

Liminal Europeanness: Whiteness, east–west mobility, and European citizenship

Aleksandra Sojka

Department of Social Sciences, Carlos III University in Madrid, Spain

asojka@clio.uc3m.es

Author's version of Chapter 8 in *Borderlands in European Gender Studies. Beyond the East-West Frontier*, Teresa Kulawik and Zhanna Kravchenko, eds. London: Routledge, pp. 193-212.

Introduction¹

The European Union (EU) enlargements of the early twenty-first century constituted a significant eastward shift in the geographical and discursive borders of the Union. The most significant wave of expansion in the EU's history removed boundaries to the political membership of the Union, its supranational citizenship, for millions of citizens in the post-socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). European citizenship denotes belonging to the EU as a political community. It is associated with transnational citizenship rights, which include freedom of movement and political participation beyond national borders. EU citizenship also suggests the existence of a shared political identity. Therefore, the eastward expansion of the EU can be regarded as especially significant in terms of “European integration” as it symbolized the overcoming of the continent's former deep division. As the popular slogan Back to Europe suggests, with EU accession, CEE countries have (re)claimed their full Europeanness.

In spite of being officially admitted to the community, new EU member states are still marked by their history of state socialism and relative economic underdevelopment.

¹ This chapter is the result of a research project undertaken at the University of Utrecht (the Netherlands) in the framework of the Graduate Research Programme in Gender and Ethnicity, with a fellowship from the TALENTIA programme of Junta de Andalucía (Spain). I would like to thank Sandra Ponzanesi for her valuable scholarly guidance throughout the process and Rosi Braidotti for her encouragement and insights regarding the project. I would also like to thank the editors of this volume for their support and helpful comments on the earlier versions of this chapter.

Such perceived difference of Eastern Europe has been a critical element in defining a (West) European identity (Neumann 1998; Stráth 2002; Todorova 1997, among others). Some authors even note that, due to this historically established otherness of Eastern Europe, the latecomers to the process of European integration could be unable to embrace their Europeanness fully (Malksöo 2010). Therefore, far from constituting a straightforward integration or unification process, the most recent enlargements of the EU entail complex and multifaceted processes of a redefinition of belonging in the European space. Perceptions of Europeanness as a racialized category intersect with these processes, and the objective of this chapter is to analyze them by looking at the case of new EU citizens within the space of free transnational movement established by the Union.

More specifically, the main focus of the analysis is the case of female labor migration in the aftermath of post-socialist transformations and EU enlargement. The empirical basis for the study is a set of in-depth interviews conducted with Polish domestic workers in Madrid, Spain, in 2009. Even though this is a particular social and geographical setting, I argue that evidence from such a specific location can be used to advance a more general argument concerning the remaking of European citizenship in postenlargement Europe. The case of Polish domestic workers in Spain highlights how gender, race, and class intersect with European citizenship. The traditional employment of East European women as domestic workers in countries of Western Europe can be interpreted within the framework of the normative position of Central and Eastern Europe as the “other” Europe (Coyle 2007; Morokvasic 1991), but also more broadly within the global hierarchies of womanhood in terms of class, nationality, and citizenship (Parreñas 2000).

From a sociological point of view, citizenship can be analyzed as political membership and as social rights and claims, as well as a collective identity (Benhabib 2002). A feminist revisiting of the concept focuses on a multilayered understanding of citizenship, which includes the tensions and contradictions that surface in its lived experience (Strasser 2012). In this sense, I analyze European citizenship as a status, as an ascription and a relation to self in the aftermath of European enlargement. My main argument is that Europeanness is not a fixed position of privilege; instead, it must be analyzed in the context of broader mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion within the borders of Europe, as well as processes of socioeconomic and discursive differentiation taking place between its center and peripheries. European citizenship bears strong racial connotations, since European whiteness constitutes a specific form of ethnicity (Balibar 2004; Goldberg 2006). However, whether it remains unmarked or becomes racialized depends on the intersections between class, gender, and

nationality. By analyzing connections between these axes of differentiation, the present chapter addresses the necessity for “a theoretical, critical and political re-evaluation of citizenship politics in the age of globalization and transnationalization” (Hearn et al. 2011: 4).

This chapter presents the main theoretical points of the study and a summary of its empirical outcomes. First, I discuss the challenges of East–West mobility in contemporary Europe and develop the theoretical framework of the study: the concepts of liminal Europeanness and whiteness in the context of Europe. In the second part, the narratives of Polish domestic workers are presented with a focus on their perceptions of race and Europeanness. This empirical evidence is analyzed using the analytical tools of liminal Europeanness and whiteness to unpack the complexities of contemporary European identities.

East–West migrations and intra-European mobility

European citizens who move to another EU country exercise their right to freedom of movement within the Union. Therefore, it is more accurate to talk about mobility than to use the term migration to describe it. In recent years, we have witnessed an increased academic interest in the issue of East–West mobility within the enlarged EU (Burrell 2009; Rostek and Uffelmann 2011; Spohn and Triandafyllidou 2003; White 2011). Before the eastward enlargement, the possibility of mass labor migration from new member states to the West constituted one of the principal preoccupations among its detractors. A cheap workforce from the East flooding West European labor markets was often depicted in West European media as a threat, as encapsulated by the figure of the “Polish plumber.”² These fears resulted in the introduction by most EU member states of transitional periods restricting free labor mobility from the new EU member states for up to seven years (the maximum legally permitted period). These restrictions temporarily curbed the transnational rights of the new EU citizens and created a kind of second-class citizenship. The restrictions were especially acute for Romanians and Bulgarians, as their free labor mobility remained limited in most EU countries until 2014. When they finally became full-fledged European citizens, the dangers of mass migration from these countries and the possibility of preventing

² This topic surfaced in the political debate surrounding the French campaign on the European Constitution. The “Polish plumber” embodied fears concerning possible mass migrations of workers from the new Central and East European member states who might take the jobs of the nationals of the EU-15 states.

it became hot topics of public debate in several EU countries (especially in the U.K., in the context of the Eurosceptic discourse of parts of both the Conservative and Labour parties, as well as of the radical right). Moreover, as of 2019, Romania and Bulgaria have been blocked from participation in the Schengen area of free cross-border movement.

