

ETHNICITY IN LITHUANIAN EMIGRANTS' PUBLIC LETTERS

‘THE EASIEST CHOICE’ OR ‘THE SEARCH OF NORMALITY’? DISCOURSES OF ECONOMIC MIGRATION SINCE EU ACCESSION AND THEIR CONSTRUCTIONS OF ETHNICITY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

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INTRODUCTION

According to official statistics, approximately 200.000 people have emigrated from Lithuania, a country with a population of 3.4 million, since the country's accession to the European Union in 2004 (Statistics Lithuania 2011a; Statistics Lithuania 2011b, Statistics Lithuania 2011c). The growing number of emigrants has become a topic of news as well as political and social discussions in Lithuania. Emigration is discussed in media not only in terms of decreasing numbers of Lithuanians in the national territory (e.g., *Emigration: who has stayed in Lithuania?* [Butvilas 2012]) and affected economy (e.g., *When there will be no one left to work in Lithuania?* (delfi.lt 2011)), but it is also linked to a decline of civil consciousness and national identity (e.g., *Emigration: curse or salvation?* [Kilpys 2006]; *Emigration: road to the search of Lithuanian identity* [Venckute 2009]). Hence, emigration in the Lithuanian context was and still is very much problematised because it is seen either as result of declining importance of ethnicity and national identity, or as a cause of such decline. In consideration of Lithuanian discussions about emigration, this study asks how Lithuanian emigrants account for emigration, and how these accounts relate to their perceptions of ethnicity and national identity. The research

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is based on public Lithuanian emigrants' letters published on a popular Lithuanian news website, delfi.lt. This paper argues that two discourses constructing migration can be distinguished, which, depending upon their construction of emigration, frame ethnicity and national identity in different ways.

THEORISING ETHNICITY AND MIGRATION

The literal translation of 'ethnicity' in Lithuanian '*etniškumas*' is rarely used in spoken everyday language. It is not a word that could be found in the letters that this paper analyses. However, other words referring to 'nationhood' (*tauta*), those who belong to the same nation (*tautietis*), and what can crudely be translated as national identity (*tautiškumas*) emerge often in the texts. Though these words are formed through the word 'nation' (*tauta*), what they actually refer to lies both in the concept of nation and ethnicity. In Lithuanian, ethnicity and national identity can hardly be separated, especially in the spoken language. Because of these reasons, in my work I will use them interchangeably, depending on which of the concepts defined in the literature is closer

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to the ideas of the letters. Therefore, this section will explore how the ideas of ethnicity, the nation, and the identification to it have been discussed in the academic literature. Furthermore, I will present the Lithuanian migration history and present by reviewing some of the existing works that analyse ethnicity in emigration as well as works theorising experiences of recent Eastern European migrants will be presented.

As Gerd Baumann notes, though the concept of ethnicity is difficult to define and is a scientifically vague concept, it is subjectively known - something that we 'recognize when we see it' (2010: 46). After looking at the academic literature on ethnicity, one needs to quote Fenton (2010: 3) who states that there is no unitary theory of ethnicity. Consequently, in this work ethnicity will be understood as a constructed contextual identification with others who share cultural characteristics, language, and ancestry,

rather than a primordial fact of identity (Scott and Marshall, 2005; Ratcliffe, 2004). Ethnicity is socially constructed and, as Rex notes, one is born into 'the infantile ethnic trap' (1997:271) where environment offers ideas about origins and belonging to certain ethnic group. Ethnicity is contextual because it is not stable, but rather constantly changing, as it arises from various social interactions in which it needs to be enacted (Ratcliffe 2004). Moreover, it is relational because ethnicity can only be understood in relation to other ethnicities, as only in relation to others can uniqueness of that ethnicity be established. As Barth puts it, ethnicity is defined through boundaries, which demarcate one group from the other (1969 cited in Fenton 2010:90-91).

Nation and nationhood can be seen as relying on ethnic category, as these concepts are based on group identification with similar ancestry, history, language, and territory; however, nation and nationhood are very much political concepts (Fenton 2010; Anderson 1997). This is because the political authenticity of European nation-state rests on the concept of nation, while nationhood expresses 'peoplehood' and those who do not belong to it (ibid.). Moreover, Anderson (1997: 44) argues that the nation is an 'imagined community': while the members of the nation will never meet, or hear of, most of the other members, they nonetheless all maintain an image of their community. Bauman (2004) argues that national identity demands loyalty and cannot bear competition. Neo-liberalism and its effects to the shrinking of the working class as well as establishment of a global economy and market has made 'national identity' highly problematic, since the state cannot be longer relied on as a source of welfare (Bauman 2004). As the state becomes separated from welfare, the desire to identify with the state declines. Therefore, among those who look for a stable haven within the state in the midst of the uncertainty of neo-liberal age emerges the need to re-establish the 'cultural visions' of national identity (Bauman 2004: 61).

