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Legality, Racialization, and Immigrants' Experience of Ethnoracial Harassment in Russia

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Abstract

Using data from a structured survey and in-depth interviews in three Russian cities, our study engages the scholarship on immigration legal regimes and racialization practices to examine the experiences of ethnoracially motivated harassment among working migrant women from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in Russia. The results of statistical analyses show that regularized legal status is associated with a significantly lower likelihood of experiencing harassment at the hands of law enforcement agents and other actors alike. Regardless of legal status, however, the analyses reveal significant variations across the three migrant groups, with members of the group that is seen as racially most distinct from the host population having the highest odds of reporting harassment. The analysis of in-depth interviews confirms and expands on these patterns, providing additional insights into the complex expressions and interplay of legality and race in migrants' everyday experiences. The study findings are situated within the cross-national literature on migrants' legal and ethnoracial exclusion in receiving contexts.

Keywords

Immigration; Legal status; Race/Ethnicity; Racialization; Mixed Methods

The legal framework of immigrants' reception channels them to – or bars them from – opportunities in the host society (Menjivar 2006; Portes and Böröcz 1989). As efforts to limit immigration through tightened entry requirements or beefed-up border enforcement have generally been unsuccessful (Cornelius 2005; Massey and Riosmena 2010), receiving country governments have been trying to deter future migration by curtailing immigrant newcomers' rights and access to employment and social services and by increasing their surveillance (Broeders and Engbersen 2007). Irregular, or undocumented, migrants are the primary targets of these efforts (e.g. Calavita 2005; Takei, Saenz, and Li 2009; van Meeteren 2010).

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¹¹The Russian Federation has indigenous ethnic groups with pronounced Asiatic racial characteristics such as Kalmyks, Buryats, or Yakuts. Aitieva (2015:59), for example, mentions that Kyrgyz migrants in the Siberian city of Yakutsk are often mistaken for local Yakuts, also a Turkic group. However, the size of those groups is rather small and their presence outside their original areas of settlement, including the sites where our data were collected, is very limited.

Yet, a focus on immigrants' legal predicaments may lead to an underestimation of the role that other characteristics, such as racial and ethnic background, play in molding their experiences. Thus, the U.S.-based scholarship has observed that both immigration policies and racialization projects often frame groups from similar backgrounds into a single "other," ignoring important within-group differences, such as the case of Latinos in the United States (Lippard and Gallagher 2011; Ngai 2004). However, research also has demonstrated that actors and institutions in receiving societies use race to hierarchically rank immigrants (see Hao 2007), according more value to some groups than to others, and in the process producing and reproducing the meanings and structures that undergird racialization processes (Adler 2006; Bonilla-Silva 1997; Calavita 2005; Catanzarite and Aguilera 2002; Maldonado 2006). Importantly, racialization is a fluid, geographically and historically-specific relational process, and therefore its mechanisms and expressions vary across contexts (see Bonilla-Silva 2006; De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003; James, Kim, and Redclift 2015; Maldonado 2009).

Using the case of Central Asian migrant women in the Russian Federation, we demonstrate how the formal legal context *together with* racialization practices impact migrants' everyday experiences.¹ We argue that overcoming the hurdles of legalization does not eliminate the challenges embedded in migrants' ethnoracial otherness but also show that the penalty for otherness is disproportionately borne by the migrant group whose phenotype is particularly distinct. By examining these processes in the context of Russia, our study contributes to the scholarship on contemporary processes of immigrant racialization.

LEGALITY AND RACIALIZATION

Research in immigrant-receiving countries has examined how immigration laws and regulations create legal categories that include and exclude, crucially shaping immigrants' incorporation and life chances (Calavita 2005; Donato and Armenta 2011; McIlwaine 2015; Menjívar 2006; Menjívar and Abrego 2012; Willen 2007). Specifically, legal status impacts immigrants' position and wages in the labor market (Gleeson 2010; Massey and Gelatt 2010; Massey, Durand and Malone 2002; Takei, Saenz and Li 2009), and their access to social services (Fujiwara 2008; Hagan et al. 2003), health care (Castañeda 2009; Viladich 2012; Willen 2012), housing (McConnell 2013; van Meeteren 2010), and education (Gonzales 2011; Menjívar 2008; Söhn 2014).

We bring together a focus on legal status with that on racialization. In doing so, we dialogue with the segmented assimilation framework which proposes various "modes of incorporation" for immigrants in the host society (Portes and Böröcz 1989). This framework has been widely used in identifying structural forces that hinder or facilitate immigrants' mobility, from immigration laws to inequalities in job market opportunities (e.g., Menjívar 2006; Portes and Zhou 1993). It also has been applied to the examination of racialization processes in the context of reception (Portes and Zhou 1993). Thus, stressing the importance of "color," Portes and Zhou (1993) note that while race "may appear at first glance as an

¹We use the words 'migrant' and 'immigrant' interchangeably, as semantically equivalent, because in an increasingly transnationalized world, distinctions between permanent and temporary or staying and returning are becoming increasingly blurred. In Russia, where this study was conducted, 'migrant' is more widely used.

individual characteristic, in reality it is a trait belonging to the host society.” “Prejudice,” they continue, “is not intrinsic to a particular skin color or racial type, and indeed, many immigrants never experienced it in their native lands. It is by virtue of moving into a new social environment, marked by different values and prejudices, that physical features become redefined as a handicap” (p. 83).

Following Silverstein (2005), we define racialization as the processes and practices that classify groups, including immigrants and minorities, on the basis of physical characteristics into an ethnoracial hierarchy. This classification further depends on a variety of social attributes (Penner and Saperstein 2008) and results in unequal life chances among hierarchically-ordered racialized groups (Bonilla-Silva 1997, 2006; Omi and Winant 1986). Practices of racial ascription exert symbolic violence on those who are categorized (Bourdieu 2000), as a racial identity is imposed on them, leaving them little room for alternative identities (Fassin 2011) and forcing them to accept and internalize their oppression (Massey 2007; Pyke 2010). These processes have real-life consequences (Maldonado 2006, 2009; Villanueva 2002). Race, thus, becomes a “fundamental organizing principle of social relationships” (Omi and Winant 1986:66).