While it is still rather early to evaluate the long-term effects of the EU enlargement in terms of population movements, the case of the U.K. as the principal host country to the mobile EU citizens from Central and Eastern Europe provides an excellent example of the enlargement's real and perceived effects. The U.K. was one of the few countries that opened its labor market to the 2004 enlargement countries immediately upon accession. According to official data, in the two years following the enlargement, about half a million Poles established themselves as workers in the U.K., and Poland became the top country of citizenship among foreign citizens in Britain (13 percent of total) (Migration Observatory 2014). The presence of hundreds of thousands of Polish workers in the U.K. attracted much attention not only from the press but also from scholars.³ It emerges from existing studies that, in economic terms, Poles, just like the rest of the mobile EU citizens from CEE member states, find employment predominantly in the lowest-paid jobs available on the British labor market (Drinkwater et al. 2009). However, in terms of social perceptions, their cultural proximity is rather highly valued (Garapich 2008). More and more attention is paid to the issue of race in these recent studies of East European post-2004 migration to the U.K. In general, scholars agree that in the multicultural British society, new Europeans are less visible as "migrants" due to their whiteness (McDowell 2009). Whiteness operates as a criterion for implicit racialized inclusion, and as such conforms to the popular understanding of Europeanness (Fox et al. 2012). However, an analysis of British tabloid press reveals that racism toward Eastern Europeans can also be based on presumed cultural difference (Fox et al. 2012), making the distinction between those who belong and those who are excluded from the community much more nuanced.

The position of Poles in the U.K., between racialized inclusion and presumed difference, exemplifies the ambiguous perception of new European citizens within the political community of the EU at large. These ambiguities are also applicable to the case of

³ The scholarly interest in the presence of Polish migrants in United Kingdom is reflected in numerous studies and research articles published on this topic in recent years. See, for instance, the research performed at the Centre for Research on Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Multiculturalism (CRONEM) at the University of Surrey or the volume *Polish Migration to the UK in the "New" European Union after 2004*, edited by Kathy Burrell (2009).

Spain, a country which opened its labor market to CEE workers in 2007. In general, as opinion polls as well as qualitative research on the migrant community in Spain reveal, Poles are viewed as culturally close, and their perceptions within the Spanish society are predominantly favorable.⁴ However, their employment remains principally restricted to the gendered niches of migrant employment: domestic labor (women) and construction work (men) (Stanek 2008). The influence of racial perceptions in this context is of paramount importance.

In the early 2000s, Spain became one of the so-called new immigration countries of Western Europe. The establishment of a fast-growing multicultural and multiethnic migrant community in this country triggered a great deal of attention from social researchers. However, the vast majority of the research focused on the non-European migrants from Latin America and Africa. In this context, very little attention has been paid to the presence of Central and East European migrants, whose migrant status was transformed in 2004 into that of European citizens. This lack of research interest⁵ could be attributed to the fact that CEE citizens are not perceived as typical subjects for migration studies because of the difficulties involved in qualifying them as migrants.

Therefore, the evidence presented in this chapter contributes to the existing research by exploring racialized perceptions of European citizens who remain in the traditional position of migrants in economic and social terms. My focus is on the situation of migrant domestic workers in a European country; however, the specificities of the social location of the women in question as White, Catholic, (East) European, and EU citizens make it challenging to categorize them as migrant women in traditional terms of racialized difference. Therefore, to account for the ambiguous positionality of Central and East European women employed in the domestic-work sector, we need specific analytical tools and frameworks. In the following section, I discuss how an intersectional approach could be a suitable tool allowing us to combine various social categories of analysis, most importantly

⁴ In 2000, CIS (the Spanish Centre for Sociological Research) included in its monthly survey a few questions regarding perceptions of Poles in Spanish society. The principal characteristics mentioned by the respondents were “religious,” “hardworking,” and “polite”; this is in spite of the fact that only 15 percent of the respondents affirmed having actually met a Polish person.

⁵ This has changed in recent years with a great influx of Romanian citizens even before 2007. Romanians became the most numerous foreign community in Spain in 2007, surpassing Moroccans, who had traditionally been the largest foreign population. Therefore, Romanians embody the image of “East European migrants” for the Spanish population and have begun to attract the interest of Spanish researchers.

race, class, and gender, to account for the dynamic character of the social locations of the new European citizens.

Theoretical framework: disentangling the intersections of Europeanness and whiteness

The concept of intersectionality has been subject to much debate in the last two decades, and while it was first introduced by the American scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to analyze the complexities of the disadvantages of Black women in the United States, studies of interlocking oppressions had been developed by European feminists throughout the 1980s. In recent decades, intersectionality has become a hot topic in women's and gender studies, and there has been much debate on its different conceptualizations as well as methodological aspects (McCall 2005). To account for the complexities of these debates would be beyond the scope of this chapter; however, for the purposes of this study, the conceptualization put forward by Nira Yuval-Davis (2006) will be adopted (for more detailed discussions, see also Gradskova, Chapter 4, this volume, and Freidenvall and Dahlerup, Chapter 10, this volume).

Two aspects are central to my analysis. On the one hand, it is the post-socialist condition of the new European citizens, the “liminal Europeanness” of Central and East European identities (Malksöo 2010: 56), that denotes their position as subaltern in relation to Western Europeanness. On the other hand, I apply the notion of whiteness, as critically revisited in the European context (Griffin and Braidotti 2002), to analyze the narratives of location and positionality (Anthias 2002) of a group of mobile women EU citizens. To account for their complex and shifting positionalities, I apply an intersectional perspective: whiteness and Europeanness constitute central categories of analysis, together with gender, class, citizenship, and nationality as the other significant axes of differentiation present in contemporary European societies. Intersectionality is applied here as a way to “avoid attributing fixed identity groupings to the dynamic process of positionality and location, on the one hand, and the contested and shifting political construction of categorical boundaries, on the other” (Yuval-Davis 2006: 200). Thus, intersectionality allows us to adequately approach “the interlinking grids of differential positioning in terms of class, race and ethnicity, gender and other social divisions, [which] tend to create, in specific historical situations, hierarchies of differential access to a variety of resources—economic, political and cultural” (Yuval-Davis 2006: 199). In the specific context of this study, such an

approach is crucial to account for how whiteness intersects with European citizenship and liminal Europeanness. Furthermore, it allows me to unpack the complex positionality—between privilege and disadvantage—of White European women employed in the racialized sector of domestic work.

