Introduction

There are countless competing definitions of globalization, but in its simplest sense we can understand it as the “widening, deepening and speeding up of global interconnectedness” (Held et al. 1999: 2). Although the intensified worldwide ties associated with globalization are often primarily considered from an economic standpoint (see, for example, Castells 1996; McMichael 2017), they can also be understood from social and political perspectives in which “events, decisions, and activities in one part of the world come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe” (McGrew 1992: 23). In this understanding, globalization has brought about a massive transformation in social and political relations and has impacted the ways in which we think about a variety of phenomena from nation-states, citizenship and borders to capitalism, the environment consumption and the ways in
which we communicate (Delanty 2009). Indeed, as Delanty (2009: 1) notes, “virtually the entire span of human experience is in one way or the other influenced by globalization.” To this regard, human migration and globalization are often seen as phenomena that go hand in hand.

While it is clear that international migration took place long before the age of globalization, during the global era an overall increase has taken place in the volume, diversity, geographical scope and overall complexity of international migration (Czaika and de Haas 2014: 284). Undeniably, studies have shown that the worldwide stock of international migrants has dramatically increased in recent decades. Between 1980 and 2005, Peter S. Li (2008) observes, the population of international migrants worldwide increased by some 3.6 million people per year. Citing United Nations figures, he notes that in 1980 the worldwide migrant population¹ was under 100 million people, or 2.2% of the world population (Li 2008: 2). By 2005, however, the number of international migrants worldwide “had increased to 190 million people, or 2.9 percent of the world population” (Li 2008: 2). This trend has continued with the number of international migrants worldwide reaching 232 million people in 2013, or some 3.2% of the world population (United Nations 2013).

This growth in the volume, scope and complexity of international migration has led to the expansion of diasporas and new forms of migrant transnationalism. These have been facilitated by other developments linked to globalization such as advances in transport and communication technologies (cf. Vertovec 2004). For Zygmunt Bauman (2011), such changes represent a passage from the “nation-building” stage in the history of modern states to one of “multiculturalism”. In his terms, this is a movement from a solid modernity that is “bent on entrenching and fortifying the principle of territorial, exclusive and indivisible sovereignty, and on surrounding the sovereign territories with impermeable borders, to [a] ‘liquid’ modernity, with its fuzzy and eminently permeable borderlines, the unstoppable (even if bewailed, resented and resisted) devaluation of spatial distances and the defensive capacity of the territory, and an intense human traffic across all and any frontiers” (Bauman 2011: 428). Within the latter, the prospect of living permanently with difference is raised. Such movement and the diversity it engenders has, Robert Holton (2009: 40) writes, “been seen as a major structural condition conducive to cosmopolitanism.”

¹Li 2008: 2
Theorizing Cosmopolitanism

At the same time as the social sciences have come to perceive migration as the human face of globalization (cf. Keeley 2009), there has also been, in recent decades, a renewed interest in cosmopolitanism. This popularity has given rise to a variety of different approaches to and understandings of cosmopolitanism, so much so that in drawing on the work of David Harvey, Michael Skey cautions that the term is in danger of becoming “an abstracted discourse with no tangible meaning” (Harvey 2000: 547; cited in Skey 2012: 473). Therefore, while the term’s flexibility might make it attractive as an explanatory device, “to assess its utility we need to try and make sense of what it is being used to explain” (Skey 2012: 473). Indeed, as Skey (2012) notes, the most prominent accounts of cosmopolitanism today tend to take the form of macro-sociological explanations of social change and communal relations.

One such account can be found in the work of Ulrich Beck (see, for example, Beck 2002a, b, 2006). While Beck’s account has received a fair amount of critique, it has proven influential. It stems from Beck’s call for a “cosmopolitan turn” in social and political theory (cf. Beck and Grande 2010; Beck and Sznaider 2006). Like many macro-theories, Beck’s cosmopolitanism is based on the idea that a transformation in modernity has taken place and a new era of “reflexive modernity” has emerged: one “in which national borders and differences are dissolving and must be renegotiated in accordance with the logic of a ‘politics of politics’.” (Beck 2006: 2.) It is this transformation that Beck (2006: 2) argues “urgently demands a new standpoint, the cosmopolitan outlook, from which we can grasp the social and political realities in which we live and act.”

