

Creolizing reflexivity: Autoethnographic stories and theoretical entanglements

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Abstract

This article contributes to ongoing debates on generating interconnected transformative possibilities for decolonizing knowledge production in Nordic educational research without erasing power differences and tensions. Drawing from my PhD research, I entangle various research practices from the previously ignored or discredited margins, which go beyond hegemonic gazes and approvals for legitimacy. I particularly highlight everyday knowledges stemming from multiple senses, encounters, and unexpected connections, which might seem from a scientific perspective less rigorous or considered research at all. These may disrupt Nordic exceptionalism and color-evasiveness in researchers' racialised positionalities. I show how the concept of creolization intersects with the method of autoethnography as Anzaldúan autohistoria-teoría with the aim of entangling multiple unequal knowers and knowledges, imagine and experiment with unforeseeable possibilities in and beyond research, and thus creolize reflexivity. This can expand the research imagination with regards to what constitute data generation and analysis, co-researching, co-writing, co-authoring publications, and presenting the research to wider audiences.

Keywords

Creolization; autohistoria-teoría; autoethnography; reflexivity; Nordic; education; knowledge.

Introduction

Reflexivity has become the defining feature of qualitative research, generating debates on how to do reflexive research, with multiple competing, but also overlapping, claims to its rationale and practices (Pillow, 2003; Finlay, 2002, 2017; Day, 2012). Exploring reflexivity in its various forms can aid in unpacking research relationships and power relations, what counts as valid knowledge in different paradigms, how do we know and who can claim to know, and how to challenge underlying assumptions about the validity and quality of research (Day, 2012, p. 60). Despite the impossibility for reflexivity to solve the dilemmas of knowledge production, the importance of discussing and mapping its various uses can foreground epistemological and methodological underpinnings and the political effects of qualitative research, and thus clarify various implications for knowledge production practices and research outcomes (Day, 2012, p. 81). This article builds on these claims by arguing for dialogues across and beyond plural and unequal research paradigms, and for theorizing from those perspectives that might seem from a scientific point of view less rigorous or considered research at all. I particularly highlight everyday knowledges stemming from multiple senses, encounters, and unexpected connections. This may generate fruitful conversations that can disrupt Nordic exceptionalism and color-evasiveness in researchers' racialised positionalities.

Nordic exceptionalism and color-evasiveness in researchers' racialised positionalities

Nordic exceptionalism is built on the continuing widespread denial of colonial histories in public discourse, reproducing the idea of ethnic homogeneity rather than the transversal plurality characterizing Nordic nation states formation (Hübinette & Lundström, 2014). This invisibilizes in public discourse the settler colonization of Sápmi (the homeland of the Sámi indigenous people, covering the north of Norway, Sweden and Finland, and the north-west of Russia), the attempted assimilation of Kale and other groups of Romani people living in the Nordics, and the Nordic colonial endeavours in Africa and the Americas (Keskinen, 2019). With the increased migration into the Nordic region during the past few decades and the simultaneous proliferation of anti-migration policies and practices, Nordic exceptionalism also translates into color-evasiveness (Annamma et al., 2017), which can be seen in anxieties around mentioning racialization and racism in Nordic public discourse, research, and educational practices (McEachrane, 2014; Mkwesha & Huber, 2021; Vertelytė & Staunæs, 2021).

In an academic context, Nordic exceptionalism generates color-evasiveness in researchers' racialised positionalities. This allows the production of disembodied knowledge production from "zero-point epistemologies" where the 'neutral' disembodied researcher observes without being observed (Castro-Gómez, 2007), thus producing "bodies out of place" and lack of recognition of marginalized knowledges and knowers (Ramirez, 2021, pp. 1-2). Yet these circumstances also generate "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo, 2009) among marginalized knowers who enact alternative possible becomings in Nordic academia (Ramirez, 2021). On the one hand, marginalized knowers are expected to hide aspects of themselves and thus be dehumanized into fragmented subjectivities in order to be recognized as 'true' academics (Ramirez, 2021, p. 12).

Such transgressive actions towards dismantling power from within can only occur in cooperation between plural marginalized actors within and beyond the Nordic space, and within and beyond academia (Suárez-Krabbe, 2012, p. 43). Central to such solidarities across unequal power positions is rethinking and practicing anew research reflexivity. Reflexivity is essential in knowledge production regardless of researchers' positionalities, yet different positionalities determine different applications of reflexivity. Still, positionalities are not fixed, they shift according to shifting circumstances, which means that the same researcher may apply various types of reflexivity simultaneously, and also that there may be similarities between certain reflexivities that differently positioned researchers apply. Differently positioned researchers may be among each other's oppressors, or in dominant/subaltern positionings relative to each other, which are also shifting and context-bound. Dialogues and entanglements between such unequal power relations can generate fruitful tensions from which future possibilities can be explored.

This article contributes to ongoing debates on generating interconnected transformative possibilities for decolonizing knowledge production in Nordic educational research and dismantling Nordic exceptionalism (Diallo, 2019; Ezechukwu, 2020; Custódio & Gathuo, 2020; Lapiņa & Vertelytė, 2020; Ramirez, 2021). Drawing from my PhD research (Țișteea, 2024), I entangle plural research practices from the previously ignored or discredited margins, which go beyond hegemonic gazes and approvals for legitimacy. Overall, I argue for creolizing reflexivity as a way to imagine and experiment with unforeseeable possibilities in and beyond research. This can open research to plural knowers and knowledges, and expand the research imagination with regards to what constitute data generation and analysis, co-researching, co-writing, co-authoring publications, and presenting the research to wider audiences.