The liminal Europeanness of Central and Eastern Europeans

In spite of the differences between its countries and regions, there are two fundamental aspects of the ambiguous location of Central and Eastern Europe as part of the broader concept of Europe. On the one hand, there is the legacy of the socialist past and memory of its status as the “Second World”, separate from the Western sphere (Regulska 1998) combined with the even more deeply rooted ideas regarding Easternness and Orientalism. On the other hand, there is a desire to compensate for these legacies and become fully (Western) European. While this desire has been acknowledged as legitimate for several of the post-socialist states through the eastward enlargements of the EU, some authors argue that the divide between the fully European Europe and the not-yet-fully European “Eastern Europe” constitutes a central premise of their EU accession (Kuus 2004). Exactly such positioning as “Europe, but not quite” can be considered as a form of liminal Europeanness (Malksöö 2010). Easternness continues to connote a sense of backwardness and inferiority, even if this is the East of Europe (Böröcz 2001; Neumann 1998; Stråth 2002; Todorova 1997). In this sense, Bo Stråth argues that while the Enlightenment philosophers “established ‘Western Europe’<th>” as the seat of civilization, so too they invented an “Eastern Europe” as its complement. Eastern Europe exhibited a condition of backwardness on a relative scale of development; however, the philosophers did not bestow on Eastern Europe the radical otherness ascribed to non-European “barbarians’<th>” (Stråth 2002: 393). According to Stråth, it is precisely this unclear position of Eastern Europe, between civilization and barbarism, which relegates it to such an ambiguous space within the discourse on Europe. Central and Eastern Europe remains simultaneously included in and excluded from Europe (cf. Neumann 1998; Todorova 1997, among others).

Such an ambiguous position of the Central and Eastern parts of Europe is deeply intertwined with issues of colonial legacies and postcolonial mentalities. For example, David Moore (2001) points to the social and economic parallels in historical and political developments between the post-socialist space and postcolonial countries, such as economic problems, ethnic tensions, and disillusionment with the political process. Moore remarks

that many peoples of the post-socialist Second World think of themselves as Europeans (thus, “Western”), and would, therefore, reject the notion that their situation is similar to that of the colonized peoples of less developed countries. The interesting conclusion reached by the author is that one of the results of extended subjugation, as many theorists of colonization suggest, is the desire for mimicry, understood as a craving for the dominant cultural form. In the case of the post-socialist countries, this compensatory process is manifested in the fact that “Central and Eastern Europeans type this desire as a return to Western-ness that once was theirs” (Moore 2001). In a similar vein, Böröcz (2001) points out that the colonial legacy remains relevant to Eastern enlargement insofar as “the very combination of wealth, power, centrality and privilege—which owes its existence to the imperial-colonial past of western Europe—constitutes the iron core of the magnetism of the EU for its ‘eastern’ applicants today.” Moreover, according to Böröcz, part of “catching up with the West” and CEE’s desire for EU membership implies accepting ideas pertinent to the advantages of Western identities within the global racial hierarchies and, thus, reproducing an “unreconstructed” idea of whiteness.

Whiteness revisited: Europeanness and race

The uses of whiteness to construct advantageous identities operate globally as well as more locally. According to Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka (2004), an unclear self-definition of Eastern Europeans between “being European” and “being other than European” produces an attitude of superiority toward societies farther East. This, in turn, compensates for an inferiority complex toward the West among those liminal Europeans. Such divisions within “Eastern Europe” are based on processes of inferiorization, which imply racial othering (Boatcă 2006). These differentiations produce “hierarchies of Easternness” and result in the “lesser whiteness” of some Eastern Europeans or, as Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995) puts it in the context of the Balkans, “nested Orientalisms,” intertwined with perceptions regarding race and religion, whiteness, and Christianity. These processes imply the use of racialized hierarchies within Eastern Europe to compensate for the unclear identity of liminal Europeans.

Therefore, racial categories remain central to European identity, East and West. In this sense, David T. Goldberg (2006) argues that contemporary notions of Europeanness inevitably imply whiteness and Christianity. This is due to the

long-established presumption of Europe as the home of, and so to, whiteness and Christianity, from which it follows that any person of color or non-Christian in Europe presumptively is not of Europe, not European, does not (properly or fully) ever belong. (Goldberg 2006: 352)

Such characterization of Europeanness as a very concrete, historically shaped form of belonging based on whiteness and Christianity poses significant problems of belonging for the numerous non-White and non-Christian communities in Europe. It is also the focal point for critics of the concept of European citizenship, who point to the fact that unless such assumptions are deconstructed, there will be no real community on which the European Union project can be built (Balibar 2004). If Europeanness is understood in such racial terms, Central and Eastern Europeans have always belonged to Europe and have constructed their identities on considerations pertinent to race (whiteness) and religion (Christianity) (Boatcă 2006). From this perspective, their acquiring of European citizenship would be significant only in legal terms. However, in what follows, my objective is to show that the relation between Eastern whiteness and Europeanness is not straightforward either; further analytical work concerning the notion of whiteness in the European context is required to fully account for its complexities.

Academic interest in the category of whiteness has grown significantly in the last several decades. In the 1990s, scholars such as Richard Dyer (1997) argued for the problematization of whiteness to dismantle its social invisibility. Ruth Frankenberg, in her book *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (1993), examines White women's relation to whiteness. In this study, Frankenberg is one of the first scholars to argue for an analysis of the processes of "the social construction of whiteness." She argues that "whiteness refers to a set of social locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination" (Frankenberg 1993: 6). Frankenberg claims that "naming" whiteness displaces it from the unmarked status that entails dominance. Furthermore, whiteness is a relational concept, since it is coconstructed with other categories of social difference such as class and gender.