Beck’s theory of reflexive modernity presupposes the existence of a global societal space primarily organized into nation-states but constantly crisscrossed by transnational networks (Faist 2010: 32). In giving primacy to this global societal space, he argues that a new modernity “in which everyday life is banally cosmopolitan” (Beck 2006: 133) has replaced the prior national modernity. However, Skey (2012) points out that there is an inherent problem in operating through such a dichotomy. Indeed, as “the nation state has been historically opaque, sociologically uncertain and normatively ambivalent” (Chernilo 2006: 15), those, like
Beck, who suggest a new global era or the existence of a banal cosmopolitan reality “simply end up reifying the myth of a historically stable, coherent nation-state” (Skey 2012: 473). Such an argument, then, leads to the conclusion that, in arguing for a methodological cosmopolitanism, Beck’s vision of a second modernity falls afoul of the methodological nationalist gaze. If Beck’s argument is based on a methodological nationalist understanding of the nation-state, “the remedy to methodological nationalism cannot be methodological cosmopolitanism” (Skey 2012: 473).

In order to move beyond this impasse, we should avoid “the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form in the modern world” (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002: 302) and think rather about the challenges associated with studying cosmopolitanism empirically (Skey 2012: 473). Indeed, rather than constructing universal, context-free definitions, a more practical way of thinking about cosmopolitanism would be to view it as a periodically articulated perspective on the world that can only be theorized in relation to the contexts in which it arises (cf. Skey 2011): one that “recognizes global belonging, involvement, and responsibility, and can integrate these broader concerns into everyday life practices” (Tomlinson 1999: 185). As such, cosmopolitanism, like nationhood, “race” and ethnicity, can be thought of as a practical category (albeit on a larger scale) used by individuals to make sense of particular circumstances rather than the inherent property of a particular individual or group (cf. Brubaker 1996).

Drawing on Brubaker’s practice-based approach, this chapter breaks with much of the scholarship on cosmopolitanism that seeks to engage in top-down descriptions of who is cosmopolitan. While this scholarship is important and has led to insights into cosmopolitanism amongst “elite” actors (see, for example, Favell 2008; Kennedy 2004; Nowicka and Cieslik 2013), for example, this work rather seeks to examine when those I study identify themselves as, broadly speaking, cosmopolitan. In this way, I focus on the changing ways in which “cosmopolitan” works as a category of self-identification (cf. Brubaker 2012: 6). As such, the category “cosmopolitan” is my object of analysis. I ask how cosmopolitan identifications are constructed in migrant self-narratives and what discursive resources my research participants employ when making such identifications. By focusing on such questions, I aim at “a more grounded and nuanced account of cosmopolitanism in practice” (Skey 2012: 476).
The Data Collected and Approach Taken

Biographic Narrative Interview Data

Before turning to the analysis featured in this chapter, I will first give a brief account of the data used and the analytic approach employed. Due to the limited length of this chapter, the discussion below is based on an analysis of interviews with two research participants: Ahmad, who was born in Iran but currently resides in Finland, and Risto, who was born in Finland but currently resides in the UK.3 Both research participants were interviewed during my doctoral research on migrancy and the construction of narrative identities. These interviews took a biographic narrative form similar to Gabriel Rosenthal’s approach (see, for example, Rosenthal 1993, 2004). This enabled the collection of both extended biographical accounts and turn-by-turn interactions between the researcher and the research participant. In each two-part interview session, the research participant was first asked to recount his lived experience of migration—his migration story. This was followed by a second part in which the research participant and I engaged in a discussion of the participant’s earlier account.

While my doctoral research included a corpus of two dozen such interviews,4 the biographies of the two research participants selected and the “biographic talk” (cf. Taylor 2010, 2012) they engaged in bear a surprising level of similarity despite key differences in the research participants’ ethnic, national and religious backgrounds (see the vignettes below). They therefore provide an interesting starting point for analysis. Indeed, as Stephanie Taylor (2012: 399) has suggested, where such consistencies occur in biographical talk (e.g. in what is recounted or how it is told and the account shaped) they may become a feature to be explored.