Importantly, in the case of immigrants, racialization processes go hand in hand with those of illegalization (Flippen and Parrado 2015). Thus, while the production of migrant illegality is designed not to fully exclude migrant workers but to conditionally, or differentially, include them so as to ensure a steady supply of cheap and malleable labor (see De Genova 2004; Espiritu 2003; Maldonado 2006; Ngai 2004), the “racial projects” of the state (see Omi and Winant 1986)—often deployed to restrict citizenship for immigrant workers (Baldoz 2004)—help to reinforce this conditional inclusion by perpetuating immigrants’ marginality. Although these processes are fundamentally universal, their concrete configurations, dynamics, and outcomes are shaped by specificities of the ethnoracial and legal context of reception, as well as the history of relations between the sending and receiving countries (e.g., Chavez 2013; Kim 2008). Also importantly, these processes, like other aspects of the immigrant experience, are highly gendered, and may magnify the disadvantages that immigrant women already face in the host labor market (Blau and Kahn 2007; Hall, Greenman, and Farkas 2010) and their vulnerabilities stemming from a clash between their labor force participation and patriarchal family arrangements and expectations (Flippen 2013; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003; Kibria 2006).

MIGRATION FROM CENTRAL ASIA TO RUSSIA

The Russian Federation has the third largest population of international migrants in the world after the United States and Germany (United Nations 2015). Whereas immigration to Russia shares many features typical of large migration flows in other parts of the world, it is quite unique in its historical context and its rapid increase in a relatively short period. The history of Russia’s immigration has been influenced by the disintegration of the USSR into a host of independent states in 1991. Accordingly, large-scale labor migration of native Central Asian groups to the Russian Federation is relatively recent, starting in earnest only in the first half of the 1990s.² After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the first significant migratory flow of Central Asian natives³ to Russia was composed of forced migrants,

primarily from Tajikistan (present-day population of c. 8 million), where the new state formation was accompanied by a civil war (1992–1997). Extreme political instability compounded the economic shocks of the Soviet collapse and set the conditions for rapidly growing migration, which continued after the cessation of hostilities. Massive labor migration from Uzbekistan (pop. 30 million) and Kyrgyzstan (pop. 6 million), which avoided major internal political upheavals in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, started much later, in the mid-2000s, fueled by protracted economic stagnation and rising social instability.⁴ Although some migratory flows have gone to neighboring Kazakhstan (Zimovina and Agadjanian 2012), the Russian Federation, a much larger and wealthier nation, has attracted the overwhelming majority of Central Asian migrants (Abashin 2014).

Reliable figures of the size of the three migrant groups in Russia are not available, but recent statistics of the Russian Federal Migration Service (FMS)⁵ on foreign citizens lawfully present in the country (i.e., excluding naturalized immigrants) put the number of legal adult Kyrgyz nationals at around 530 thousand, Tajik nationals at 930 thousand, and Uzbek nationals at 1.94 million (FMS 2015a), or approximately 9%, 11%, and 6% of the respective countries' population.⁶ Although labor migration from Central Asia started as almost exclusively male, the share of female migrants has rapidly grown (Khusenova 2013; Tyurukanova 2011), paralleling trends in other parts of the former Soviet Union (e.g., Hoffmann and Buckley 2013) and elsewhere in the world (Donato and Gabaccia 2015). In today's Russia, some 40%, 17%, and 19% of registered Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek nationals, respectively, are women (FMS 2015a), and increasingly women migrate on their own rather than accompanying/following their male partners (Tyurukanova 2011). While male immigrants predominate in construction and similar industries, women typically work in services, as sales clerks, cashiers, and cleaners in supermarkets and small shops, or as cooks, waitresses, and cleaners in cafes and restaurants. A large number of Central Asian women also work in bazaars (*rynki*) selling foodstuffs and inexpensive manufactured goods. Finally, some migrant women work in private settings, mainly as domestic workers and caretakers (Tyurukanova 2011; Karachurina, Poletaev, and Florinskaya 2015). Although these occupational niches attract many migrant women, they also have a large presence of native Russian women, including internal migrants.

Whereas several studies have examined the transformation of gender ideologies and relations in the southern periphery of the former Soviet Union as both a catalyst and a consequence of labor migration (e.g., Hoffmann and Buckley 2013; Reeves 2013a), the scholarship focusing on migrant women's experience in Russia remains very limited. The few existing analyses typically note cultural and economic challenges that Central Asian

²Soviet and even pre-Soviet times saw considerable mobility, voluntary or forced, of ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, and other groups of European origin from the European part of the country to Central Asia, but migration of autochthonous Central Asian groups outside of their respective homelands was much smaller (e.g., Ergeshbayev 2006).

³In this study, we do not address massive "return" migration of ethnic Russians and other European groups from Central Asia to the Russian Federation around the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union and its aftermath.

⁴The other two Central Asian countries, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, richly endowed with natural resources, have not sent similarly large flows of migrants to Russia.

⁵In April 2016 the FMS was abolished and its functions were transferred to the General Administration of Migration Matters of the Russian Ministry of Interior.

⁶In fact, these figures are lower than corresponding figures from earlier years probably due to the mid-decade economic recession in Russia.

migrant women face as they seek to reconcile traditional gender norms with demands and expectations in the Russian labor market (Tyurukanova 2011), challenges that are further exacerbated by entrenched gender inequalities in Russian society (e.g., Kosyakova, Kurakin, and Blossfeld 2015). While these challenges are unique in their specific configurations and manifestations, they parallel those identified in the western scholarship cited earlier.

Although massive labor migration flows from the three Central Asian nations to the Russian Federation are relatively recent, they reflect the strong historical connections between Central Asia and Russia. As Panarin (2003) observed, a subjective sense of common geographical space and historical destiny is still widespread among residents of the countries that emerged from the rubble of the USSR. Cemented by the earlier mobility of ethnic Russians and other European-origin groups throughout the Russian and Soviet empires and the spread of the Russian language and Russian-Soviet culture, this sense of symbolic unity, however imperfect and unequal its actual functioning might have been historically (see Sahadeo 2007), plays an important role in shaping Central Asians' motivation for migration and in the expectations that migrants have when they arrive in Russia.