Frankenberg's study is an example of the U.S.-based perspectives on whiteness in the 1990s, focused on making it visible as a racial category and providing analytical tools for its research. However, more and more European scholars point to the necessity of developing a specific framework of study for the European context. France Twine and

Charles Gallagher (2008) argue for a new perspective on whiteness, which they term the third wave in the scholarly study of this concept. They propose a concept that would reject any assumption of whiteness as “only an unconditional, universal and equally experienced location of privilege and power” and become focused on “the situational, relational and historical contingencies that are reshaping and repositioning White identities within the context of shifting racial boundaries” (Twine and Gallagher 2008: 4).

The study of whiteness as linked to Eastern Europeanness offers precisely this kind of opportunity to investigate how White identities are reformulated in multicultural European societies when whiteness intersects with the social and economic status of the supposedly not-fully-European citizen/migrant. Such a project inscribes itself into the wider task of providing “a necessary corrective to the literature on race dominated by analyses of and analytical frames based upon the North American and British analyses of racial hierarchies and meanings” (Twine and Gallagher 2008: 16). The need for studies of whiteness that account for the European specificity of White identities is pointed out by Griffin and Braidotti (2002), who revisit the whiteness debate in terms of the European cultural and historical context. The authors focus on the specific effects of the ideology and practices of eugenics and anti-Semitism, which, in their view, must be considered as central in any European debate on race. The analysis of whiteness in the European context must, therefore, entail accountability for European historical memory. In particular, this implies exploring White identity as a complex process shaped by colonization, the Holocaust, and ethnic cleansing, as well as undergoing important changes in contemporary Europe. In the context of the present study, it must also be considered as mediated by the post-socialist condition of the new European citizens and the ways in which whiteness is used strategically within Europe.

Therefore, to study whiteness is to explore not only the implications of skin color itself. Of interest is, rather, the broader context of other features that surround it, the influence of nationality, religion, class, gender, and language in the construction of social hierarchies. Skin color is one of the criteria of inclusion in the community of so-called real European nationals. However, “in the lived perception and in the most commonly used model of explanation for racial inequality in Europe, one does not primarily refer to skin color, but deeper connotations of citizenship, national identity, western superiority, and civilization” (Essed and Trienekens, quoted in Twine and Gallagher 2008: 16). In the case of Central and Eastern Europeans, their whiteness implies Europeanness, but at the same time, their specific racial characteristics define them as “Eastern” and, thus, not fully

European. They remain both unmarked in social perceptions and racialized as Eastern Europeans. In sum, the ambiguous position of Central and Eastern Europeans, due to their historically constructed position as “Eastern,” and ambiguously “Other,” reinforced by the socialist past, is further complicated by the intersections between discourses on culture and race perceived as essential elements to Europeanness.

Between difference and commonality: Polish domestic workers in Madrid

Having established the theoretical outline of the relationship between the concepts of (liminal) Europeanness and whiteness, I turn to the discussion of the narratives of Polish domestic workers. The choice of the sector of domestic work as the focus of this study is deliberate: one of the most important characteristics of migration in the globalized world is its feminization (Castles and Miller 2009). This process is due to a large extent to the growing demand for a labor force in domestic work (Lutz 2008), traditionally gendered as female. However, most research concerned with the situation of foreign domestic workers in Europe focuses on the presence of women who are racially and ethnically different, migrants from other regions, continents, and of culturally diverse origins (see, for instance, Escrivá 2000; Marchetti 2005; Parreñas 2000). Therefore, the presence of foreign domestic workers in the countries of the European Union is often analyzed in terms of their racial difference, within the framework of global hierarchies of gender, class, race, and citizenship. However, the racial hierarchies present in the labor market are also critical for the situation of new European citizens. As Bridget Anderson argues, “employers tend to express preferences for specific nationalities of domestic workers, and these preferences often reflect racial hierarchies that rank women by precise shades of skin color” (Anderson 2000: 108). Therefore, we might expect that it is in this sector that issues of race and Europeanness as whiteness become especially salient.

Case study outline and methodological considerations

The empirical material presented in this chapter is the outcome of a qualitative study concerned with the impact of the 2004 enlargement of the European Union on the status and the work and personal situations of Polish women employed as domestic workers in Spain. As argued above, the change from migrant to European-citizen status has had

important legal and practical, as well as normative and discursive, implications for the citizens of the new member states of the EU. In the context of a strongly racialized migrant community, Polish domestic workers' whiteness, perceived cultural proximity, and (still ambiguous) belonging to Europe position them closer to the host society and thus constitute a basis for preference on the labor market. On the other hand, in economic and social terms, their predominant employment in the migrant niche of domestic work locates them closer to other, non-EU migrant women in Spain. Therefore, such an ambivalent position offers a vantage point from which to explore the complexities of European citizenship construction and the ways in which it intersects with other social processes and hierarchies that together define the dynamic social positionalities of new European citizens.

The choice of qualitative method for the purpose of this research has been motivated by the assumption that quantitative methods, which would allow for broader generalizations about the social reality in question, could also “offer limited access to account of experiences, nuances of meaning, the nature of social relationships, and their shifts and contradictions” (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002: 155). Similarly, Kofman et al. argue that it is the in-depth qualitative inquiry that can “illuminate the motivations and strategies that are hidden within statistics” (Kofman et al. 2000: 195). For this reason, the method chosen for this study was the use of in-depth semistructured interviews. Each interview lasted between two and five hours, was conducted in Polish, and was recorded, transcribed by the author, and translated where necessary. My nationality allowed me to be considered as an insider in the Polish community, which facilitated some of the initial contacts, even if my occupation as an academic sometimes generated a lack of confidence and the perception of me as an outsider to the economic migrants' community (see Sojka 2011).

Purposive sampling (Ryan et al. 2009) was used to recruit the respondents among Poles in Madrid. Potential interviewees were contacted mainly through job advertisements that specified nationality. The participants of the study differed significantly in terms of family situation, education levels, and geographical origins and, therefore, represented (though they were not representative of) the heterogeneity and complexity of the lived experience of mobile EU citizens (see Table 8.1).