Vignette 1: Ahmad

Ahmad was born into a liberal Muslim family in a large city in Iran in the early 1950s. Upon completing school, he took the opportunity to travel to the UK to improve his English. While there, he completed Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in chemical engineering, and met and became engaged to a Finnish woman. After completing his education,
Ahmad and his fiancé returned to Iran where he found a position working at a university. The couple married there and soon had two daughters. However, with the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Ahmad found that he was unable to continue his work in Iran. The family again moved to the UK where Ahmad earned his doctorate. After completing it, he was presented with job opportunities in several places, but the family decided to move to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area as his wife had family there. Before even making the move to Finland, Ahmad secured an excellent job as a chemical engineer focusing on research. He progressed rapidly in his career and invested a great deal of effort in learning Finnish. His employer offered him the opportunity to travel regularly, and Ahmad soon acquired Finnish citizenship so that he could travel without the restrictions incurred by an Iranian passport. As his career developed, Ahmad’s employer offered him the opportunity to work abroad for extended periods: he eventually ended up living in China with his wife for two years, returning to Finland thereafter. Ahmad is now retired but continues to travel, regularly visiting family and friends in several countries.

**Vignette 2: Risto**

Risto grew up in a suburb near the center of Helsinki in the decades following World War II. After completing his schooling, he trained as a print typesetter. In his early twenties, he desired to see something of the world. After exploring his options, he found a job suited to his skills in Scotland. After settling there he met a local young woman with whom he fell in love. Eventually the couple married and had children. Due to problems in the UK economy in the 1970s, Risto decided to re-train and begin a career in the burgeoning oil industry. He applied for and was accepted onto a traineeship program that would result in him becoming a highly qualified engineer. Because of his career change, Risto found that he was now making excellent money and his skills were in demand all over the world. Taking advantage of the mobility afforded by his profession, he has worked and spent extended periods living in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), North America, Singapore and China, while at the
same time continuing to call Scotland home. Nowadays, Risto is retired but continues to work on a freelance basis in the oil industry training would-be engineers all over the world.

The Narrative–Discursive Approach

The following analysis centers on the construction of cosmopolitan identifications that are articulated through references to subject positions in which those studied claim to be a “citizen of the world” or “international” person—two terms that have been used interchangeably (see, for example, Excerpt 2). Influenced by Taylor’s narrative–discursive approach, I understand identities “as derived from the accumulated ideas, images, associations and so on which make up the wider social and cultural contexts of our lives” (Taylor 2007: 113). These ideas, images, associations, and so on, form recognizable discursive resources that are used to construct identities which also refer to the unique circumstances of a particular life (Taylor 2005: 49). Identities, then, are understood not simply as things that people have, but rather as complex constructions through which individuals produce an image of themselves as a certain kind of person and present it to the world (Taylor and Littleton 2006: 23). Nonetheless, while identity construction is seen as something the agentic individual does (a way of acting upon the world), this approach also recognizes the constraints imposed by social structure. As such, “identities are in part conferred through positioning (cf. Davies and Harré 1990), and in part actively constructed, contested and negotiated by active speakers” (Taylor 2007: 113–114).

Given this understanding of identity, the narrative–discursive approach presents a particularly useful and suitable method for analyzing the biographic narrative data presented earlier. Its concern with biographical talk—an umbrella term for how research participants talk about themselves, their lives and their personal experience (Taylor 2012: 388)—ties it closely with the well-established research traditions of oral history and the expansive field of narrative research. What is more unique in this approach, however, is its suitability for exploring “connections between the general and the particular, the ‘social and cultural frameworks of

peter.holley@helsinki.fi
interpretation’ (Mishler 1999: 18) on the one hand and the identity or subjectivity of a single speaker, on the other” (Taylor 2010: 130). Indeed, its understanding of talk as the site in which identity is instantiated and negotiated, opens up the biographically unique “reality” of people’s lives (cf. Hollway and Jefferson 2000) to an analysis that focuses discursive practices involved as actors engage in “identity work”.

Being a “Citizen of the World”

As I noted earlier, within the narrative accounts analyzed both research participants sought to take up a subject position as a “citizen of the world” or they used its concomitant term to position themselves as an “international” person. In Excerpt 1, when discussing the various countries in which he has resided over the course of his career, Ahmad mentions that he is a citizen of the world.