Reflecting the long-lasting political and symbolic ties among the former Soviet republics, citizens of the three Central Asian countries can enter the Russian Federation without a visa. However, as all other foreigners who seek employment in Russia, they must fulfill a complex set of requirements to obtain a work permit and temporary resident registration. Because these requirements are convoluted and costly, and corruption is endemic (Malakhov 2014), many migrants stay and work in Russia in violation of at least some of the numerous immigration and labor regulations, often using fake or other people's documents (Reeves 2013b). Importantly, even migrants who do not violate any law are often perceived as having done so as migrant status typically connotes illegality (Abashin 2014).

In theory, new arrivals who obtain temporary residence status may then transition to permanent residence (*vid na zhitel'stvo*, in Russian) and eventually apply for Russian citizenship. As a rule, application for citizenship requires five years of permanent residence, but under certain conditions (e.g. spouse or children who are Russian citizens) citizenship can be obtained faster. Citizens of some countries may also obtain citizenship faster thanks to bilateral agreements between their countries and the Russian Federation (FMS 2015). Of the three provenance countries included in this study, this expedited process applied only to nationals of Kyrgyzstan since the mid-1990s but even in their case it was greatly restricted in 2012.⁷ For all migrants, the path to citizenship is fraught with numerous bureaucratic difficulties and great financial costs, both official fees and bribes to corrupt officials. In addition, becoming a Russian citizen usually entails the loss of the previous citizenship, which may complicate migrants' life when they return to their homelands and, in particular, jeopardize the property they may own there.⁸ Because a sizeable share of Central Asian

⁷In 2015, two years after the data collection for this study, the Kyrgyz Republic joined the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). An assessment of the implications of Kyrgyzstan's accession to the EEU for Kyrgyz citizens' opportunities and experiences in Russia requires a separate investigation.

⁸Immigration law of the Russian Federation requires that individuals who acquire Russian citizenship renounce their previous citizenship (FMS 2015b). Citizens of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan automatically lose their citizenship upon acquiring Russian citizenship. Although Kyrgyz citizenship is not formally annulled in such cases, at the time of this writing, the Russian Federation and the Kyrgyz Republic did not have a treaty on dual citizenship.

migrants intend to return to their home countries after working in Russia (Agadjanian, Gorina, and Menjívar 2014), these potential complications add to their ambivalence about naturalization.

Racism and racialization

The historic ties between Central Asia and Russia, while facilitating migrants' journey to and incorporation in the host country, have not prevented the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment in Russian society. As the number of migrants has grown, racist, xenophobic, and nationalist rhetoric by politicians and the media have become increasingly commonplace, especially during electoral campaigns (Regamey 2010; Titov 2003). Organizations openly espousing racist or anti-migrant views are increasingly visible, organizing public protests in cities across the country. Widespread formal racism both reflects and exacerbates grassroots resentment toward "black" (i.e., darker complexion) migrants⁹ who have "come in large numbers" (*ponayekhali*), and "inundated" (*navodnili*) or "filled up" (*zapolonili*) Russia, and allegedly have brought diseases, crime, and religious extremism to the country. According to annual surveys conducted by the Levada Center, a leading public opinion research firm, since the early 2000s, the idea of "Russia for ethnic Russians" (*Rossiia dlya russkikh*) has been fully or partly supported by more than 50% of the country's population (ranging between 51% and 66% across years) since the early 2000s (Levada Center 2015). Although ethnoracially motivated hostility often targets Russia's indigenous ethnic minorities, especially those from the country's North Caucasus region (e.g., Laryš and Mareš 2011; Shnirelman 2011), evidence suggests that migrants are significantly more vulnerable (e.g., Alexseev 2010). Overt racism and xenophobia, especially targeting Central Asians, are pervasive in today's Russia (e.g., Galliamov 2005; Petrov 2002; Reeves 2013c; Regamey 2010; Zakharov 2015), and the Russian government has been unable or unwilling to prevent or combat them. Violent racially-motivated attacks and even murders of members of minorities of non-Slavic origin have become common occurrences in large metropolitan areas as well as in smaller cities. Racial slurs aimed primarily at Central Asians, such as *churka* (lit. block of wood, in reference to supposedly inferior intellectual abilities), are commonplace in everyday vernacular.¹⁰ Central Asians' phenotype (e.g. darker skin tone and "Asiatic," i.e., East Asian phenotype) is a particularly strong object of hostility and stereotypes. Thus, it is common for classified job ads to require explicitly, in addition to formal qualifications for a job, *both* Russian citizenship *and* "Slavic" (e.g., fair-skinned, European) appearance, particularly for positions that involve frequent contact with the public. Hence, job applicants must meet the requirements of legal status but also the expectation of a certain "racial fit." At the same time, classified ads often stress that the employer is an ethnic Russian to make the job more attractive for potential ethnic Russian applicants.

⁹In today's popular racial taxonomies, the Russian word for "black" (*chiorny*) is typically used for natives of the southern fringe of the former Soviet empire (including Russia's North Caucasus) rather than individuals of African descent.

¹⁰Popular stereotypes of Central Asians' racial, cultural, and intellectual inferiority were not uncommon during the Soviet period (e.g., Sahadeo 2007). However, the spread of such negative stereotypes, not to mention their overt public expression, was contained by the Communist state ideology of "peoples' friendship."

Similar racialization practices are widespread in the housing rental market; thus, it is not unusual for agencies and individuals renting out residential properties to state explicitly their preference for “Slavic” or ethnic “Russian” renters and, vice versa, for those seeking to rent a place to indicate that they are ethnic Russian in order to appear more desirable to potential landlords. These ubiquitous ads send messages that though Russian citizenship or legal status is important, race matters a great deal as well. Furthermore, these messages are reinforced by the Russian police who routinely stop darker-skinned, non-Slavic-looking migrants for document checks in the streets, the subway, and other public spaces for the sole reason of their appearance. Importantly, because there is virtually no official or public repudiation of anti-immigrant racism, the ubiquitous racist labels and stereotypes are normalized and become part of the cognitive repertoires of natives and migrants alike. Thus, Central Asian *gastarbayeri* (from the German *Gastarbeiter*, or guest worker) receive continuous, poignant reminders that they are not only outsiders in a legal sense but also racially alien and inferior.