Creolization

Édouard Glissant (1981) introduced the concept of creolization based on Caribbean histories and ontologies, including colonialism, slavery, racial classification, forced displacement, loss of social identity, and a double consciousness based on experiences of oppression and struggles for liberation. Later in his work, Glissant (1997) engages creolization as a new way of seeing the world in relational and interdependent ways based on multiple, unexpected, transversal encounters and connections. He develops creolization by departing from creoleness. Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant (1990, pp. 891-892) see creoleness as a transactional aggregate of "Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine" elements, which forge a new creative humanity from extreme adversities and inequalities. Creoleness is thus an ontological entity emerging from the process of creolization, the latter entailing brutal, non-harmonious, and unfinished mixing between peoples, histories, languages, cultures, etc. (Bernabé et al., 1990, pp. 893-894). While creoleness is firmly rooted in the Caribbean, the authors also see the world as evolving into a state of creoleness, which they present as a convivial alternative of "a world diffracted but recomposed, the conscious harmonization of preserved diversities" (Bernabé et al., 1990, pp. 902-903). Glissant (1997) however moves from the ontological entities or identarian essences of creoleness to the ongoing, relational processes of creolization (p. 89). He thus sees creolization more as an epistemology and methodology rather than a state of being (Glissant, 1997, p. 196), a traveling theoretical and

methodological stance functioning as a mode of worlding (Parvulescu & Boatcă, 2023, p. 122).

Glissant also develops creolization in contrast to racial mixing or hybridity. The latter reproduces essentialist social orders inherited from colonialism by relating distinct racial entities to each other, without mutual transformations (Murdoch, 2023, p. 110). In contrast, creolization is a limitless hybridization that creates new vocabularies not inscribed in any hegemonic script, with its elements diffracted and its consequences unforeseeable (Glissant, 1997, p. 34). Hybridity can momentarily disrupt dominant knowledge by posing cultural differences alongside one another and allowing them to co-exist without being objectified (Bhabha, 1994, p. 114). Yet the hierarchies, although temporarily disturbed, ultimately remain in place, with distinct entities having to tolerate one another without allowing each other to engage in mutually rewarding and transformative learning processes toward unpredictable consequences (Murdoch, 2023, p. 110). Creolization however results in new unequal configurations that cannot be restored to their initial 'pure' elements because these have been permanently 'translated' (Hall, 2015, pp. 15-16). When applied beyond the Caribbean context, creolization should not be romanticized, but rather treated as a mode of transformation and creativity premised on the unequal power relations that characterize modernity/coloniality—dispossession, colonization, violence, and enslavement—and their legacies (Parvulescu & Boatcă, 2023, p. 127).

In a Nordic context, creolization has been previously applied by Eriksen (2003, 2015) to describe the subjectivities of descendants of migrants in Norway and Denmark who live in-between worlds and mix elements of the multiple worlds they inhabit to ongoingly refashion their subjectivities. Keskinen (2022, p. 134) has also referred to creolization as a way of creating communities of belonging among mixed youth, which she argues occupies a marginal position within wider processes of postethnic activism in the Nordics. This article applies creolization to Nordic educational research. I show how the concept of creolization intersects with the method of autoethnography as Anzaldúan autohistoria-teoría with the aim of entangling multiple unequal knowers and knowledges.

Autoethnography as Anzaldúan autohistoria-teoría

As part of my PhD studies, I conducted autoethnographic research from 2015 to 2022 in Finnish educational settings involving diverse migrants occupying multiple positions on both receiving and delivering sides of migration-related services: a migrant 'integration' training at an adult education centre which I attended as an unemployed jobseeker and Romanian migrant; a 'pre-integration' training in a reception centre for asylum seekers where I did my job practice; and a cleaning work and training project in an emergency accommodation centre for Eastern European Roma migrants where I worked as a non-Roma mediator and translator. This article revisits some of the material generated during my PhD, namely:

- 116 pages of field notes and reflections taken while attending the migrant integration training for 14 months during 2015-2016 (including 2 months spent doing my job practice in a reception centre for asylum seekers)
- 110 pages of dramatized theatre play scripts created based on the material above

- A recorded Zoom lecture delivered in 2021, consisting of 1 hour and 50 minutes in which I performed some of the theatrical dramatizations from point 2). I transcribed the critical feedback received from students, resulting in 21 pages of text. The students gave their informed consent for me to utilize the transcribed lecture recording in publications. I also have 17 pages of feedback received during academic conferences where I delivered similar performances.
- 98 pages of creative non-fictional stories written during my 1-year work experience in 2021 in an emergency accommodation centre for Eastern European Roma migrants
- 49 hours of audio-recorded conversations taking place between Gabriela Băncuță, the main Roma co-researcher and my co-author, and I during two years in 2021-2022. We met on average twice per month and recorded on average one hour of conversations during each meeting. We listened together to the recordings and selected some of them to transcribe. I transcribed 7 hours of conversations that resulted in 83 pages of stories, which I then translated from Romanian to English.

My approach to autoethnography is based on Gloria Anzaldúa's autohistoria-teoría. She coined this method for marginalized knowers' interventions into and transformations of normative, hegemonic autobiographic and ethnographic forms of research and writing (Anzaldúa, 1987). The aims of autohistoria-teoría are to expose limitations in existing disciplinary paradigms; travel between and beyond multiple disciplines; re-read, re-write, and create new narratives of self-growth, epistemic and socio-cultural critique, and individual/collective transformations (Keating, 2009, p. 319). With autohistoria-teoría I craft my creative and analytical space in Nordic educational research from my "differentiated" or liminal positionality in relation to Nordic whiteness (Lapiņa & Vertelytė, 2020), as a Romanian migrant, woman, researcher, student, and worker in Finland, and create new stories of multiple becomings and transformations beyond those categories. Autohistoria-teoría implies relationally-reflexive and creative-theoretical acts, mixing cultural and personal biographies paired with multiple histories and embodied lived experiences, in dialogue with creative forms of theorizing stemming from artistic forms and from body-mind-soul-spirit connections (Anzaldúa, 2009b, p. 578; Keating, 2009, p. 319; Gajardo, 2011, p. 19).