**Excerpt 1**

Ahmad: So, I’ve lived in England and I’ve lived in Scotland, altogether for eleven years. I’ve lived in the United States (US). I’ve lived in Iran, of course, and we lived in China for two years, and, of course, almost twenty-five years here [in Finland], minus the two years in China. So, I am citizen of the world. (1.5)6

As I told you, I don’t fit into the category of a typical Iranian immigrant who comes from Iran, maybe as a refugee, and settles here with without his family. I came here with my wife and children. They were all Finnish citizens, so the life was much easier for us. ...

If you read the journals—newspapers and magazines—where the immigrants tell their stories, they seem to have a pretty hard time here. But I didn’t. I adapt easily. I’m not one of those fanatical Muslims [and] my wife is a Finn. So, we’ve had a pretty good life here until now (.) But, of course, it takes effort to learn to assimilate, to adapt to another culture. Because I’ve lived in so many places—I left Iran when I was young—I’ve adapted to the European way of life.

Here and throughout his narrative account, Ahmad refers explicitly to his mobility as intimately tied to his self-identification as a “citizen of the
world”. He distinguishes himself from the “typical Iranian immigrant” whom he associates with the status of “refugee”. As Ahmad seeks to explain his elevated social position and the cultural capital he possesses as a “citizen of the world”, he distinguishes himself from those might be defined as problematic, mere migrants or refugees. He opposes his “good life” with the widely circulated discourse that “immigrants” face challenges living in Finland. Indeed, throughout the telling of his migration story, Ahmad repeatedly highlighted the “elite” status associated with his profession, mobility and high level of education.

Like Ahmad’s self-positioning, in Excerpt 2 Risto makes the claim that the more “international” a person is, the better it is for the whole world. Indeed, in the exchange in Excerpt 2 Risto first uses the term “international” in opposition to a perceived narrower, more parochial, “nationalist” viewpoint. Referring to an indeterminate, generic third person (you), he distinguishes between pride in where one is from, defined here as patriotism, and nationalism, which has an unambiguously negative connotation as the source of armed conflict.

Excerpt 2

Risto: The more international you are, the better it is for the whole world! All the nationalistic feelings, there’s nothing wrong with being proud of where you come from (.) but don’t start getting all nationalistic ’cos that’s how wars start!

Peter: Yeah, okay. (0.5) But what do you mean by ‘international’?

Risto: <Well> (1.0) I guess you could- (0.5) I guess that it’s like you’re a citizen of the whole world. You don’t think of yourself as being better or more special than anyone else.

When pressed on what he means by “international”, Risto resorts to the same discursive repertoire as Ahmad: “the citizen of the world”. However, while using the same language as Ahmad, Risto’s migration story wasn’t couched in talk of his professional status (which coincidentally was much the same as Ahmad’s) or his mobility. Rather, Risto makes no mention of his social class, wealth (other than what is implied when talking about his passion for golf) or other forms of social status.
Unpacking These Cosmopolitan Subject Positions

While the previous section shows a shared use of the “world citizen” category, albeit with subtle differences in the ways that each speaker adopts a cosmopolitan position in their talk, to further understand these differences we need to unpack what each speaker means as he engages in the discursive identity work associated with claiming a cosmopolitan subject position. Like Skey (2011, 2012) and Taylor (2007, 2010, 2012), I draw on Michael Billig’s “rhetorical approach” as a useful tool for analyzing identity work (cf. Billig et al. 1988; Billig 1996). In this approach Billig draws “attention to the contradictions that people must deal with as they puzzle over and argue about their lives” (Skey 2012: 481). As common-sense logic is often inherently contradictory, it “overflows with numerous bits and pieces, creating and recreating endless ‘ideological dilemmas’” (Billig 1996: 15) that must be addressed as a speaker seeks to navigate multiple and often conflicting subject positions while striving for consistency in their self-presentation.

Referring back to Excerpt 1, we see that, when identifying himself as a “citizen of the world”, Ahmad is confronted by contradiction in his self-narrative. At the same time as he seeks to position himself as a world citizen, he encounters the subject positions of “Iranian migrant” and “Muslim” that he has employed in earlier talk about himself. Therefore, when engaging in the identity work associated with a cosmopolitan self-positioning, Ahmad seeks to distinguish himself from others that occupy the same categories. This, as I have noted earlier, is accomplished by drawing on the notion of social class and its associated cultural capital. Indeed, while he is Iranian and a Muslim, he claims to occupy an “elite” status that is afforded by his highly respected professional background, mobility and doctoral degree.