The shared stereotypes regarding the three groups of Central Asian migrants are cemented by their regional provenance and Muslim background. Not surprisingly, these stereotypes obscure important ethnocultural distinctions among the three groups and homogenize them simply as “Central Asians” and thus as others. Kyrgyz and Uzbeks speak similar Turkic languages, and are therefore ethnoculturally close, whereas the Tajik language is of Iranian stock. At the same time, Uzbeks and Tajiks represent traditionally sedentary Central Asian populations whereas Kyrgyz are traditionally a nomadic group whose sedentarization is historically recent. Although all three groups are Muslim, the influence of Islam is generally stronger among Tajiks and Uzbeks than among Kyrgyz. Yet, because these ethnocultural distinctions among the three groups are seldom visually manifested, they remain largely imperceptible to the majority of ethnic Russians. In contrast, racial differences are readily noticeable. Thus whereas most Central Asians have darker complexion than ethnic Russians or other Slavs, Kyrgyz also typically have more pronounced Asiatic physical traits. Many Uzbeks, another Turkic people, also have Asiatic features but to a much lesser extent than do Kyrgyz, reflecting a greater degree of racial mixing between Uzbeks and their neighbors of Iranian roots. Finally, Tajiks, the most established of three immigrant groups in Russia, are generally construed as less Asiatic and more *vostochny* (literally “Oriental,” or “Eastern,” i.e., having more Middle Eastern or West Asian appearance) in the common Russian racial imagery. Although Tajiks have darker skin and hair than most ethnic Russians, they can be easily confounded with Russia’s own “blacks,” i.e., mainly natives of the North Caucasus, whose presence in many Russian cities is very visible.¹² Hence, compared to the other two groups, and especially to Tajiks, Kyrgyz, despite being less distinct culturally (mainly due to weaker adherence to Islam and greater assimilation into Russian cultural codes) and having had, until a few years ago, a privileged path to legal incorporation, *appear* more Asiatic and therefore more different.

¹²At the exploratory stage, we fitted models excluding women with non-matching ethnicity and provenance. The results of those models did not differ substantially from the models for all women, and we opted to present the latter here (the results of the alternative models are available upon request).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

We posit that ethnorace, defined here as a socially constructed, reproduced, and reinforced group identity based on both racial and ethnocultural characteristics, is an important factor in Central Asian migrants' experiential trajectories. Adapting the cross-national scholarship on the racialization of immigrants to the context of the Russian Federation, we focus the analysis on migrants' reported experience of ethnoracially motivated harassment as the most direct manifestation of hostility on the part of the host society. Importantly, subjective experiences of harassment are not necessarily an accurate reflection of what could be defined as harassment by some legal or other objective measures. Yet, we assume that even if migrants' perceptions may not fully match such objective definitions they nonetheless are highly consequential for migrants' well-being.

First, we examine the association of ethnorace with the experience of such harassment. We expect migrants' ethnorace to matter regardless of other characteristics, and we hypothesize that members of the group with most distinct ethnoracial features, Kyrgyz, will be most likely to report experiences of harassment triggered by their appearance. Kyrgyz will be especially disadvantaged relative to Tajiks, the group with the least apparent ethnoracial foreignness, whose acceptance by the host society may also be facilitated by its longer history of migration.

Second, we examine the relationship between ethnoracially motivated harassment and migrants' legal status. We assume that a more established legal status will shield migrants from harassment and therefore hypothesize that migrants who are Russian citizens or permanent residents will be less likely to experience ethnoracial harassment than migrants in a less regularized legal position. We also expect that legal status will at least partially mediate the effect of ethnorace on the likelihood of experiencing harassment. Finally, we distinguish between harassment perpetrated by law enforcement authorities (e.g., stopping migrants to check their papers, extorting protection money, etc.) and harassment perpetrated by others (e.g., employers, landlords, co-workers, customers, the general public, etc.). We hypothesize that the protective effect of a regularized legal status will be most pronounced in the case of harassment by the police. In comparison, distinct ethnoracial appearance will be equally likely to trigger harassment on the part of law enforcers and the general public.

We test these hypotheses using survey data on migrant women from three Central Asian countries in three Russian cities. We then complement the results of the statistical tests with insights from in-depth interviews with migrant women from the same groups conducted before, in parallel with, and after the survey. Migrants' experience of harassment, abuse, and discrimination, like migrants' other experiences in host societies, are gender-specific and the psychological, social, and economic consequences of such experiences may differ for women and men. Although we cannot compare women and men with our data, we do note, wherever possible and appropriate, the unique gendered experiences of migrant women.

DATA AND METHODS

The statistical tests of the hypotheses use data from a survey of working immigrant women aged 18–40 from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and their native counterparts (overwhelmingly ethnic Russians) conducted in 2012–2013. Because large numbers of Central Asian immigrant women work in three sectors of the urban economy—eateries, small retail, and produce or clothing bazaars, the survey targeted these three sectors. It was carried out in two main sites—Moscow, the nation’s capital, and Novosibirsk, a large city in eastern Siberia. In addition, women working in bazaars were also interviewed in a third site, Yekaterinburg, another large city in central Russia. Although all three cities have attracted considerable immigration from Central Asia, Moscow, Europe’s largest city, has been by far the most important migrant destination. The Russian capital also has registered a disproportionately large number of racist and neo-Nazi attacks, most of which target migrants (SOVA 2015).

In eateries and retail outlets, the survey used a time-venue sampling approach whereby respondents were recruited at their places of work at a particular time of day; in bazaars, a random-walk algorithm was employed (see Agadjanian and Zotova 2012 for details on the application of time-venue sampling and random-walk algorithm for surveying migrants in urban Russia). The survey interviews were carried out in the language of respondent’s choice (Kyrgyz, Tajik, Uzbek, or Russian) by female interviewers of matching ethnicity/origin; similar background, combined with rigorous interviewer training, helped to build interviewer-respondent rapport and to reduce the “retaliation fear” that often affects responses in surveys of vulnerable populations (see Zotova and Agadjanian 2014). The survey instrument included questions on respondents’ demographic, ethnocultural, socioeconomic, migration-related and other characteristics, details of their sexual and marital lives, and everyday experiences. The survey instrument included direct and detailed questions about respondents’ legal characteristics (citizenship, residence, work permit, whether residence or work documents were legitimate or counterfeit, etc.); thus, unlike most analyses of survey data in the U.S. (and similar settings), where immigrant legal status is assigned through inherently imperfect imputations (e.g., Van Hook et al. 2015), we use precise information in creating our legal status categories. In total, the survey interviewed 940 women. After the exclusion of native respondents, the analytic sample of 694 women consists of approximately equal numbers of Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek women.