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Emigration from Lithuania is not a new phenomenon. Lithuania's history is marked by several waves of emigration that were caused by different factors and have affected the state in different ways. The first wave of emigration can be dated back to the nineteenth century. It was impelled by presence of the Tsarist Russian regime executing political and religious oppression and marked by underdevelopment and unrest (Thaut 2009). Around twenty per cent of the population emigrated during the Tsarist period, one-third of which set off for the United States (Kuzmickaite 2003). The second wave of emigration was during the World War II, when Lithuanians were fleeing mainly to Germany from the Soviet occupation and persecutions that it entailed (ibid.). The beginning of Soviet rule in Lithuania was marked by mass deportation – in other words, forced migration – of Lithuanians to Siberia (ibid.). The third and most recent wave of intensive labour migration from Lithuania began in the 1990s, when independence was established. Since then, short-term labour migration has become a trend in Lithuania (Gruzevskis 2004). This emigration movement became more intense when Lithuania became a member of European Union in 2004 and Lithuanians were granted the right to freely travel and work in the EU (Thaut 2009). Hence, we can see that migration from Lithuania can easily be divided into two types: first, the emigration that occurred up until 1990s was mainly political, while the second, starting during 1990s, can be seen as economic.

Social anthropologist Michal Garapich, writing about similar patterns of migration from Poland, notes that these patterns enable construction of what he calls 'emigration ideology' (2008:130). This ideology is based on the dichotomy between migration for political and for economic reasons. It attaches symbols and associates different migrations with different values (Garapich 2008). Therefore, in the political emigration ideology, which is seen as forced and requiring sacrifice, has a higher moral position than migration for economic reasons, which is perceived as a simple, voluntary choice:

In Polish emigration ideology, political exile is a sacred act in the fight for freedom while economic migration is a necessary evil, a manifestation of weakness or simply cowardice, egoism and ambiguous act turning away from the fate of the nation. (Garapich 2008: 130)

In their research, Galasinska and Kozłowska (2009) find similar ideas expressed in Poland, where patriotism and moral fibre of economic migrants has been questioned and they, portrayed by some as entrepreneurs, were seen by others as traitors. Thus, we can see how, as Garapich (2008) states, the emigration ideology only accepts dominant historical processes rather than personal choice and agency as a justification for emigrating.

Similar ideas to Garapich's (2008) emigration ideology have been reported to be present in Lithuania (Civil Society Institute 2005). It could be argued that the concept of emigration ideology can be easily transferred to Lithuanian context, because Poland and Lithuania share similar histories. Both countries have faced long-lasting historic oppressions from the Russian side as well as an intense struggle for independence. These two factors can be seen as feeding the emigration ideology that Garapich (2008) is describing, suggesting that the meanings of emigration might be more related with patriotism or the lack of it for peoples that have long fought for their independence and acquired it quite recently.

The literature at which I am looking to draw an account of ideas of ethnicity in migration focuses on post-EU accession migrants from Poland. The stories of Polish post-accession migrants, analysed in several works, are marked with longing and search for 'a normal life' (Galasinska and Kozłowska 2009; Galasinska 2010; Rabikowska 2010a, 2010b; Ryan 2010; White 2011). Rabikowska hypothesises that the 'West' in Eastern Europe has become the embodiment of this normality, as Eastern Europe has been long living with an 'inferiority complex' towards the West due to various prohibitions and shortages, which were a total opposition of the free and varied life in West (2010a: 289). Hence, westward emigration enables one to, if not to achieve, then at least to move closer to the desired level of normality. The meaning of ethnicity and national identity, which were of no importance at home, in the situation of migration become important parts of identity (Rabikowska 2010a). Not only because ethnicity suddenly

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becomes attached to one by others (Ryan 2010; White 2011), but also because it enables one to become a part of larger ethnic group, which offers a desired degree of unity against the opposing host culture (Rabikowska 2010a). However, the émigré community is not homogenous. There are members who are marginalised and seen as polluting the name of Polish ethnicity. These were namely Poles who transgress the culturally and socially accepted behav-