Writing from the body, the intellect, and the imagination entails inner-explorations and ways of knowing that deepen one's range of perception, which may open possibilities for building bridges to cross toward one another beyond differences, anger, and victimhood, toward collective transformations through empathy and solidarity (Anzaldúa, 2009b, pp. 543, 556; Gajardo, 2011, p. 20). With autohistoria-teoría I bring my personal experiences in dialogue with those of differently positioned knowers in unequal power relations. The aim is exploring new subjective relationalities, epistemic and socio-cultural alliances, productive tensions and frictions, and relational theorizing beyond colonial divides that nonetheless emerge within coloniality. Autohistoria-teoría is thus a creolized space of theorizing, creativity, and bridge-building through which I go beyond autoethnographic methods that describe, analyse, and map personal narratives of cultural belonging and already-existing cultural practices onto broader sociocultural discursive spaces (Bhattacharya & Keating, 2018, p. 345). This allows me to create new narratives by examining my

previously ignored, disdained, buried, or disowned self-knowledges, self-ignorance, practices of knowing others, and ignorant views of others (Bhattacharya & Keating, 2018, p. 345; Pitts, 2016, p. 357), and explore their connections with multiple alternative knowledges, knowers, and ways of knowing to develop new theories, tools, strategies, and collective insight regarding the im/possibilities of building bridges and coalitions in new and unexpected ways (Bhattacharya & Keating, 2018, p. 353; Arfuso, 2022, p. 603).

The disowned, buried knowledge and ignorance I explore with *autohistoria-teoría*, as a pre-requisite for building coalitions beyond victimhood, has to do with what Tudor (2017a, p. 26) calls “transing”, a way of crossing borders and boundaries to create solidarities. Yet “transing” in relation to race is problematic. In my case, it reproduces white women’s desires to pass as woman of colour, a technique of epistemic racism that allows the narrativization of the white subject’s knowledge of herself through her sympathetic, seemingly ‘innocent’ incorporation of others within that narrative (Ahmed, 1999, p. 100; Țișteea, 2021). In diasporic contexts, I have often been misread as Roma. I sometimes perceived this misreading as offensive. I later found out that “the ascription as Roma of white Romanians is discriminatory—however, not against the white Romanians, but against the Roma. [T]o perceive it as a harm to be named as ‘Roma’, to understand the appellation as a slur and the misreading as Roma as wrongful, reproduces antiromaism” (Tudor, 2017b, p. 34). At other times, I took up my misreading as Roma as a strategy to equate the discrimination I experience with racism (Țișteea, 2021). Yet performing an imagined racialized subjectivity from a privileged positioning fetishizes racialized ‘others’ through “an apparatus of knowledge that masters the other by taking its place” and thus becomes “a form of appropriation in which the other cannot and does not speak” (Ahmed, 1999, pp. 99, 100). My passing as Roma involves access to knowledges embedded in white and colonial privilege that approximate a ‘knowable’ and decontextualized subjectivity and assume that one can pass for others by adopting their ways of being, thus fixing those ways of being as indicators of what it may mean to be Roma (Ahmed, 1999, p. 102; Țișteea, 2020a, 2021). Thus, a white Romanian who passes as Roma maintains the difference perpetually reaffirmed by reconstituting the ‘other’ through the hegemonic self and, rather than “transing”, reinstates a similar outcome as that of distancing oneself from being read as Roma through anti-Roma racism.

With the risk of self-exposure, my *autohistoria-teoría* delves right into these disowned aspects of my subjectivity as a way to create new knowledge and collective insights. This requires applying reflexivity both to those experiences as well as to my positioning as ‘judge’ of those experiences, and accepting that self-knowledge, like all forms of knowledge, is subject to political and social forms of critique (Pitts, 2016, p. 366). Yet before being able to be reflexive without mirroring in victimhood, shame, guilt, or “negative epistemic resistance” (Medina, 2012, p. 50), I first had to look into what reflexivity is and how it has been applied previously in Nordic Roma-related research (Țișteea, 2020a). While I tended to be very critical towards what I perceived as lack of reflexivity in other non-Roma researchers’ writings, I also saw myself in some of those unreflexive practices. I thus engaged with my own ignorance and complicity with values that I may not endorse, with knowledge that both exposed and removed my fears, which marks the creative and the painful sides of *autohistoria-teoría* (Anzaldúa, 2009a, p. 553; Pitts, 2016, p. 361; Țișteea, 2020a,

2021). These confrontations with my ignorance and knowing practices is part of the ongoing, cyclical process of shifting between negative and positive, internal and external epistemic resistance in search for epistemic communities (Medina, 2012; Pitts, 2016, p. 362). Positive internal epistemic resistance unmasks prejudices and biases, whereas the negative valence involves a reluctance to learn or a refusal to believe (Medina, 2012, p. 50). Positive external epistemic resistance entails beneficial epistemic friction in bringing into dialogue plural beliefs and knowledges toward reassessing those and considering new ones, being more aware and able to communicate one's knowledges, and recognizing limitations; whereas negative friction silences or inhibits those abilities and blocks communication (Medina, 2012, p. 50).

In what follows I look back at my PhD research and search for epistemic communities, exemplifying shifts in-between various internal and external epistemic resistances at different points in time (Medina, 2012). I theorize self-knowledges, self-ignorance, practices of knowing others, and ignorant views of others, in ways that have wider collective relevance, showing how misreadings create opportunities to reflect on entanglements between unequal positionings towards creating social and epistemic solidarities.

Multivocality

In early attempts to destabilise my authority as researcher and apply a performative lens to my multiple shifting subjectivities, I wrote and performed narratives through poetry and storytelling in multiple voices (Țișteea, 2020b). Before creating the theatrical representations of my autoethnographic research (Țișteea, 2021), I first experimented with creating characters based on my multiple subjectivities, in dialogue with interrogating broader discourses on racialization, whiteness, and 'Eastern Europeanness'. A white migrant observes the 'integration' training as an 'insider' and takes self-victimizing notes to cope with the loss of her privileges. She arranges her notes into a poem for an enhanced artistic effect, to impress her readers. A trainee in a reception centre for asylum seekers acts as a 'white saviour', contributing with short, anecdotal stories based on her brief time in the centre. Her stories cut through the poem by her fellow character, the 'white victim'. A 'wannabe' researcher interviews representatives of these institutions under the mask of self-righteousness and then presents her study results in conferences without reflecting on her complicity with the power structures she critiques. Her interventions consist of text boxes placed next to the poem and stories by the other two characters, as side notes commenting on their accounts. By speaking within closed boxes, she shields her narrative from potential criticism and maintains her knowledgeability unquestioned and intact, thus parodying the positivist myth of objectivity, neutrality, and representability. Each character has its own particular voice and mode of playing with text and language (Țișteea, 2020b).