For testing our hypotheses, the outcome of interest is migrant’s experiences of ethnoracially based harassment. The survey respondents were asked approximately how many times in the twelve months preceding the survey interview they experienced acts of harassment, persecution or abuse which, in *their* opinion, were motivated by their ethnicity and/or ethnoracial appearance. The questionnaire distinguished between two types of harassment—perpetrated by law enforcement authorities and perpetrated by others (e.g., employers, co-workers, landlords, and strangers). Because of the distribution of responses to these questions, we chose to create a dichotomous variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent reported at least one instance of ethnoracially motivated harassment, and 0 if otherwise. To capture possible differences between the two types of harassment, we also

consider separately harassment perpetrated by the police and harassment perpetrated by other actors.

Following our conceptual focus, the main predictors of interest are respondent's ethnoracial background—Kyrgyz, Tajik, or Uzbek—and legal status. Although each ethnoracial group is eponymous to its respective country of origin, in a few cases, ethnorace and provenance did not match (e.g., ethnic Uzbeks originating in Kyrgyzstan rather than Uzbekistan). Although this mismatch could have some meaningful implications for migrants' selection and experiences, the number of such cases was very small and would not provide sufficient statistical power to detect any significant differences.¹² Russian citizenship being the most straightforward marker of permanent legal incorporation of migrants, we split the sample on the basis of citizenship. Because the sample had very few permanent residents and because permanent legal residence status in the Russian context almost automatically leads to citizenship, we include those few permanent residents in the sample in the same group as Russian citizens. This group is contrasted with respondents who had temporary residence status (obtained either legally or not) or did not have even temporary residential registration.

Control variables include: respondent's age and age squared; whether or not she has at least a few years of tertiary education; whether or not she has a marital partner living in the city; the city of interview—Moscow vs. Novosibirsk or Yekaterinburg; the sector of work—sales, eateries, or bazaars; respondent's total monthly income in thousands of rubles; the number of persons with whom she shares the room in which she usually sleeps (a proxy for residential conditions); number of close relatives in the city; number of close friends in the city; duration of continuous stay in Russia; and whether or not she commands the Russian language well (a dichotomy based on respondent's self-assessed Russian language proficiency).

We employ logistic regression for binary outcomes and start with a model predicting the likelihood of any type of harassment from migrants' ethnorace; the model includes all the controls except legal status. We then add legal status to the model. To examine possible variations in the effects of the predictors of interest, we fit two logistic regression models separately for harassment by the police and harassment by others. Each of these two models includes the full set of covariates.

While the survey data analysis formally tests our hypotheses, to contextualize and complement the statistical results, we use insights from qualitative data. Fifty-seven survey respondents, approximately equal numbers from each of the three ethnic groups, were purposefully selected from the survey sample for in-depth interviews which further explored vulnerabilities and risks of migrant women. In addition, we use data from interviews with twenty-one migrant women of the same provenances conducted as part of the larger multi-stage project two years earlier (2010) using a similar protocol. As with the survey interviews, all in-depth interviews were conducted in the language of participants' choice by female interviewers of matching ethnic and migratory background; the digitally recorded interviews lasted about one hour on average and the recordings were transcribed verbatim and then translated into Russian; only the quotes used here were translated into English. As with the survey, in-depth interviews covered the women's migration and work histories,

living arrangements, social ties and everyday experiences, among other themes. Due to the Journal's length limit, we include only selected quotes (all under pseudonyms) that best illustrate our conceptual arguments.

Both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study were approved by the Institutional Review Board of Arizona State University and the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

RESULTS

Survey Data Analysis

Table 1 presents the distribution of predictor and control variables. By design the survey sample is almost equally distributed among the three ethnoracial groups. Just over a quarter of respondents had Russian citizenship or permanent residence. Again by design, almost 60 percent of respondents were interviewed in Moscow, with the rest interviewed in either Novosibirsk or Yekaterinburg. The mean age of respondents was 30 years, and slightly less than one-half of them had a marital partner living in the same city. Forty percent of respondents worked in bazaars whereas the rest, again by design, were almost equally split between those working in retail and those working in eateries. They earned about 21,000 rubles (c. \$650 at the exchange rate at the time of the survey) per month on average. As an illustration of migrants' crowded living condition, each respondent, on average, shared a room with more than three other people. More than a quarter of respondents had at least several years of university education and forty-one percent said they were proficient in Russian. The average time continuously lived in Russia was 3.3 years. Respondents had, on average, 4.5 and 3.7 close relatives and close friends, respectively, living in the same city.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the experience of ethnoracially motivated harassment and the bivariate associations of the experience of harassment with ethnorace and legal status. Overall, more than one-third of respondents experienced at least one instance of harassment based on their ethnorace in the twelve months preceding the survey. The share of those who experienced harassment by law enforcement officers, 23 percent, is lower than the share of those who experienced harassment perpetrated by others, 30 percent. It should be noted that experiences of the two types of harassment are highly correlated as about one-half of those reporting any experience of ethnoracially based harassment had suffered it both with the police and with others.

Table 2 shows considerable variations in reported experiences of harassment across ethnoracial lines. In congruence with our conceptual reasoning, Kyrgyz, the most ethnoracially distinct group, are much more likely to report having been harassed by both the police and the general public than the other two groups. However, there are also considerable differences between Tajiks and Uzbeks, with the former having the lowest percentage reporting harassment. This pattern fits our theory about a greater degree of acceptance of Tajiks, a group with the least pronounced phenotypical otherness and also with deepest migration roots and most established presence in Russian society, compared to the two other groups.