In Excerpt 3, we see that when I further inquired as to what Ahmad meant by “citizen of the world”, he immediately responds by drawing on the old proverb of the “rolling stone”, through which he implies that he can integrate wherever he goes. Although Ahmad doesn’t fully articulate the proverb—*a rolling stone gathers no moss*—he draws upon its widely shared understanding that the stone, an allegorical nomad, avoids getting bogged down or becoming static. Interestingly, however, Ahmad’s view of
himself as a rolling stone deviates from proverb’s implication that someone who doesn’t settle in one place will not accumulate wealth, status or close social ties. The repeated evocation of status and privilege in his migration story suggests that, for Ahmad, the rolling stone is one with access to cosmopolitan cultural capital. Moreover, by using the Finnish adjective särmikäs, meaning jagged, he suggests that he doesn’t possess sharp edges—fundamentalist religious beliefs or a strong national identity—that may prevent him from fitting in. Here, the world citizen is someone who can move freely and live anywhere within a privileged bubble.

Excerpt 3

Peter: You mentioned about being a citizen of the world.
Ahmad: Mm hmm.
Peter: And how this made life much easier? (0.5) I was wondering if you could tell me a little more about that.
Ahmad: Well, you have a rounded character. The Finns, () we have a word, särmikäs. You know what it means—what this särmikäs means? You have these sharp edges.
I don’t have any sharp edges. They are all round because, y’know, a rolling stone. () I don’t have any sharp edges, I can fit in. I don’t have any strong dos and don’ts.

Referring again to Excerpt 1, we also see that as he positions himself as a world citizen, Ahmad claims to have adapted to “the European way of life”. On the surface of things, being a “European” and a “citizen of the world” may appear to be at odds with one another. Yet, if we think about Ahmad’s self-identification as an expression of a classical cosmopolitan perspective in which Enlightenment thinking is articulated through a pronounced Western orientation, then Ahmad’s particularistic, Eurocentric view of the world citizen comes as no surprise (cf. Delanty 2009). Furthermore, as Ulf Hannerz (1996: 107) has noted, “the institutions of transnational culture tend to be organized so as to make people from Western Europe and North America feel as much at home as possible.” This occidentalist perspective ties well with the archetypal image of the cosmopolitan as someone with material privileges such as “‘good’ passports and easy access to visas, international credit cards and membership in airline clubs, invitations from conference organizers and

peter.holley@helsinki.fi
organizational contacts ... [that] facilitate a kind of inhabitation (if not necessarily citizenship) of the world as an apparent whole” (Calhoun 2003: 543). With his “elite” position and “good” passport, Ahmad appears to be the very epitome of the class-conscious, frequent-travelling cosmopolitan actor (cf. Calhoun 2002) and, as such, the “citizen of the world” refers to a particular way of life.

In contrast to Ahmad’s elite view of the world citizen, in Excerpt 2 Risto uses the analogous term “international” to refer to a generalized person he understands to be a “citizen of the whole world”. Distinguishing between those with nationalistic and patriotic outlooks, he argues against an insular nationalistic position and in favor of being international yet rooted in a patriotic love for one’s homeland. This difference between nationalism and patriotism is reminiscent of George Orwell’s thinking. Indeed, in Orwell’s (1968: 411) terms, patriotism implies a positive association, a “devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force on other people”, whereas nationalism implies a negative one, a desire to “secure more power and more prestige, not for himself [sic] but for the nation or other unit in which he has chosen to sink his own individuality.”

Excerpt 4
Risto: I do this job representing Finland, hopefully in an international way so that it’s not black and white (0.5) there’s lots of grey. But I do love Scotland. I must say that that’s my country!