<TABLE 8.1 HERE>

The main criterion of selection was the temporal aspect: in order to provide an empirical basis for a comparative perspective on the experiences of pre-2004 migration and post-2004 mobility, I aimed to interview both established residents in Spain and those who had arrived more recently. The accession of Poland to the European Union (2004), the subsequent acquisition of the status of European citizen, and the right to reside and work in Spain on equal terms with the country's nationals (2007) constituted the main points of reference. Hence the study included respondents who had been in Spain for more than a decade (representing the economic migration of the 1990s post-socialist transition), as well as those who arrived at different points after 2004 (already as European citizens). Such a diversity of life trajectories allows for a comparative approach and an analysis of the different strategies adopted in the face of the experience of migration/mobility. While the perceived importance of the change in legal status from migrant to European citizen is explored in previous publications (see Sojka 2012), my focus here is on the complexities of Europeanness as self-perception, especially in relation to race.

As argued above, my theoretical assumption is that the situation of new European citizens must be analyzed from the perspective of their liminal Europeanness and European citizenship as associated with whiteness. The process of migration offers a vantage point for this type of analysis, as it involves the experience of one's race in a series of new places and through new social interactions, which also involves facing social stereotypes regarding one's community (Ryan 2010). Therefore, the main question here is how the new European citizens experience their whiteness through migration/mobility. The geographical movement as a catalyst for the realization of one's racialization is especially relevant in the case of Poles, as their home country is overwhelmingly racially homogenous, making race even more central to their experience of migration/mobility.

Europeanness and race in the context of intra-European mobility

As previous research shows, before 2004, while Polish workers were still considered to be non-EU migrants, whiteness and Christianity positioned them closer to the host societies of West European countries. Such cultural and racial similarities allowed Polish (and other Central and East European) mobile citizens to remain less visible and, thus, more socially acceptable in the context of a racialized discourse on the "dangers" of migration present in EU countries (cf. Ferrero Turrión 2005; Ramírez Goicoechea 2003). However, and as I argue above, while Central and East Europeans' whiteness implies Europeanness and belonging,

it becomes more ambiguous when combined with the specific racial characteristics that imply perception of them as “Eastern Europeans.”

The general idea emerging from the scholarship available on Central and East European immigrants in Spain is that nationals of the CEE countries integrate quickly into the Spanish society due to their cultural proximity and the lack of past issues between Spain and the region (Ferrero Turrión 2005). The Europeanness of CEE nationals is considered an important characteristic within the framework of immigration dominated by Moroccan, Latin American, and sub-Saharan migrants, who are strongly othered by Spanish society (Ramírez Goicoechea 2003). In previous studies we find the idea that Poles are “the ones who integrate the best,” who are not “visible” in society, or whose presence in Spain is not perceived as a “problem” by the Spanish public (Ferrero Turrión 2005; González Yanci and Arilla Aguilera 1996; Ramírez Goicoechea 2003). This generally favorable opinion is also reflected in the fact that Spanish citizens regard Poles as hardworking and highly valuing family ties (Ramírez Goicoechea 2003), and as discreet and law-abiding (González Yanci and Arilla Aguilera 1996).

All of the interviewees confirmed this favorable stereotype and expressed feelings of being positively perceived by Spanish society as a whole; such a positive attitude related most often to their employment possibilities. Agnieszka (37 years old, a university graduate living in Madrid since 2003 with her Polish partner and their two-year-old daughter) talked about this in very general terms, noting that “we have an excellent reputation; I know Spanish families who only want to have Polish women in their house.” Ewa (fortyish, a secondary-school graduate living in Spain for the past 12 years, with 2 children at home in Poland with their father) went into more detail, confirming that “Poles have always been valued here, for children, cleaning; they have always been praised by [Spanish employers]. They say, ‘Polish! That’s good, they are good people, they work hard, and they are clean’.” Martyna (20 years old, a secondary-school graduate in Madrid for a year, where she reunited with her émigré parents) expressed a similarly positive perception: “Spaniards have respect for Poles, I think. The family I work for, my employers, they have been to Poland, and they liked the country.” Such evidence points to the fact that Polish women actively use their nationality to reaffirm their belonging in Spanish society, in a way similar to that in which Lithuanian women construct a positive image of themselves in the U.K. (Erentaite 2011). It is interesting to note that many Poles state their nationality in the job seekers’ advertisements they post, and it is reasonable to think that they do so because of their belief that it might help them find employment. Such a hypothesis was confirmed in my

interviews; the participants expressed their conviction that their nationality constituted an advantage for them, as many Spanish employers preferred Polish domestic workers over Latin American and Moroccan women. This fact makes explicit the conscious and strategic use of one's nationality as an asset within the existing hierarchies based on race, ethnicity, and nationality.

An important point of cultural reference that reinforces the positive stereotype of Poles in Spanish society is the representation of Poland as a deeply Catholic country. Most studies of the Polish community in Spain point to the strong connections between the Catholic religion and Polish national identity, which are supposedly maintained in the process of migration/mobility (Arnal Sarasa 1998; Ramírez Goicoechea 2003). Nevertheless, such straightforward assumptions constitute simplistic representations of a more complex social reality. In my study, with only one exception, all participants defined themselves either as not Catholic or as Catholic but not concerned with religion at all. Moreover, interviewees noted that the three Polish churches in Madrid, regarded as a symbol of attachment to Catholic and national origins, in reality constituted more of a meeting place for the Polish community. The Polish mass is considered a social event and does not necessarily have a profound religious meaning. Out of all of the participants, only Kasia (20 years old, a secondary-school graduate from a small village and arrived less than a year before the interview) considered the Catholic religion to be an important element of her culture of origin and, in fact, a source of difference in the context of the host country:

I am a Catholic and I am not ashamed of it. I don't care what they [Spaniards] think about me. My boss asked me whether I go to church, and I said yes. And she made a strange face. But I don't care what she thinks. They are different from us; they don't value such things.