In comparison with the substantial variations across the three ethnoracial groups, the differences between the two categories of legal status are rather modest. Interestingly, the share of respondents with Russian citizenship or permanent residence status reporting any ethnoracially motivated harassment is slightly higher than the corresponding share in the rest of the sample. Contrary to our expectation, there is almost no difference between the two legal categories of migrants in reported experiences of harassment perpetrated by the police. In sum, there is no clear evidence in these bivariate comparisons that citizenship/permanent residence status acts as a buffer against ethnoracially based harassment.

Table 3 displays the results of several multivariate binary logistic regression models predicting experience of at least one instance of ethnoracially motivated harassment. In the first model (Panel 3.A), the outcome is any type of harassment, and the predictor is ethnorace. The model also includes all the controls. Results point to a sharp contrast among the three ethnoracial groups: paralleling the bivariate association pattern, Kyrgyz women are significantly more likely to have experienced harassment than Uzbeks (odds ratio= $\exp[1.061]=2.889$). The difference between the two latter groups is, in turn, also highly statistically significant: the odds of a Tajik reporting harassment motivated by her ethnorace are, *ceteris paribus*, less than half those of an Uzbek (odds ratio= $\exp[-0.754]=0.470$). This pattern fully supports our hypothesis.

In the following model (Panel 3.B), legal status is added. Despite this addition, however, the effect of ethnorace barely changes. The effect of Russian citizenship/permanent residence, which was not apparent in the bivariate comparisons, is now in the predicted direction and is highly significant: net of ethnorace and other factors, the odds of having experienced ethnoracially motivated harassment are fifty-seven percent lower among those respondents who hold Russian citizenship or are permanent residents, compared to the rest of the sample ($OR=\exp[-0.853]=0.426$). This result supports our hypothesis regarding differences between the two legal status categories of migrants. At the same time, we find no evidence that legal status might mediate the association of ethnorace with the likelihood of experiencing harassment.

To test for possible differences between the two types of harassment, we fit two separate models for harassment by the police and by others (Panels 3.C and 3.D, respectively). Contrary to our expectation, no difference in the effects of legal status between the two models could be observed (in fact, the effect of legal status is weaker in the model of harassment by the police than in that of harassment by others). We also test for possible interactions between legal status and ethnorace, but no clear patterns emerge (the results are not shown but are available from the authors upon request). We conclude that the effects of ethnorace and legal status are essentially independent of each other regardless of the source of harassment.

Among other covariates, we should note that Russian language proficiency, a marker of cultural integration into Russian society, does not seem to shield immigrants from harassment. Duration of stay in Russia decreases the odds of reporting harassment by others but not by the police. Migrants living in the capital city are also more likely to report harassment than migrants in the other two cities, but the difference is large and statistically

significant only for harassment by the police. It is also clear that women working in the largely informal bazaar sector are more vulnerable to harassment than those working in the more formalized retail sales and food services, regardless of legal status and other characteristics. These and other statistical effects require further investigation.

Insights from In-depth Interviews

Evidence from in-depth interviews both parallels the results of the survey and throws the challenges faced by migrants into sharper relief. First, Russian citizenship was stressed by almost all participants as a vital prerequisite for successful integration into Russian society, in general, and into the Russian labor market, in particular. In fact, those participants who did not have Russian citizenship often had to borrow their relatives' documents for job and housing rental applications. At the same time, because acquiring Russian citizenship usually means renouncing their original citizenship, many study participants expressed concerns about the longer-term implications of citizenship change as most wanted eventually to return to their countries of origin.

While many interviewees, regardless of their provenance, spoke of friendly, or at least respectful, interactions with locals, some, especially those interviewed in Moscow, did recount instances of direct and frequent hostility. Echoing the results of the survey data analysis, interviews with Kyrgyz women produced most of such accounts. The following excerpt from an interview with Aygul, a 25-year-old Kyrgyz without temporary registration who worked as a merchandiser in a small retail outlet, exemplifies that group's experience of racism and xenophobia: "I always feel discrimination at work. Russians constantly humiliate us, saying: 'You are Kyrgyz'. . . Not only at work; I feel this attitude everywhere." Similarly, Dilyara, her 23 year-old compatriot, also without temporary residence registration, who worked as an assistant sales clerk in a small shop, said:

"At work, Russians treat us very badly, derogatorily, constantly point out that we are visitors. They always look for flaws, notice only our blunders. . . Customers are picky, they split hairs. [Interviewer: Do you think they are so because you are Kyrgyz?] Of course, I think so. Because I am of a different ethnicity, they split hairs, humiliate. Yes, exactly because I am of a different nation [ethnicity] the customers treat me so badly."

Experiences of abuse and resulting frustrations and fears accompany Kyrgyz women when they leave the workplace. Bermet, a 28-year-old naturalized Russian citizen who worked in a restaurant, tried to avoid stepping out of her apartment unless absolutely necessary, saying: "I'm afraid of them [Russians]. I am afraid they will look at me. I'm afraid they will push me in the metro, hit me. Once on a commuter train, I saw how they beat up some Kyrgyz guys and then threw them off the train –for nothing, just because of their *natsional'nost* [ethnicity]." Elnura, a 34-year-old Kyrgyz bazaar vendor, who had become a Russian citizen, observed: "Even if you have a passport of a Russian Federation citizen, it doesn't change anything. We still cannot deal with them [native Russians] as equal – it is because of our *natsional'nost* and our appearance."

Kyrgyz women also have to deal with ethnoracially motivated abuse and harassment directed at their family members, especially children. Aida, a 29 year-old Kyrgyz woman who was a

Russian citizen, told the interviewer about her son's experience in secondary school: "When he first went to school here, [other children] called him '*churka*,' 'Chinese,' they provoked him. He had to fight back, complained almost every day, saying that he doesn't want to study, that even the teacher treated him unfairly." According to the woman, the abuse that her son was suffering abated only after she and her husband went to the principal to protest. Despite her Russian citizenship, she wanted to leave Russia after her children finish secondary school.

Of course, experiences of ethnoracial prejudice were not unique to Kyrgyz, but complaints about personal experiences of racist treatment were less frequent among the women from the two other groups, especially among Tajiks. Yet, even Tajik interviewees were cognizant of the negative stereotypes, as exemplified by the words of Shahnoza, a 32-years-old Tajik, who did not have a temporary residence registration and worked as a waitress in a café: ". . . one thing saddens me very much. I am outraged that they here call us *churki*, blacks, *ponayehavshiye* [those who came in large numbers], etc." Interestingly, she then added: "No one, of course, has said that to me personally, but I know it is so."