In Excerpt 4, Risto discusses his role as a serving representative on the board of a transnational non-governmental organization that aims to represent the interests of emigrant Finnish citizens. While he represents his fellow co-nationals residing abroad, he seeks to distance himself from any nationalist connotations. Indeed, he is confronted by the apparent contradiction of dedicating his free time to serving the interests of Finnish emigrants while also persistently rallying against the exclusivity associated with nationalist interests. To resolve this contradiction, he draws upon the notion of acting in an “international” way. This is employed to counter any potential accusation of narrow-minded nationalism.
Furthermore, unlike the “elite cosmopolitanism” displayed in Ahmad’s migration story, Risto’s identity work rather suggests a more rooted cosmopolitan perspective. Drawing upon Kwame Anthony Appiah’s (1997) concept of the cosmopolitan patriot, we can see from Excerpt 4 that Risto claims a strong attachment to Scotland while at the same time arguing for a cosmopolitan openness to the world/Other—being international. From this perspective, cosmopolitan openness is not opposed to rooted attachments with their own cultural peculiarities (cf. Appiah 1997). Further, the rooted cosmopolitan perspective articulated by Risto does not necessarily entail that everyone remains tied to their own natal patria, as Appiah (1997: 618) reminds us. Such a cosmopolitan imaginary suggests that while many people continue to spend their lives in the places where they were born, others, like Risto, may move abroad and form attachments to their new homelands or to multiple locales. These movements, Appiah (1997: 619) notes, result in new forms of hybridity, cultural change and the engagement with alterity as people take their local practices and peculiarities with them.

In seeking to position himself as a rooted cosmopolitan, belonging to his adopted home country (being a patriotic Scot) yet open to the Other, Risto repeatedly challenges the insularity he associates with the nationalism he opposes. In Excerpt 5, he highlights the racialized moral hierarchies that are associated with a nationalist thinking. Here, he criticizes the tendency to view negative behaviors connected with one’s own national group as exceptional, while viewing the racialized/ethnicized/nationalized other as morally inferior.

Excerpt 5

Risto: There are drunks in Finland (0.5) FINNS! Now, if there’s a Filipino woman here, she’s considered to be a prostitute! That’s the way we often think. That’s the accepted view because they are beneath us, because we are Finns. But the Finnish drunkenness thing, that’s considered an exception.

The thing is, we are everywhere. Therefore, we must accept that they can come from everywhere to here! We’d have laws and criminality anyway, but we have to accept— (1.0) (That’s a classic) lesson that I learned. (0.7) I learned that in one year— in my first year in Scotland!
This challenge to the hierarchical thinking of “us” and “them” adopted by Risto when engaged in the identity work associated with positioning himself as a cosmopolitan actor entails a moral universalism. By drawing on “traditions of universalism” (Billig et al. 1988: 105), Risto is able to depict himself “as disinterested [in] and removed from more narrow forms of parochialism” (Skey 2012: 482). In disagreeing with the view that others are beneath “us”, then, he adopts an anti-racist discourse that draws on the universality of human nature (cf. Lamont and Aksartova 2002). Indeed, throughout our interview sessions, Risto repeatedly sought to identify with all others, rather than with just his kinsmen or co-nationals. This was expressed through a cosmopolitan conviction that involves both identifying with one’s homeland and with humankind more generally. As Appiah (1997: 622) writes, “cosmopolitans can be patriots, loving our homelands (not only the states where we were born but the states where we grew up and the states where we live); our loyalty to humankind so vast, so abstract, a unity does not deprive us of the capacity to care for lives nearer by” (see also Ingram 2016: 69).

Additionally, in Excerpt 5 Risto further articulates a cosmopolitan universalistic moral commitment by insisting that, since “we” Finns have migrated all over the world, “we” should accept others coming to live in Finland. This openness to the immigrant Other, justified by the fact that “we” Finns have been afforded the opportunity to migrate around the world, again challenges the hierarchical ordering of people while simultaneously countering ethno-nationalist discourses appropriated by radical right-wing populists in Finland under the banner of “immigration critical”. Through such talk, Risto expresses his support for an everyday, lived multiculturalism (cf. Wise and Velayutham 2009) in which diversity is treated as a fact of life rather than as something to be problematized or a threat to an imagined national community that is defined as autochthonous, mono-cultural and exclusively white.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have set out two very different instances of “cosmopolitan” identity work that emerge in the biographical talk of the research participants selected for analysis in this chapter. These center around
my research participants’ talk of being a “citizen of the world” and the use of the concomitant term “international”. Rather than focusing on problematic macro-sociological theories of cosmopolitanism, which, as Skey (2012: 484) reasons, are being made to do so much analytic work that it is sometimes hard to assess their worth, I argue in favor of more a limited theorizing of cosmopolitanism in practice. Indeed, given the rather dubious theoretical foundations of large-scale explanations (see, for instance, the discussion of Beck’s theory of a reflexive cosmopolitan modernity discussed earlier), this chapter has drawn on actor-centered or practice-based approaches such as those set out by Brubaker (1996, 2012) and Skey (2011, 2012) to develop new insight into the various ways in which a cosmopolitan perspective is articulated in the context of migration.