With the use of multiple voices, I tried to follow Minh-ha (2019) who sees the multiplicity of voices as part of the process of decentralizing, dehierarchizing, and destabilizing knowledge, and presenting subjectivity as assembled, decentred, and multiple. I performed the characters in various settings with the help of masks and costumes reflecting my unsettled, flexible, and constantly shifting subjectivities, while visually documenting these performances (Figures 1-3). But what happens when I fix the subjecthood of my subjectivities/roles/performances behind rigid

masks? How is it productive and for what?

Image 1

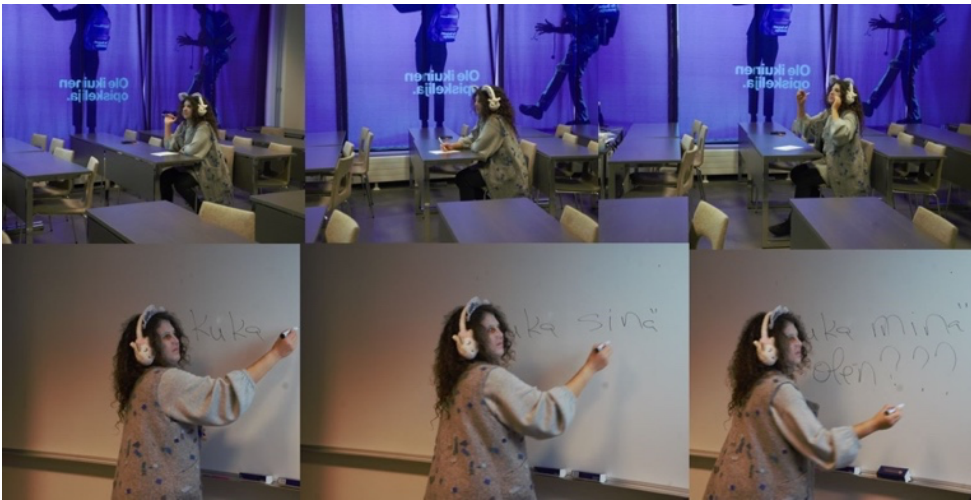


Figure 1 'White victim' performs her poem

Image 2



Figure 2 'White hero' plays her stories

Image 3

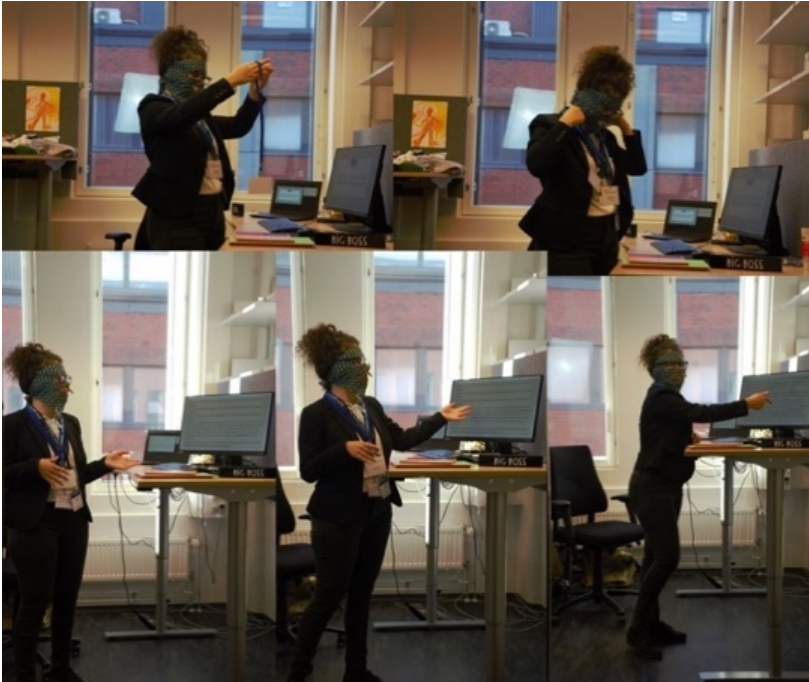


Figure 3 'Wannabe' researcher speaks within the box

After discussions with my supervisors, I realised that the masks and their multivocal performances solidify rather than destabilize subjectivity and authority by drawing boundaries between each voice and reinforcing strict distinctions between essentialist, fragmented, and unitary selves. Multivocality is not transgressive when juxtaposing voices that continue to speak within identified boundaries or used to better mask “the Voice”—that very place from where meaning is put together (Minh-ha interviewed by Chen, 1992, p. 85). The masks enable the characters to hide, to take refuge, to speak within boxes or against each other. They conceal. But through concealment they also reveal. By taking refuge behind self-parodying masks, the characters find the courage to speak about their biases and internalized racism, the courage to say what otherwise they could not. The characters were indeed thought-provoking through my use of irony and evocative performances, yet my self-conscious, ‘clever’ presentations also became alienating and pretentious (Finlay, 2003, p. 15). The characters were not actively listening to each other. They spoke about each other and about others with authority, but not with each other and not with or nearby others. Speaking nearby means speaking as if the others are present and can engage and fill in the blanks, it means speaking with intimacy and understanding, rather than pointing fingers at others’ faults and speaking from a position of detachment (Minh-ha interviewed by Chen, 1992). How can the characters open up, break the boxes from which they are speaking, pierce through their masks, become porous, and engage in mutually rewarding dialogues with each other? How can the characters reach out and transversally connect with plural others, thus allowing for broader resonance emerging from their specificities, and epistemic and political ramifications toward non-appropriative solidarity? My supervisors also helped me see the potential of ethnodrama in answering these questions by placing the characters in more dynamic

situations and conversations with plural other characters emerging from the participants in my research, and placing my theatrical performances in interactions with audiences – students at guest lectures and audiences at academic conferences – as knowledge producers (Țișteea, 2021). Multivocality can therefore open up to a non-identifiable ground of possibilities when boundaries are constantly undone while also being accounted for, in ongoing processes of collective entanglements and transformations (Minh-ha interviewed by Chen, 1992, p. 85).