Thus, while women from different Central Asian backgrounds may have different personal experiences of ethnoracial harassment, they are well aware that locals treat all of them differently and that this differential—and usually hostile—treatment is triggered by their appearance, which, despite ethnoracial and individual variations, contrast sharply with those of Russians of European background and "Slavic" looks. Madina, a 40-year-old Uzbek a market vendor, who worked with fake documents, shared her observations: "When I came here, I noticed that they don't like outsiders [migrants] here, treat them badly, without respect. . . But they treat *gastarbayteri* from Ukraine or Moldova well, because they look like locals, and we look different. . . I noticed that very well."

Importantly, the ethnoracial stigmatization of Central Asian migrants is not just humiliating – it has practical consequences. For example, Dilyara, the Kyrgyz woman whose words we heard earlier, observed: "I noticed that Russians who work with us have many days off, but we, salespersons of other ethnicity, work without days off for the same salary." Aygul recounted her experience: "The manager of my shop cheated us, did not pay at all, saying, like, 'You are Kyrgyz, you do not have any rights.'"

As is the case of many marginalized ethnoracial groups (e.g., Fassin 2011; Pyke 2010), Central Asian migrants rationalize their symbolic exclusion and its practical consequences as intrinsically normal and universally inevitable, a price they must pay for the chance to earn a decent living. This normalization and internalization of migrants' supposed social inferiority by migrants themselves (cf. Massey 2007; Menjivar and Abrego 2012) is illustrated by the words of Cholpon, a 22 year-old Kyrgyz, without a temporary residence permit, who got her job as a cook in a café using her sister's Russian passport: "No matter how fairly some of them [Russian coworkers] treat me, they always stress that I am not Russian. But I think it is normal. Back in Kyrgyzstan is the same. Back there we don't like outsiders either." After telling us about the differential treatment that migrant and native salespersons receive, Dilyara concluded: "They [employers] think that we have nowhere to go, that we will accept any work, on any conditions. And they are right." "Why bother [to

complain]?” echoed Elnura, “no one will help me anyway, no one will defend me. . . That’s why I try not to get into conflict with anyone.” Migrants’ acquiescence to the reality of discrimination and their playing by the unfair “rules” that the host society imposes on them help to perpetuate the cycle of abuse. Madina, the Uzbek market vendor quoted earlier, summed up this *modus operandi* as follows: “Despite the discomfort we feel in an alien country, we keep living and working. Every month the district police officer comes and collects [racket] money. . .we have good relations with the police, there is no pestering [on the police’s part], but it is still better not to catch the eye of the police.”

We should note that Central Asian migrant women are mistreated not only by the members of the host ethnoracial majority. Interviews provided ample examples of abuse, including sexual assault, that informants suffered at the hands of other migrants, often those of the same ethnoracial background, to whom migrants turn for support—a reality that adds another nuance to the injurious effects of racialization.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Despite the unique nature and wealth of our data, several data limitations must be acknowledged before any conclusions are drawn. While the questions on harassment included a brief description of what ethnoracial harassment meant, it is possible that some respondents underreported their experience because of poor recall, their own view of what constituted harassment, and lingering fear of retaliation; our estimates of harassment are therefore conservative. Although underreporting could vary across the three groups, there is no evidence in the literature or our fieldwork suggesting a particular bias; besides, the battery of controls included in the statistical models helps to account for some variations across the groups that might have produced such a bias. As in most surveys, no formal test of Russian language proficiency was performed and therefore a self-assessed measure is used. While the three cities from which our data come are in many respects typical of migrants’ primary destinations in the Russian Federation, they nonetheless are not fully representative of that vast and diverse country. Thus, in some parts of Russia, where the autochthonous population is phenotypically similar to Central Asians, the frequency and dynamics of ethnoracial harassment may differ. Likewise, there are no reliable estimates of the size and composition of the three ethnoracial groups in each city; it is possible that the size, composition, and other group-level attributes for which we cannot account in our analyses may have influenced migrants’ individual experiences.

These limitations notwithstanding, our study paints a rich and informative tableau of ethnoracially motivated harassment experienced by Central Asian migrant women. The legal context into which these women arrive and in which they live in the Russian Federation is critical for their everyday lives and long-term prospects. Similar to its significance in other contexts, legal status is crucial for Central Asian migrants in Russia, as it provides them with formal resources (registration, permits, health certificates, etc.) to settle, earn a living, and advance in the host society. Expanding on extant knowledge about the effects of legality, our analysis shows that net of other factors legal status also helps to protect migrants from informal mistreatment, such as ethnoracially based harassment, and this protective effect is

similar for harassment perpetrated by law enforcement authorities and by employers, coworkers, and the general public.

Yet, while the net beneficial effect of legal status is highly significant, we find that legal status does not explain away, or even abate, ethnoracial differences in experiences of racism among Central Asian migrants in today's Russia. Specifically, paralleling the scholarship on racialization in other largely hostile, anti-immigrant contexts (e.g., Adler 2006; Bonilla-Silva 2006; Kim 1999; Maldonado 2009) our findings demonstrate that informal racialization practices are consequential for immigrants' experiences and perceptions regardless of legal status. Racialization in the Russian context is multilayered: while "blackness" is a general ascribed quality of all natives of the post-Soviet South (cf. Abashin 2014; Reeves 2013c; Zakharov 2015), racial distinctions within the "black" migrant population are also important. Thus, Kyrgyz, despite their somewhat greater cultural proximity to Russian natives and, until recently, privileged path to legalization and citizenship, are also the most racialized and penalized through ethnoracially motivated harassment. While such harassment is experienced by the other two groups too, their racial otherness is less obvious and therefore, we argue, does not trigger as much hostility and abuse as does that of the Kyrgyz. Importantly, this ethnoracial differentiation of the experience of harassment does not vary by the sources of harassment—be they law enforcement authorities, employers, landlords, or other social actors. These statistical results find ample support in the qualitative data. In-depth interviews also reveal how migrant women, constrained by their marginalization as migrants and their subordination as women, tend to accept ethnoracial abuse as normal and unavoidable, which may further perpetuate the abusive practices to which migrants are routinely subjected.