While I have shown that there were similarities in the language used by my research participants (particularly the idea of the “world citizen” and accompanying terms) and that they possessed key similarities in their biographies that may position them both in a rather privileged position vis-à-vis other migrants who do not possess the same elevated social class positions and the benefits associated with this, my bottom-up analysis reveals that “there is a need to unpack commonplace definitions of cosmopolitanism, which trade in abstract notions of openness, awareness, and cultural engagement” (Skey 2012: 484). Indeed, when unpacking Ahmad and Risto’s cosmopolitan self-identifications, I have sought to question how such cosmopolitan subject positions (however fleeting) were constructed and what discursive resources were used when doing so. This has given rise to two very different interpretations of what it means to be a cosmopolitan “citizen of the world”/“international” person. Ahmad drew on discourses of mobility and material, educational and social class privilege, whereas Risto drew on notions of belonging and argued in favor of a universalist moral commitment to the Other. This resulted in the construction of an elite cosmopolitan perspective with a profoundly Western bias and a rooted cosmopolitan perspective with a strong opposition to parochialism and racism.

Within the narrative interviews selected for this chapter, then, as each participant sought to render his life meaningful “as if it were the outcome of individual choices made in the furtherance of a biographical project of
self-realization” (Rose 1999: ix), the cosmopolitan subject positions evoked rendered visible differing ways in which migrants may construct identifications that extend beyond the boundaries of individual nation-states. Indeed, in response to problems associated with the methodological nationalist gaze of the social sciences, this work does not insist upon a methodological cosmopolitanism à la Beck, but rather an active “sociological listening” (cf. Back 2007) that interrogates “how, in practice, global dynamics and individual lives are interrelated” (Axford 2013: 2; cited in Caselli and Gilaroni in Chap. 1 of this volume). By engaging in artful listening, we may begin to understand the complexity of the social world not from the perspective of the grand theorist, but from that of those whom we study. This means that we should bear in mind the postmodernist call to understand emergent cosmopolitan self-identifications (like all collective identifications) as part of a shifting set of ways in which people think about themselves and their place in the world. As such, we might begin to understand cosmopolitanism not as something fixed or the property of certain groups, but as a disposition that can be periodically articulated to suit different purposes as actors engage in self-presentation.

Notes

1. Defined here as persons residing in a country other than that of their birth.
2. For a discussion of methodological nationalism see, for example, Chernilo (2006) and Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003).
3. Both pseudonyms were selected by the research participants after the interviews.
4. A dozen interviews were conducted with members of a multicultural migrant association in Finland and another dozen with members of Finnish emigrant groups in the UK.
5. This understanding of identity as performative draws on insights from phenomenological sociology, in particular the Goffmanian notion of self-presentation (see, for example, Goffman 1959).
6. The numbers placed in parentheses indicate pauses in speech.

peter.holley@helsinki.fi
7. At the time that the interview was conducted the Finns Party (Perussuomalaiset)—a party with a strongly anti-immigration and cultural diversity agenda—had recently achieved its breakthrough success in the 2011 General Elections in which it became the third largest party. As a result, our interview featured several instances in which Risto raised the rising popularity of “immigration critical” actors and expressed concern about these trends.

References


peter.holley@helsinki.fi


**Peter Holley** is a doctoral student at the Department of Social Research and a member of the Migration and Diaspora Studies Research Group (MIDI) at the Swedish School of Social Science, University of Helsinki. His research contributes to the research project “Transnationalism as a Social Resource among Diaspora Communities” (Project № 295417), funded by the Academy of Finland between 2016 and 2020. He holds a Master of Social Sciences (MSocSc) degree in Sociology from the University of Helsinki and his research interests include migrancy, ethnic and racial studies, national identities, cosmopolitanism, understandings of home and belonging, ethnographic methods and narrative/discourse analysis. He is currently writing up his doctoral dissertation and expects to defend his thesis in 2018.