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our: swearing and shouting in public, and acting in rude or violent ways (Ryan 2010; White 2011). Many migrants associated these negative behaviours with the host country, which freed Poles from the usual social control of the homeland, and the 'deviant' Poles were seen as losing their ethnicity by not complying with the 'Polish' moral values (Ryan 2010). Galasinska and Kozłowska argue that contemporary migrants tend to construct migration as an action that is easy to make and does not require long preparations; it is a 'temporary event with an open outcome' (2009:89). The East-West migrants today seem to be semi-settled, making frequent visits home and continuously maintaining plans to return home (White 2011). It can be argued that because most post-accession migrants perceive their emigration as temporary, they are holding to their

ethnicities, thereby preventing deeper integration into the host society (White 2011). Not having close family members around adds to temporary nature of the migration (ibid.). Nonetheless, apart from not being able to feel at home, these Polish emigrants feel they have a 'normal' life in the United Kingdom. Even though most of them have been 'de-skilled' by emigration, their work satisfaction is higher and they feel more cherished as employees in the UK (Galasinska 2010; White 2011). An important part of the 'normality' is financial security and the better quality of life (ibid.). However, even those who have 'achieved normality' might feel alien in the host country or hostile towards it, as well as being critical or even disdainful towards their homeland (Rabikowska 2010a).

METHODOLOGY

This research focuses on Lithuanian emigrants' public letters which were published on Lithuanian news website delfi.lt under a series entitled 'The emigrant's notes' ('Emigranto užrašai') from the beginning of the series (October 2010) to February 2012. Delfi.lt is one of the biggest Lithuanian digital news outlets. The website can be seen more often providing opinionated articles rather than objective or critical reportage. The column that I am analysing falls under a bigger section that is called 'Citizen' ('Piliētis'). It is a citizen journalism project that publishes texts written by delfi.lt readers who present, discuss, or analyse various social and political problems. Most of 'The emigrant's notes' letters also do the same – they discuss the emigration, present their own views on it, as well as the problems it entails. I have chosen this specific website and its column because it offers a platform specifically for emigrants to voice their ideas and issues to a wider public than for example a discussion forum would. The people who have written for this column had the intention of publishing their ideas in one of the most popular news websites in Lithuania. Reading these letters means looking at the thoughts that emigrants want society to hear. These texts are not written on any specific question, with no intervention of in-house journalists or editorial staff that would direct the authors. Some of the texts in the column simply present various aspects of countries the emigrants are settled in, or describe the everyday life of the person abroad. Authors of the texts usually use pseudonyms, which I will use in this paper as they make the authors unidentifiable. There were 24 letters overall at the time of research, 13 of which proved to be more data-rich.

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Fairclough (2003) argues that the 'objective' analysis of the text is impossible, as it is always biased by the subjectivity of the analyst. The subjectivity comes into play not only during the analysis but even when one selects texts to analyse. Thus, reflexivity should be employed in order to minimise possible influence of the researcher and his/her positionality on the research (May 2001). Being Lithuanian, who for several years has been studying abroad,

and hence, not lived constantly in Lithuania, I need to acknowledge the possible influence that similarity of my position to that of authors may have on my readings of the letters and the findings of my research. However, my position also made me aware of and knowledgeable about the Lithuanian context and debates in which the letters are based.

The analytical tool of this research is discourse analysis. Potter and Hepburn (2008 cited in Silverman 2011:302) argue for ‘discursive constructionism’, which works in two ways. First, discourses are themselves constructed through variable use of language, through the choice of words, metaphors, and idioms, for example. Second, discourses are constructive as they ‘put together and stabilise versions of world’ (ibid.). Discourse analysis is interested in looking at this discursive constructionism in order to show how people’s accounts construct reality (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Therefore, when conducting discourse analysis, one seeks to identify the discourses, rather than to fit ideas into *a priori* held assumptions. Moreover, discourse analysis is against the assumption that there can be ‘truth’ hidden underneath people’s accounts and constructions (Silverman 2011). Fairclough (2003) argues that discourses constitute part of the resources which people use in relating to one another (e.g., separating, uniting, competing). In my analysis, I am especially interested in this part of discourse’s work and how discourses are used to maintain the ideas of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘nation’ as a collective entity. After critically re-reading the letters several times, highlighting and noting the important and reoccurring ideas, putting them in the context of political and cultural meanings of emigration in Lithuania, two discourses which persistently emerge from the letters could be indicated.