Kasia, therefore, seemed to be the only one in this case study confirming the stereotypical perception of Poles as being very religious and deeply attached to Catholic values. Surprisingly, from her perspective, her religiosity constituted a source of perceived difference with Spanish society rather than commonality. In spite of such heterogeneity, however, and as other studies suggest (Arnal Sarasa 1998), the widespread perception of Poles in Spain as Catholic is used as a mechanism of adaptation by this community when faced by a negative discourse on migration that seeks to other migrants as racially and culturally different.

In the context of a strongly racialized migrant community, such a positive perception of Polish citizens as unproblematic indicates the link to issues of race and ethnicity. However, these issues remain unspoken and are referred to through a discourse on “cultural proximity.” Poles enjoy an advantageous position in the labor market and within Spanish society in general due to their being perceived as White and European. As argued above, whiteness constitutes a racial category that remains unnamed, and that therefore produces spaces of power and domination over those defined as non-White. In this sense, the term whiteness⁶ is not used by the respondents, and no explicit reference is made to the racial location of Poles. Whiteness remains unspoken, unnamed, even though all of the study respondents related to it in one way or another. For instance, Ewelina noted:

Poles are characterized by blond hair...; we have fair eyes, fair skin, etc. And I am more aware of this now, of the culture we have, what distinguishes us.... When I was living in my village, I didn't think about it.

Therefore, Ewelina directly related issues of skin color and race to the notion of cultural difference, which became evident to her, as anticipated, in the context of the multiethnic Spanish society. Sylwia (in her mid-thirties, with a basic level of education, living in Spain for the past 11 years), on the other hand, points to the fact that this homogenous image of Poles is false and exists only as a social construction, while the reality is much more complicated. She notes that “for [Spaniards], a Pole is this conception of blond with blue eyes, but we are not all like that.” In contrast to the accounts of older women, Kasia and Martyna did not express notions of difference; rather, they thought that Poles remained invisible since, as Martyna argued, “we don't stand out at all, and we are no different from Spaniards in terms of skin color, culture.” Nevertheless, such invisibility clearly refers to a very concrete racial category, that is, European whiteness. In this respect, respondents in my study saw other migrants only in racial terms and conceived of their own “blond hair and fair skin” as something natural and unproblematic. Whiteness is a position which remains unnamed and, thus, invisible.

Such perception of self as a nonracialized norm can lead to racist remarks concerning the racialized others whom Poles encounter in the context of the multiethnic Spanish migrant community. In particular, Sylwia affirmed that:

⁶ In fact, it is a term that does not translate easily into Polish.

Spanish women prefer Polish women. Because Ecuadorian women have a reputation of being lazy people, dirty, all those Peruvians, they are dirty, Romanians are thieves, Ukrainians and Russians are mafia, all the time in the newspapers.... So, you know, we should be glad that we are Poles. Always there has been an opinion that [we] are hardworking and diligent.

Apart from its racist content, this statement substantiates the fact that Poles use their Europeaness strategically to affirm their belonging. However, Poles do not only construct their identity in opposition to the racialized others; the process also implies differentiated perceptions of other Eastern Europeans. As Ewelina noted, “I think [my nationality] matters, at least in the sector [of domestic work] in which I work now; we are ahead of Russians, Ukrainians, and Romanians—whom everybody hates, you know?” Like Sylwia, Ewelina thus inscribed Poles in a hierarchy of Eastern Europeans that reproduces the racialized “hierarchies of Easternness” as discussed above, in which the position of Poles is highly advantageous as they are perceived as “more Western.” From this perspective, it is not only skin color that matters but also nationality and regional differences: those from a more “faraway East” are perceived as occupying a lower position in the racial hierarchy. Moreover, this is directly linked to how Polish identity has been constructed in opposition to Poles’ Eastern neighbors, who are treated by them as “others.” In this sense, Polish Europeaness has been most often defined in terms of difference from such Eastern (“non-European”) neighbors, especially Russians (Pittaway 2003).

However, in the context of migration/mobility, individuals experience their ethnicity in various ways—by reinforcing existing prejudices as well as by making their self-perception more complex. Here it is interesting to note that, in spite of the assumption that Poles somehow stand out among other Central and East Europeans, respondents told me that they are quite often confused with Romanians. As Zofia (in her early forties, previously a teacher in Poland, living in Spain for more than 14 years) noted, “people very often associate me with Romania and not Poland; at first I was outraged.... But Romanians, like the rest of us, are all sorts of people, there are those who cheat and those who work hard.” However, for Sylwia and Ewelina, such associations were not at all positive, since they themselves held strong negative opinions about people of this particular nationality. Therefore, Poles find themselves faced with their Easternness, which would otherwise remain unproblematized. Moreover, they realize that being perceived as an East European migrant constitutes the basis for an inferior status. In spite of the generally positive attitudes toward

Poles as domestic workers, respondents also noted that coming from Central Europe has its costs. As Agnieszka put it:

They treat you as an apprentice because we are from Poland, we are from Eastern Europe, we are not from America [meaning the U.S.], we are not from England, and we are not from Germany or France. We are treated as if we still need to learn.

Agnieszka was referring here to the borders drawn between the East and the West of Europe and to the fact that Poles remain not entirely European, since coming from the Eastern borderland of the EU marks them as backward (Kuus 2004). Such perceptions exemplify liminal Europeanness—new EU citizens recognize the fact that they are treated as “neophytes to the European project” (Malksöo 2010: 4). The combination of positive attitudes on the one hand and recognition of perceptions of difference on the other implies a somewhat ambiguous position for Poles, caught somewhere between those who are entirely European and Western and those who do not belong in the space of Europe. However, in social and economic terms, Poles seem to perceive themselves as belonging to the latter group of economically disadvantaged migrants who treat their mobility as strictly an economic undertaking. As Ewelina noted:

Our situation is closer to those who come from Ecuador, Peru; they all come here to earn money, like us. But it is much more difficult for them with the papers [residence and work permits] and everything.

Therefore, the intersecting differences and commonalities between European and non-European, Western and Eastern, belonging and nonbelonging, result in a complicated web of hierarchies in which the position of Poles remains shifting and unstable. Poles’ Europeanness is defined to a great extent by the salience of whiteness in different contexts.

