As is normally the case, we are well aware that this volume merely skims the surface of further investigations that are ripe and ready. Examples that occurred to us while we were preparing this volume include different cultural representations and emerging counter-narratives around Finnishness and the effects of global capitalism, not necessarily in reference to past colonial systems, but rather as part of modern neoliberal economy where the decisions of big companies affect, for example, which names and images can be seen on food brands in the shelves of Finnish grocery stores. Examples include the contestations of Finnishness through shifting a white to Brown Finnish young woman as the character depicted on the Finnish brand of oats, Elovena (see Turun Sanomat 2006), as well as changing brand names such as Eskimo brand ice creams in the wake of the global wave of addressing systemic racism and following the example of international companies (see Sirén 2020). Returning to Finland's success as the "goodest" and the "happiest" country and its new self-image as a global winner, it might be relevant to ask: How much room is there for critical self-reflection and the admission and addressing of racism in a country that is already seen as "perfect"?

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Notes

¹ Translation by the editors of this book.

² <https://www.ruskeattytot.fi/>

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