DISCOURSES OF EMIGRATION

The analysis of the letters reveals that the authors construct migration in at least two different ways through the use of two discourses. One of them frames it as ‘the easiest choice’, and the other constructs migration as ‘the search for normality’. These differing discourses lead to two different constructions of ethnicity

and national identity. 'The easiest choice' discourse on migration leads to ideas of 'corrupted ethnicity and national identity'. 'The search for normality' discourse of emigration leads to a continuous nurturing of loyalties through the ideas of returning to homeland, while at the same time more critical perception of ethnicity and nation emerges.

Migration as 'the easiest choice'

Authors who have employed discourse of 'the easiest choice' to look at economic migration have discussed migration of other Lithuanians in relation to their own experiences of it. These letters presented what was 'wrong' about others' migration and gave suggestion of how things should be changed. The reasons for emigration suggested by these authors were purely economic (the economic crisis of 2008 was linked to emigration, for example). However, the crisis itself was not to blame; rather, it was the poor financial situation people found themselves in. It was the individual's irresponsible financial decisions during the economic boom that caused them troubles during the recession. These decisions are responsible for the emigration.

Škūna Jūrevičius:

I haven't done a research, however just from the circle of my acquaintances and kindred, I could guess that in Lithuania people who still hold on and don't emigrate, are those who in the time of economic bubble remained wise with their finances, who didn't feel the lure of capitalism to dive into the stack of loans in the hope that economic boom will remain forever.

Hence, it would seem that those who choose to emigrate have no one else to blame but themselves that they can no longer 'hold on' in Lithuania as the 'wiser' individuals can. The same author states that the possibilities to easily emigrate have taken away a valuable lesson that could have been learned from facing the problems people created for themselves. Thus, emigration is perceived as an 'easy' way out for people who are entangled in loans rather than a real solution to their problems.

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Another author, Lakkys, states that claims about lack of jobs in Lithuania expressed by those who emigrate are untrue because of the high number of job advertisements. He sees these claims as justification for emigration when in reality emigrants ‘can’t be

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bothered’ to look for a job, go to interviews, or get qualifications. Emigrants choose to go to foreign countries as getting job there is easier. De-skilling in emigration is seen as being caused by the selection of profession by ‘stereotypical fancies’ rather than by market needs. Emigrants in this letter, similarly to the previous account, are unable to act ‘correctly’ in the capitalist world, and therefore they choose to emigrate rather than exert more effort.

In an account by RaiK, emigrants were seen as people who want ‘a lot and quickly’. As the author states, they do not understand that no matter where one lives, small steps are needed to create an enjoyable life. The idea of small steps was also used by aagnoushka, who claimed that she will patiently take small steps towards her aim in Lithuania, suggesting that she is not seeking for ‘easy’ achievements. RaiK also states that in foreign countries ‘money don’t grow on trees’, implying that emigrants’ perception of the life in foreign country is distorted. Emigrants here are portrayed as being in search of shortcuts to financial stability and prosperity. Instead of working hard in their country, they assume they will find abroad an easy way towards personal and financial goals.

We can see that ‘the easiest choice’ discourse of these accounts relies on what Garapich (2008) calls the ‘emigration ideology’. Even though the political migration is not put in opposition to the economic migration, it is apparent that economic migration is very much seen as ‘a manifestation of weakness or simply cowardice, egoism’ (Garapich 2008:130). Economic reasons for emigration are seen as taken by people who are driven only by the material needs. This is well expressed in another letter of Škuna Jurevicius where he, commenting on the news article claiming that happiness for an average Briton is eating pizza and watching TV, sug-

gests that emigrants, who follow local social canons, have 'all the conditions for mutating into direction of Nietzsche's last man in a more quicker pace'. In comparison with 'the last man' who is an apathetic conformist without any passions, the emigrants search for normality is seen as an uncomplicated, unsophisticated aim. Hence, this discourse is moralistic about aims that people have in life and suggests that certain aims are somewhat more worthy than others.

The last quote also implies, in line with the emigration ideology, that economic migration is seen to be corrupting one's national identity, as emigrants easily integrate in the foreign conformist society. Barth's (1969 cited in Fenton 2010) boundaries that divide and demarcate ethnicities are invoked here: 'they', the Britons, are lazy conformists, while 'we', the Lithuanians, are unlike them, but in emigration we put ourselves into danger of becoming alike. This links back to emigration ideology, where 'national morality lies in the national bounded territory and soil' (Garapich 2008:130). This idea was echoed by other authors, as well.