The perception of Poles in Spain is further complicated by notions of commonality and otherness based on culture. The issue of language should constitute a particularly prominent source of difference in the context of the strong presence of Latin American migration. However, it turns out that Polish migrants learn the basics of the language quite rapidly and overcome this difficulty relatively easy. Moreover, it seems that for Spanish employers who prefer to employ Poles, language does not pose a problem in the least; all of the women with whom I spoke had started working with Spanish employers without having even a basic notion of the language. Nevertheless, there always remains the issue of accent,

as accents in Spain constitute a reliable indicator of the sociogeographical origins of its inhabitants. It is no different in the case of Poles, who are considered to have a specific “East European” accent. As Agnieszka noted, “my accent—it is typically Eastern European, and they laugh at it.” Zofia explained this further:

People tell me I know the language quite well; there is no accent.... And [Poles] always have this distinctive accent, and that is why in a conversation they think I am from the East, but not from Poland, rather from Romania, because their language is similar to Spanish.

Therefore, accent, or a lack thereof, can be a source of further differentiation that, when combined with specific racial characteristics and Catholic associations, mark Poles as “Eastern migrants,” a position which, due to the connotations of Easternness as well as of migrant status, remains in tension with their alleged Europeaness.

In sum, although the issue of whiteness remains for the most part unspoken, and, thus, invisible, when combined with the perceived cultural proximity of Poles, it constitutes a basis for preference on the labor market over other, racially different, non-European women. Polish women’s positive self-perception is inscribed into the broader framework of racial hierarchies in the multicultural Spanish migrant community, where Europeaness as whiteness, Catholicism, and alleged Westernness is racialized and becomes a resource. Polish women use the perception of themselves as White and European strategically, reinforcing the (White) “norm.” However, their social perception, which remains unmarked and is actively used as a strategic resource, implies at the same time a certain difference, as they become racialized as “East European women,” thus marking their liminal Europeaness.

Conclusions

This chapter explores the complexities of Europeaness as self-perception, especially in relation to race. The main argument is that, in the expanding space of the European Union, Europeaness cannot be understood as a fixed position of privilege; rather, it must be understood in the context of broader processes of inclusion and exclusion within the borders of Europe, as well as of socioeconomic and discursive differentiation between its center and peripheries. In contemporary European multiethnic societies, especially in the context of East–West migrations/mobilities, any analysis of the complexities of European identities must take into account the many shades of European whiteness.

These complexities of European identities are exemplified by the case of the liminal Europeanness of new European citizens. When Europeanness is considered in racial terms, whiteness and Christian origins become a source of commonality and privileged position in the context of diverse, multiracial communities. Whiteness operates as a criterion for implicit racialized inclusion in host societies of the EU, as it conforms to the popular understanding of Europeanness. Moreover, racialized inclusion is actively used as a strategic resource in the context of intra-European mobility, constituting the basis for preference in terms of employment. Polish women use the Spanish perception of their whiteness and Europeanness to their benefit, signaling their belonging to the (White) “norm.” However, racialized Eastern Europeanness can also constitute the basis for an inferior status, a possibility realized by new EU citizens in the context of their migration. Moreover, racial differentiation of Eastern others is also used as an element of identity construction within the community of Central and East European migrants themselves, that is, within the framework of “hierarchies of Easternness.”

The empirical evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that European whiteness is by no means a straightforward concept or location as it becomes articulated with other axes of difference. In order for it to constitute a useful analytical category, we must account for its European specificity: how it is defined in relation to non-European racialized groups present in West European societies, as well as to the liminal Europeanness of those Central and East Europeans who have become mobile citizens following the eastward enlargement of the EU.

References

- Anderson, B. (2000) *Doing the dirty work? The global politics of domestic labour*, London: Zed Books.
- Anthias, F. (2002) "Where do I belong? Narrating collective identity and translocational positionality," *Ethnicities* 2: 491–515.
- Arnal Sarasa, M. D. (1998). *Inmigrantes polacos en España: el camino como concepto teórico para el estudio de la adaptación*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Universidad Complutense de Madrid.
- Bakić-Hayden, M. (1995) "Nesting Orientalisms: The case of former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54: 917–931.
- Balibar, E. (2004) *We, the people of Europe? Reflections on transnational citizenship*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Benhabib, S. (2002) *The claims of culture: Equality and diversity in the global era*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Boatcă, M. (2006) "No race to the swift: Negotiating racial identity in past and present Eastern Europe," *Human Architecture* 5: 91–104.
- Böröcz, J. (2001) "Introduction: Empire and coloniality in the 'Easter enlargement' of the European Union," in Böröcz, J., and Kovács, M. (Eds.), *Empire's new clothes: Unveiling EU enlargement*, Holly Cottage: Central European Review.
- Burrell, K. (2009) *Polish migration to the UK in the "new" European Union after 2004*, Farnham: Ashgate.
- Castles, S., and Miller, M. (2009) *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Coyle, A. (2007) "Resistance, regulation and rights: The changing status of Polish women's migration and work in the 'new' Europe," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 14: 37–50.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989) "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics," *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140: 139–67.