Complex communication

Dialogues emerging through multiple unequal entanglements do not always result in transgressive transformations. Sometimes there may be communicative difficulties that need to be negotiated, in which cases reflexive strategies grounded in what Lugones (2006) calls complex communication can be helpful. Complex communication happens at intersections between communicative openings and impasses, requiring tolerance for the opacity of other ways of being and knowing without attempting to break them down within one's familiar sense-making, and without necessarily relying on shared vocabularies or interests (Lugones, 2006, p. 75). Through complex communication, people who are differently positioned by relations of power can reach a liminal space where new coalitional possibilities are created, yet this requires reflexivity on the spatiality and historicity of the journey that leads each individual to that liminal space (Lugones, 2006, p. 76). Through reflexive accounts of such journeys, the intersectionality of entangled oppressions becomes clear, where some may be among others' oppressors in certain contexts, which ultimately can enable outward movements between multiple affiliative groups (Lugones, 2006, p. 77). Once each subject's liminality is recognized, once they can see one another beyond what they may be within a given structure of power, they can move on to deciphering each other's resistant codes. Their words and gestures can thus be given new possible meanings, and new possible worlds and relational ways of being and knowing be imagined beyond structural, dominant meanings (Lugones, 2006, p. 79).

With complex communication it becomes possible to practice reflexivity as a mutual collaboration between people unequally entangled in multiple unexpected liminalities. This goes beyond merely representing multiple voices as superficial juxtaposing, which masks "the Voice" as the one authorial account assimilating the other voices (Minh-ha interviewed by Chen, 1992, p. 85). Reflexivity as mutual collaboration can often claim egalitarianism and divert attention from power imbalances, thus paradoxically laying claim to more authority (Finlay, 2002, p. 222). I have fallen into this trap multiple times during the research, by trying to legitimate my study through receiving validation from participants and co-researchers or positive feedback from academic communities to further advance my arguments, while smoothing out tensions arising from unequal social and epistemic positionings (Finlay, 2002, p. 220). With the ethnodrama, I would sometimes seek positive reinforcement from audiences as a way to validate the relevance of my methodological choices (Țișteea, 2021). In the co-authorial collaboration with Gabriela, she would sometimes tell me what she thought I wanted to hear in order not to shake my confidence in our project or in myself as researcher, or not to shake my white fragility (Țișteea & Băncuță, 2023). Complex communication creolized my practices of reflexivity as mutual collaboration by making

me stay with the discomfort of receiving honest critical feedback from my interlocutors. Complex communication can occur in at least three ways: it disrupts dominant discourses through individually-created counter-discourses; it disrupts dominant discourses through collectively-created counter-discourses; and it goes beyond the vertical axis colonizer/colonized through minor-to-minor creolized communication (Lugones, 2006, pp. 82-83).

The first strategy is an oppositional address to colonizing discourses and knowledges through direct and defiant interpellation, but without an intention of communicating anything other than that disruption. It is directed to audiences imagined as possible dialogical companions sharing similar struggles (Lugones, 2006, p. 82). I have used this in my previous theorizations of reflexivity uses in Nordic Roma-related educational research (Țișteea, 2020a). After mapping various reflexivities practiced by researchers in Nordic Romani studies against multiple theories on reflexivity and applying those theories to my own readings of others' reflexivities, I concluded the publication by expressing my hopes to provoke future conversations among researchers on what a decolonial turn would entail for practices of reflexivity in Nordic Roma-related research. I thus enacted an oppositional address to what I perceived as colonizing research practices and directed it to readers imagined as possible allies in decolonizing reflexive knowledge production.

The second strategy is a collective confrontation of dominant discourses, which imagines knowledges created otherwise and lives lived differently (Lugones, 2006, p. 82). Here variously positioned speakers address each other from positionings based on already-existing categories. They jointly fashion their message and address it to colonizing forces by speaking back to power through a speech inclusive of multiple unequal voices, which nonetheless share vocabularies and intentions (Lugones, 2006, p. 83). I used this strategy in subsequent developments of the ethnodrama when engaging with audiences – students at guest lectures and attendants at academic conference – to my performances and inviting them to relate their own experiences to the drama, utilizing their stories in further reworking the play-script's thus collectively fashioned counter-knowledges (Țișteea, 2021). The context of a play script dispersed my ownership of the autoethnographic material the drama was based on. The material set in dramatized scenes no longer seemed mine, and thus I could play with them in multiple ways. Imagining those events being played and parodied on stage took away anxieties on how they could be perceived or how I could be judged, since theatre plays are meant to arouse all kinds of feelings in audiences, to approach all kinds of topics, even shocking ones, and to make use of various techniques to emphasize certain acts, sometimes in exaggerated ways. I performed the drama through reader's theatre by using humour and irony, which also took away from my anxiety of presenting personal stories with the risk of self-exposure. Humour engages readers and audiences with all their senses and facilitates their multi-layered engagement with the material. At first the audience members mainly responded within the conventions of normative academic discourses. Trying to motivate them toward making deeper personal connections with the drama often triggered uncomfortable silences and stares. Some of them however shared more personal stories and ways in which the ethnodrama touched them. These mostly came from people who could identify with the drama by connecting it with their own embodied experiences.

The third strategy of complex communication can be seen as a more subversive metacommunication that does not rely on any pre-established categories or shared vocabularies and interests (Lugones, 2006, p. 83). Gabriela and I enacted such minor-to-minor creolized communication in an attempt to unpack oppressed/oppressor binaries grounded in unequal power relations between Roma and non-Roma, recognize each other's unequal liminalities, see each other beyond limiting categorizations, and decipher each other's resistant codes toward creating new meanings and imagining future possible worlds (Țișteea & Băncuță, 2023). This entailed creative changes to our vocabularies, senses of selves, collective memories, and ways of relational living, thus creating new meanings that did not precede our encounter (Lugones, 2006, p. 84). Our attempts have not always been fruitful, and we have failed many times, yet we kept visible our productive failures as openings toward unforeseeable possibilities.