The case of Central Asian migrants in Russia, while unique in many respects, usefully contributes to our general knowledge of migrants' incorporation into host societies and specifically of the place of race and legal status in broader patterns of membership and belonging. This case helps to understand better the consequences of immigration laws and practices not only in the Russian Federation but also in most other major immigrant-receiving countries and the concomitant production of immigrant illegality through the conditional inclusion of immigrant workers (De Genova 2004; Espiritu 2003; Maldonado 2006; Ngai 2004). At the same time, this case also advances our understanding of the "racial projects" of the state (Manges Douglas, Sáenz, and Murga 2015; Omi and Winant 1986) as these projects affect certain immigrant groups more strongly than others.

In a broader sense, our study highlights the symbolic violence of the state (Menjívar and Abrego 2012), as state policies and practices control immigrants by illegalizing and racializing them, thus setting conditions for their mistreatment. The case of Central Asians in Russia demonstrates how these two processes interweave to produce and reproduce marginalization in various facets of immigrant life, similarly to what has been documented in other receiving contexts. Although immigration policies in western settings, and in the U.S. in particular, have long been purged of explicitly racist language, these policies continue to create a system of inequality in which ethnoracially othered immigrants often become de facto targets of mistreatment (Manges Douglas, Sáenz, and Murga 2015; Menjívar, Abrego and Schmalzbauer 2016). Similarly, Russian immigration policies do not

explicitly single out migrants on the basis of race, but when these policies increasingly push migrants to racialized margins, they reinforce the “racial projects” of the state. While these projects are context-specific and may affect some immigrant groups more than others, their fundamental mechanisms are similar in Russia, the West, and elsewhere.

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Table 1

Distribution of Predictor and Control Variables (percent unless noted otherwise), Survey of Migrant and Non-migrant Working Women in Three Russian Cities, 2012–13^a

Ethnoracial group	
Kyrgyz	33.1
Tajik	33.0
Uzbek	33.9
Legal status	
Russian citizen or permanent resident	26.7
Temporary resident or irregular status	73.3
Age (mean)	29.9
Partnership status	
Has a formal or informal permanent partner living in the city	46.8
Has no permanent partner in the city	53.2
Education	
High school degree or less	72.3
Has some tertiary education	27.7
Personal monthly income in 1000 RUR* (mean)	21.3
Number of other people sharing bedroom with respondent (mean)	3.2
Number of close relatives living in the city (mean)	4.5
Number of close friends living in the city (mean)	3.7
Duration of continuous stay in Russia (mean, years)	3.3
Proficiency in the Russian language	
Proficient	40.9
Not proficient	59.1
Sector of work	
Retail	30.3
Eatery	29.7
Bazaar	40.0
City of residence	
Moscow	59.8
Novosibirsk or Yekaterinburg	40.2
Number of cases	694

Notes:

^aMigrant women only; 1000 RUR ~ 31 USD at time of survey

Table 2

Reported at Least One Experience of Ethnoracially Motivated Harassment in the 12 Months Preceding the Survey, by Perpetrators of Harassment, Ethnorate and Legal Status, Survey of Migrant and Non-migrant Working Women in Three Russian Cities, 2012–13 (percent)

Perpetrator of Harassment	Ethnoracial Group				Legal Status		
	Kyrgyz	Tajik	Uzbek	Russian Citizen or Permanent Resident	Temporary or Irregular Status	All	
Harassed by the police	45.2	7.0	15.3	23.2	22.2	22.5	
Harassed by employers, coworkers, and others	54.3	10.0	25.1	31.4	29.3	29.8	
Any harassment	59.1	16.2	28.1	37.3	33.4	34.4	
Number of cases	230	229	235	185	509	694	

Note:

^a Migrant women only.

Table 3

The Effect of Ethnorace and Legal Status on the Experience of Ethnoracially Motivated Harassment, Logistic Regression Parameter Estimates and Standard Errors, Survey of Migrant and Non-migrant Working Women in Three Russian Cities, 2012–13^a

Covariates	Harassment by the Police or Others			Harassment by the Police			Harassment by Others		
	A		B		C		D		
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	
Kyrgyz	1.061	0.236**	1.265	0.248**	1.498	0.288**	1.250	0.255**	
Tajik	-0.754	0.254**	-0.773	0.257**	-1.026	0.344**	-1.137	0.292**	
[Uzbek]									
Russian citizen or permanent resident			-0.853	0.269**	-0.811	0.306**	-0.949	0.281**	
[Not Russian citizen or permanent resident]									
Age	0.034	0.144	0.097	0.148	0.283	0.174	0.107	0.156	
Age squared	0.000	0.002	-0.001	0.002	-0.005	0.003	-0.001	0.003	
Has a formal or informal permanent partner	-0.383	0.200	-0.397	0.202*	-0.524	0.234*	-0.544	0.212*	
[Has no partner]									
Has at least some tertiary education	0.486	0.215*	0.538	0.217*	0.132	0.245	0.360	0.228	
[Has not attended tertiary education]									
Total monthly income (in 1000 RUR)	0.028	0.011*	0.035	0.012**	0.037	0.013**	0.036	0.012**	
Number of people sharing room	0.058	0.049	0.053	0.050	0.104	0.054	0.045	0.052	
Number of close kin in city	-0.055	0.027*	-0.058	0.028*	0.095	0.046*	0.060	0.042	
Number of close friends in city	-0.043	0.029	-0.050	0.030	-0.023	0.032	-0.062	0.029*	
Number of years continuously stayed in Russia	0.044	0.037	0.087	0.040*	-0.002	0.033	-0.061	0.031*	
Speaks Russian well	-0.179	0.206	-0.138	0.209	-0.125	0.245	0.173	0.216	
[Does not speak Russian well]									
Works in retail	-0.725	0.231**	-0.654	0.232**	-0.706	0.274*	-0.593	0.245*	
Works in eatery	-0.816	0.237**	-0.859	0.241**	-0.818	0.277**	-0.694	0.252**	
[Works in bazaar]									
Lives in Moscow	0.580	0.233*	0.374	0.241	0.962	0.299**	0.299	0.252	

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