- Drinkwater, S., Eade, J., and Garapich, M. (2009) “Poles apart? EU enlargement and the labour market: Outcomes of immigrants in the United Kingdom,” **International Migration** 47: 161–190.
- Dyer, R. (1997) *White*, London: Routledge.
- Erentaite, R. (2011) “We are simply more beautiful. Counterstories of Lithuanian migrant women in London,” in Oleksy, E. H., Hearn, J., and Golanska, D. (Eds.), *The limits of gendered citizenship: Contexts and complexities*, New York: Routledge.
- Escrivá, A. (2000) “¿Empleadas de por vida? Peruanas en el servicio doméstico de Barcelona,” *Papers* 60: 327–342.
- Ferrero Turrión, R. (2005) “Nuevos socios, nuevas fronteras: los procesos migratorios desde Europa Central y Oriental,” *Documentos CIDOB Migraciones*, 5: Barcelona Centre for International Affairs.
- Fox, J. E., Morosanu, L., and Szilassy, E. (2012) “The racialization of the new European migration to the UK,” *Sociology of Health and Illness* 46: 680–695.
- Frankenberg, R. (1993) *White women, race matters: The social construction of whiteness*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Garapich, M. P. (2008) “The migration industry and civil society: Polish immigrants in the United Kingdom before and after EU enlargement,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34: 735–752.
- Goldberg, D. T. (2006) “Racial Europeanization,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29: 331–364.
- González Yanci, M. P., and Arilla Aguilera, M. J. (1996) “Los polacos en los nuevos flujos inmigratorios en España: una aceptación social diferente,” *Espacio Tiempo y Forma* 6: 73–91.
- Griffin, G., and Braidotti, R. (2002) “Whiteness and European situatedness,” in Griffin, G., and Braidotti, R. (Eds.), *Thinking differently: A reader in European women’s studies*, London: Zed Books.
- Hearn, J., Oleksy, E. H., and Golanska, D. (2011) “Introduction: The limits of gendered citizenship,” in Oleksy, E. H., Hearn, J., and Golanska, D. (Eds.), *The limits of gendered citizenship: Contexts and complexities*, New York: Routledge.

- Kofman, E., Phizacklea, A., Raghuram, P., and Sales, R. (2000) *Gender and international migration in Europe: Employment, welfare and politics*, London: Routledge.
- Kuus, M. (2004) "Europe's eastern expansion and the reinscription of otherness in East-Central Europe," *Progress in Human Geography* 28: 472–489.
- Lutz, H. (2008) "Introduction: Migrant domestic workers in Europe," in Lutz, H. (Ed.), *Migration and domestic work: A European perspective on a global theme*, Farnham: Ashgate.
- Malksöo, M. (2010) *The politics of becoming European: A study of Polish and Baltic post-Cold War security imaginaries*, London: Routledge.
- Marchetti, S. (2005) "*We had different fortunes*": *Relationships between Filipina domestic workers and their employers in Rome and Amsterdam*. Unpublished master's thesis, Utrecht University.
- McCall, L. (2005) "The complexity of intersectionality," *Signs* 30: 1771–1800.
- McDowell, L. (2009) "Old and new European economic migrants: Whiteness and managed migration policies," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35: 19–36.
- Migration Observatory of the University of Oxford (2014) Briefing: Migrant in the UK: An overview. Online. www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Migrants%20in%20the%20UK-Overview_0.pdf (accessed 18 August 2015).
- Moore, D. (2001) "Is the post- in postcolonial the post in post-Soviet? Toward a global postcolonial critique," *PMLA* 16: 111–128.
- Morokvasic, M. (1991) "Fortress Europe and migrant women," *Feminist Review* 39: 69–84.
- Neumann, I. (1998) *Uses of the other: "The East" in European identity formation*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Parreñas, R. S. (2000) "Migrant Filipina domestic workers and the international division of reproductive labor," *Gender and Society* 14: 560–580.
- Pittaway, M. (2003) "Europe's borders, Europe's regions: Eastern Europe, Central Europe," in Pittaway, M. (Ed.), *The fluid borders of Europe*, Milton Keynes: The Open University.

- Ramazanoğlu, C., and Holland, J. (2002) *Feminist methodology: Challenges and choices*, London: Sage Publications.
- Ramírez Goicoechea, E. (2003) “La comunidad polaca en España. Un colectivo particular,” *Reis Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas* 102: 63–92.
- Regulska, J. (1998) “The new ‘Other’ European woman,” in Ferreira, V.P, Tavares, T., and Portugal, S. (Eds.), *Shifting bonds, shifting bounds: Women, mobility and citizenship in Europe*, Oeiras: Celta Editora.
- Rostek, J., and Uffelmann, D. (Eds.) (2011) *Contemporary Polish migrant culture and literature in Germany, Ireland, and the UK*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Ryan, L. (2010) “Becoming Polish in London: Negotiating ethnicity through migration,” *Social Identities* 16: 359–376.
- Ryan, L., Sales, R., Tilki, M., and Siara, B. (2009) “Family strategies and transnational migration: Recent Polish migrants in London,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35: 61–77.
- Sojka, A. (2011) “Hablando entre ‘nosotras’ o entrevistado a ‘ellas’? Autoreflexividad, interseccionalidad y conocimientos situados en el contexto de una investigación cualitativa feminista,” in Acharya, A. K., and Sánchez, M. E. J. (Eds.), *Tras las huellas de los que se fueron. Metodología multidisciplinaria para el estudio de la migración*, Mexico: UNAM.
- Sojka, A. (2012) “Negotiating the borders of Europe from the margins: European citizenship and identity after the Eastern enlargement,” in Wojtaszek, M., and Just, E. (Eds.), *Quilting stories: Essays in honor of Elzbieta H. Oleksy*, Lodz: Lodz University Press.
- Spohn, W., and Triandafyllidou, A. (Eds.) (2003) *Europeanisation, national identities and migration: Changes in boundary constructions between Western and Eastern Europe*, New York: Routledge.
- Stanek, M. (2008) *Los inmigrantes polacos en la comunidad de Madrid y su inserción laboral, Madrid*: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Servicio de Publicaciones.
- Strasser, S. (2012) “Rethinking citizenship in multicultural Europe: Critical encounters with feminist, multicultural and transnational citizenship,” in Halsaa, B., Roseneil, S., and Sümer, S. (Eds.), *Remaking citizenship in multicultural Europe: Women’s movements, gender and diversity*, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Stråth, B. (2002) "A European identity: To the historical limits of a concept," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5: 387–401.
- Sztompka, P. (2004) "From East Europeans to Europeans: Shifting collective identities and symbolic boundaries in the New Europe," *European Review* 12: 481–96.
- Todorova, M. (1997) *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Twine, F. W., and Gallagher, C. (2008) "The future of whiteness: A map of the 'third wave'," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31: 4–24.
- White, A. (2011) *Polish families and migration since EU accession*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2006) "Intersectionality and feminist politics," *Journal of Women's Studies* 13: 193–209.