With the ethnodrama, I also reflected on my failures to enact minor-to-minor creolized communication with my BPoC classmates in the migrant 'integration' training (Țișteea, 2021). The ethnodrama parodies my ignorance in relation to my BPoC classmates in the training and my appropriation of Romani voices. It is a critical reflection on power relations and hierarchies, productive research failures, and researcher positionality. It explores ways of learning about one's own ignorance regarding power relations in the classroom and beyond and creating knowledge from that, who has the right to write which stories, and whose voices I silence or appropriate with my voice. My classmates in the 'integration' training did not see me as inhabiting a liminal space, so we did not reach creolized communication because we did not negotiate our communicative difficulties (Lugones, 2006). The impossibility for them to see my liminality related to my failure to move beyond ignorant and arrogant perceptions of the world that position me as a 'victim' without seeing my complicity to their oppression. Portraying those experiences through an ethnodrama was an ethical choice to complicate the representation of migrant 'integration' experiences and recalibrate power hierarchies within both classroom and research contexts (ZIN & Gannon, 2022, p. 235). This allowed me to focus on wider power hierarchies that were being reproduced in various settings, from the 'integration' training classroom to the academic conference room, regarding multiple entanglements between people who are differently migratised or racialised and with unequal access to making knowledge claims. The classroom thus became a catalyst to analyse wider issues about power relations in education and research contexts, including reflexivity on obstacles preventing Eastern European-BPoC dialogues in knowledge production.

Complex communication shows the relevance of paying attention to the participants' and co-researchers' reflexivities, thus avoiding the reproduction of knowing/known divides (Finlay, 2002, p. 218). This varies from involving participants in reflexive dialogues during project design and development, to mutual reflexivities between co-researchers where we analyse each other's practices, and can also translate to involving students and members of academic communities in reflexive processes and dialogues (Day, 2012, p. 80; Țișteea, 2021). The mutual engagement of co-researchers in analysing each other's reflexivities resonate with how the ability to engage in creolized complex communication requires the interlocutors to be reflexive of each other's accounts of their different journeys to the liminal space where creolization happens (Lugones,

2006, p. 76).

Middle voice reflexivity

For Gabriela and I to recognize each other's unequal liminalities and see each other beyond limiting categorizations, we first applied mutual reflexivity on the different spatialities and historicities of the journey that led each of us to a shared liminal space, or to our research collaboration (Țișteea & Băncuță, 2023). In inter-relating our different journeys we spoke with our reflexive middle voices which, as Sandoval (2000, pp. 155-156) explains, is a voice that becomes constituted as it both acts and is acted upon, hovering between active and passive, past, present and future, enabling us to act on the world while transforming our relation to it, recreating ourselves as we create our actions in an ongoing loop of transformation with no predictable outcome other than transformation itself.

With her reflexive middle voice, Gabriela told multidimensional and complex stories about her life while utilizing a plurality of strategies from varying standpoints tactically employed for addressing various subjugations. At times she presented herself as virtuous and innocent; at other times, she transpired subversiveness, creativity, and humour; in some instances, she denoted impressive strength and resilience, whereas in others she expressed her hopelessness and disappointments with the spaces and structures she navigates; in certain moments she constructed powerful resistant visions of collective transformations for Roma emancipation, whereas in others she focused more on her own individual growth and interests. She adopted different tactics for navigating different worlds. Some of her strategies may not be visible to ignorant or arrogant perceivers, since the subversiveness of Roma women, and women of colour more widely, does not make sense in a world marked by wilful white and epistemic ignorance, which constructs them as pliable, foldable, and classifiable (Lugones, 2003, p. 14). Her different tactics may also be interpreted as disloyal to the different worlds she inhabits, as in betraying a certain imagined 'authenticity' of what it may mean to be Roma. Such a perception would see her subjectivity as fragmented, fragmentation which could be used for purposes of social control. Gabriela, however, creatively defied norms that subdue her, thus asserting her multiple states toward becoming ambiguous, unclassifiable, and unmanageable (Lugones, 2003, p. 100). Gabriela also showed me how some of my decisions both as researcher and as work supervisor ignored the plurality and agencies of Roma women, thus recalibrating our collaboration with each other and how we consulted members of Gabriela's community during the process.

With my reflexive middle voice, I transformed the arrogant and ignorant perceptions I had been indoctrinated in through schooling, upbringing, and social dynamics. Arrogant perception means to ignore, ostracize, render invisible, stereotype, leave completely alone, interpret as crazy, detach, or disidentify from those one perceives arrogantly (Lugones, 2003, p. 5). I have also been the object of others' arrogant perception, yet the extent to which one perceives or is perceived arrogantly intersects with gender, race, class, etc. I have also internalized arrogant perceptions of myself and applied it onto myself, or onto similarly positioned subjects in an attempt to dissociate from them and position myself as above or beyond them. But mostly I have perceived arrogantly those whom I have seen as being for myself and from whom I thought I could arrogate their

substance, such as people positioned lower in socio-economic hierarchies (Frye, 1983, p. 66; Lugones, 2003, p. 2). Yet arrogant and ignorant perceptions can also occur when one attempts to ‘help’ or ‘empower’ disadvantaged ‘others.’

Even though it is important for Roma women to have access to the same systems and opportunities as other women, it is important to look out for any paternalism that might show up in our work together. A well-intended, privileged non-Roma Romanian migrant woman ‘helped’ a migrant Roma woman with no formal education who was street-vending in Helsinki to raise her three children living in Romania. The non-Roma woman even convinced the Roma woman to write together a research paper about their experiences of working together and their friendship. This paper will help the former earn a PhD. She thought the research collaboration would be egalitarian if the Roma woman were a co-author. The two authors tried to blur divides and hierarchies between them while acknowledging the impossibility of fully diminishing those divides by keeping the tensions and disagreements between them as generative sources of knowledge in the text. They tried to practice egalitarian ways of working together, each leading different parts of the process and consulting each other at every step. Still, instead of imagining a new world, the process risked taking them to the Roma woman being co-opted in the non-Roma world and, in that process, the Roma woman learning how to govern herself according to the norms of that world. That is because, despite our best intentions, we could not sometimes overcome the oppressor/oppressed, perpetrator/victim, saviour/saved binaries, and colonising narratives of me empowering Gabriela in my terms, even if we intended the opposite. Perhaps the problem was us intending the opposite, which still relies on the same, although inverted, categories, which simply turn Gabriela into a self-governing subject liberating herself in the coloniser’s terms, and me into an accomplice who incorporates Gabriela’s success story into existing power structures.

Through Gabriela’s analytical stories that challenged socio-economic and epistemic hierarchies, in dialogue with my stories of unlearning perceptions grounded in white and epistemic ignorance and arrogance, our collaboration became a creolizing research practice that disrupts the reproduction of whiteness as the norm against which to explore Romani experiences, and the paternalistic intent to “help” or “rescue” Roma, by shifting the focus from Roma marginalization, exoticization, or victimization to multiple creative agencies of Roma as free thinking and acting subjects (Matache, 2016, 2017). Our co-authored book chapter (Țișteea & Băncuță, 2023) in dialogue with the ethnodrama (Țișteea, 2021) contribute to the creolization of research collaborations through creative and disruptive expressions and practices, while also making visible and challenging issues of domination, hegemony, and subalternity (Hall, 2015, p. 16). Specifically, they challenge how the “epistemic violence” (Castro-Gómez & Martin, 2002) of the white academic agenda in Nordic educational research and the dominance of non-Roma researchers in Romani studies intersect with the hierarchies of knowledge production in which an Eastern European non-Roma migrant, student, researcher, mediator, and interpreter – who is usually sidelined from the discussion – can be elevated as a knowing subject while silencing the resistant, divergent, and creative agencies of Roma and BPoC migrants, co-researchers, and participants.

Discussion: Creolizing reflexivity

Drawing from my PhD research, I have exemplified several types of reflexivity, some of which may even seem to be in contradiction to each other. At times I used a more essentialist reflexivity relying on representationalism and confessional accounts about how as a researcher I impact the research processes (Undurraga, 2021, p. 1). I did that when, for instance, I positioned myself as an Eastern European non-Roma migrant woman and researcher with an interest in contributing to dialogues in knowledge production to challenge epistemic racism in a Nordic context (Țișteea, 2024). This is a kind of emancipatory reflexivity that takes responsibility in seeking social and epistemic transformations, justice, and empowerment, based on an understanding of subjectivities as relational yet stable and unitary, and on the impact that one's subjectivity has on the research produced (Undurraga, 2020, p. 7). While I take into account that positionalities are not fixed categories but that they often blur within one another, I also see the usefulness in temporarily using contested categories for contributing to epistemic transformations and social justice. At other times I practiced a more discursive and performative reflexivity that understands subjectivities as socio-culturally constituted and entangled in multiple unequal and unexpected ways, focusing on how discursive practices and institutional workings impact those entanglements and the overall research (Undurraga, 2021, p. 2). I did that in my use of *autohistoria-teoría*, or in dialogue with my co-author's Romani storytelling practices, to delve into unconscious, unarticulated dynamics of relating to oneself and others, which tolerate the ambiguous, uncertain, and unknowable that cannot always translate into verbal articulations (Țișteea & Băncuță, 2023). This type of reflexivity creates suspicious distance to one's experiences, embraces embodied but unthought knowledge, and relies on intuitive and bodily feelings in advancing an inquiry that does not close down meaning (Undurraga, 2020, p. 6).

At times I focused on my multiple ongoing role performance conflicts between student, classmate, migrant, researcher, trainee, employee, supervisor, mediator, friend, lecturer, their inter-relations with the role performances of participants and co-researchers, and how that shaped the course of the research. At other times I went beyond fixed, though inter-related, roles to look at how subjectivities are shifting, co-constructed within research settings, in an ongoing process of inter-subjective transformations (Țișteea, 2020, 2021). While in the former use of reflexivity I imported conceptual understandings of multiple roles from preestablished categories, in the latter I approached subjectivity as emerging from the perspectives of participants, audiences, and co-researchers (Day, 2012, p. 72). I thus used both a reflexivity that has an implicit notion of subjectivity as well as one that produces subjectivities (Undurraga, 2020, p. 4). Still at other times I went beyond an inter-subjective perspective or a context limited to the research setting, to consider wider relational aspects in the construction of subjectivities like multiple socio-historical and material entanglements, such as how coloniality shapes present relational im/possibilities. I did that when for instance I looked at how hegemonic understandings of knowledge attempt to transcribe into rigid structures living, organic knowledges, and how undermining the will to structure can open unforeseeable possibilities (Țișteea & Băncuță, 2023). In such cases, I treated reflexivity as producing the very possibility of conceiving of inter-subjectivities in particular ways, by decentring subjectivity through engagements with multiple histories, senses, and elements that

cannot be grasped into words (Undurraga, 2020, p. 7).

All this shows that each type of reflexivity has its usefulness depending on the context. Even if I am critical toward a certain theory on reflexivity, I may still use it without being aware of it (Pillow, 2003, p. 181). Misrepresentations in research happen despite one's best intentions, and brushing those aside or looking for accuracy and truthfulness reproduces positivist research assumptions of mastery and disembodiment, whereas treating tensions and contradictions as opportunities for further learning may open unexpected and fruitful possibilities (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 64; Day, 2012, p. 80). Reflexivity is relevant not just to the steps taken in a research process, but also the development of theories and concepts (Day, 2012, p. 78). Theorizing the ways we practice reflexivity can therefore help us see in which ways we are being reflexive at any given moment, without assuming that we already know it, and without looking for definite answers or solutions (Undurraga, 2020, p. 9). For instance, we might look for a solution to research misrepresentations through renouncing altogether the need to represent and know and embracing performativity instead. Yet representing is not something we can completely stop doing, and the boundaries between representationalism and performativity are more blurred, which means that we continue representing even when we explicitly argue against it, since developing any research argument, and even the conceptualisation of performativity, rely on representations (Undurraga, 2021, p. 9). Embracing multiple entangled reflexivities, underpinning their theorizations, potentials, and limitations, while also critiquing them, can thus produce new ways of relating to oneself, others, one's worlds, and other worlds, and can even produce those very subjects and worlds (Undurraga, 2020, p. 8; Barad, 2007). Different theories on reflexivity offer different ways of relating and understanding, in that process of relating also producing the very boundaries of subjects and worlds (Undurraga, 2020, p. 4). Different reflexivities also offer different ways of relating to theories as affective engagements, which explains how there are affective needs in embracing or rejecting certain theories and certain types of reflexivity (Undurraga, 2020, p. 7).

Undurraga (2021) also shows the relevance of entangling multiple reflexivities toward what she calls, following Barad (2007), a "diffracted reflexivity" that continually produces subjects and worlds that are relationally, affectively, culturally, and materially entangled. Diffraction refers to intra-actions between different elements of the realm of the human and the nonhuman, between discursive configurations and corporeal materialities, which produce ontological realities and material bodies that do not pre-exist their interactions but emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating (Barad, 2003, p. 803; 2007, p. 439). A diffracted reflexivity shows how there is movement in reflexivity that blurs divides between various theories on reflexivity, or between theories embracing reflexivity and those rejecting it and proposing something else like diffraction (Undurraga, 2021, p. 3). Diffraction troubles the reliance on the optical metaphor of reflexivity that wants to represent or mirror how things are, and focuses instead on the multiple interferences or intra-actions that are produced when understanding ourselves as continuously defined by and defining the worlds we study (Barad, 2007). Yet defining diffraction in opposition to one single definition of reflexivity as representationalism produces practices of exclusion that disregard the multiple ways in which reflexivity has been theorized (Undurraga, 2021, p. 3). Blurring divides between diffraction and reflexivity, Undurraga (2021, p. 6) argues, diffracts

reflexivity as ways of relating that produce selves and worlds through relational onto-epistemologies that stop assuming an already-formed subject waiting to be represented.

By bringing creolization (Glissant, 1997) in dialogue with Undurraga's (2021) diffracted reflexivity, I propose creolizing reflexivity in order to also account for the dynamics of coloniality within which diffraction or entanglements occur. While diffraction is useful in understanding entangled onto-epistemological processes of becoming, as Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2021, pp. 3-4) shows, it disregards the historically sedimented relations of domination and power within the intra-active configuration. Gutiérrez Rodríguez argues for inter-relating Barad's (2003, 2007) spatial-relational entanglements with Mbembe's (2001, p. 229) colonial entanglements that are constantly shaped and mediated by multiple, overlapping modes of self-fashioning in which the past and the present function relationally. Colonial entanglements show the lasting effects of historical processes on present configurations and, by configuring the colonial in the present, intersect with coloniality (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2021, p. 5). Entangling diffraction with coloniality leads to creolization, since the difference between diffraction and creolization is that the latter emerges within the dynamics of coloniality. At the same time, creolization creates new vocabularies not inscribed in any hegemonic script, with its elements diffracted and its consequences unforeseeable (Glissant, 1997, p. 34). It explodes multiple entangled elements into an arc, diffracting them into new dimensions, allowing each element to be there and elsewhere, rooted and open, in harmony and in deviance, in confluence and in distance, scattered and consensually assembled in unexpected ways (Glissant, 1997, p. 33).

Drawing from my PhD research, in this article I explored possible manifestations of the creolization of reflexivity. I entangled multiple unequal worlds, subjectivities, and theories, and the multiple reflexivities that produce them. I showed the embeddedness of such entanglements within coloniality with the help of Gloria Anzaldúa's autohistoria-teoría, as well as experimented with decolonial re-worlding and re-futuring by building on the concept of playful world-travelling coined by Maria Lugones (2003). The travelling Lugones envisions departs from colonial world-travelling as conquest and domination (2003, p. 12). In contrast, decolonial playfulness involves openness to surprise, to being a fool, to re/construction of ourselves and the worlds we inhabit, to risking the ground that constructs us as oppressors, oppressed, or as collaborating or colluding with oppression, while embracing uncertainty and lack of self-importance (Lugones, 2003, p. 13). I have travelled between the worlds each reflexivity produces as an ongoing process of abandoning particular preestablished constructions of myself, others, and my relation to them, toward playfully and relationally reconstructing multiple selves and worlds. Creolizing reflexivity thus occurs within tensions and conflictual moments between coloniality and decoloniality. It is those very moments that reveal complexities and nuances that can lead to unforeseeable possibilities.

Closing thoughts

Each reflexivity I have analysed here produces a worlding, and creolizing reflexivity entails travelling between multiple unequal worlds with a playful attitude, thus unlearning arrogant and ignorant perceptions and learning playful and loving perceptions (Lugones 2003). Each reflexivity also produces shifting subjectivities, which is why creolizing reflexivity through world-travelling

entangles multiple unequal subjectivities toward becoming ambiguous, unclassifiable, and unmanageable, thus creolizing them. Creolizing subjectivities inter-relates their diffracted synchronicities of multiple unequally entangled stories (Glissant, 1997, p. 221) through which they can enter liminal spaces where they engage in complex communication by inventing new vocabularies beyond preestablished structures and categories (Lugones, 2006). Each reflexivity is shaped by certain theories, so traveling between the worlds created by multiple reflexivities also entails creolizing theory through minor-to-minor theoretical relations beyond dominant paradigms (Lionnet & Shih, 2011). Such processes of creolization allow producing knowledge through and with the fruitful tensions resulting from unequal entanglements of reflexivities, subjectivities, and theories, which are both shaped by and look for ways to go beyond coloniality.

This article has applied a creolized meta-reflexivity on my processes of producing knowledge and reproducing ignorance throughout my PhD research, a reflexivity of my multiple reflexivities in relation to other people, with texts, and with theories. I have acknowledged my slippages and inconsistencies and embraced the ways I enact what I also reject, thus enhancing my responsibilities as part of ever-becoming worlds and broadening possible thinking on what divergent onto-epistemologies and methodologies can create. A creolized meta-reflexivity is thus an ongoing questioning of the entanglements and inter-relationalities created through reading, writing, dialoguing, collaborating, telling stories, performing, researching, practicing, etc., a questioning that creates new entanglements with their ongoing and emerging inequalities. It is not more comprehensive, it does not offer solutions or closures, but shakes already uncertain grounds with more uncertainty, further entangles already existing entanglements towards unforeseeability.

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