Lakkys:

[...] after all, Lithuanians adapt so quickly and willingly in the foreign land, and after that comes absolute intellectual and moral stagnation and everyone happily curses Lithuania.

Here, ethnicity is seen as changing depending on the social interactions (Ratcliffe 2004), with the change inevitably seen as a corruption. Similar to Lakkys, aagnoushka also blames the materialism of emigrants, which she claims to have overcome, for relinquishing their loyalty to Lithuania. We can see that, in this, discourse ethnicity is seen as something primordial and immanent, but at the same time fragile and easily corruptible, rather than a construction of identification with culturally and historically similar others (Fenton 2010). Moreover, this discourse seems to be used to construct Lithuanian émigré community as divided. There are the authors themselves, who seem not to have made the same mistakes as those

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other negatively perceived economic migrants, who pollute Lithuanian ethnicity. This echoes Poles in the research of Ryan (2010) as well as that of White (2011), who both see other emigrants from Poland as corrupting the image of Poles.

The discussed letters suggest that emigrants should come back either because one has to work hard everywhere, thus emigration will not provide an 'easy way out'; or because there actually are jobs in Lithuania. Therefore, there is an implied assumption that many emigrants do not recognise the reality of life in Lithuania and simply idealise the world outside.

MIGRATION AS 'THE SEARCH FOR NORMALITY'

In the letters that constructed migration through the discourse of 'the search for normality' authors wrote about their own personal experiences as migrants and their personal reasons for leaving. These letters are marked by descriptions of shortage of jobs that would provide financial security, high prices of food and utilities, as well as problems of Lithuanian system. One of the letters described recruitment for the cleaner's position, where candidates were required to have a university diploma and know several foreign languages. Facing the absurdity of this and similar situations was constructed as a worthy reason to leave in search for a 'normal' life. This links to the findings of researches on Polish post-EU accession migration, where migrants were wishing for a 'normal' life, which is characterised by stability and security (Galasinka and Kozłowska 2009; Galasinka 2010; Rabikowska 2010a, 2010b; Ryan 2010; White 2011). Quite few of the letters emphasised the poor treatment of the employees in Lithuania, where managers look down on their employees and lack respect for them. This treatment was compared to that which was experienced abroad, to the disadvantage of the Lithuanian one.

Romualdas Rima:

[Talking about Palanga's council] And the endless checks and the immense arrogance of the clerks bewilder all the employees even more. I have not seen that kind of disrespectful treatment of the employees anywhere else. Even the highest managers of England's factories are not ashamed to sit down by the same table with an unknown and uninteresting immigrant from Lithuania who works in the lowest position.

Romualdas Rima's account echoes Rabikowska's (2010a) hypothesis that the West in the Eastern Europe is seen as embodiment of normality, as it is in England where managers treat their employees as equals rather than despising them as it is done in Lithuania. This and other descriptions about the life in Lithuania show that the authors did not feel valued and that their efforts to create a better life at home were attempts in vain.

Oleandrerá:

I left because I wanted to save my personal life and to not be a burden to someone. Living in Lithuania I hoped that my aspiration to study, work and improve myself will open doors for me. I was wrong. [...] Now my two diplomas collect dust in Lithuania, while in the United Kingdom even without them I am independent and finally happy.

This account illustrates well that life in Lithuania was in no way an easy one characterized by individual struggle. Emigration, on the other hand, helped to achieve different quality of life. In Oleandrerá's case, after many efforts in Lithuania, she was unable to succeed in becoming independent and felt betrayed by the system. However, in the UK, even when her educational background is made redundant and she is de-skilled by working in a factory, she becomes 'finally happy'. Research by Galasinka (2010) and White (2011) both reveal similar feelings expressed by Polish emigrants, who, despite their de-skilling in a foreign country, feel more valued and satisfied with their jobs and lives, as the pay and treatment they have received have helped them to come closer to 'normality'. Oleandrerá's words also illustrate how the authors constructing emigration through the discourse of the search for normality have depicted their decision to emigrate. This decision is shown not as a spontaneous wish, but, rather, it is constructed as the last possible,

and sometimes even inevitable, way of getting out of the desperate situation writer finds him/herself in. In contrast to the 'easiest choice' discourse, the decision to emigrate is shown as difficult and authors are reluctant to leave and part from their friends and loved ones, who are also depicted as the main reason why authors want to return.

Returning to one's country of origin is constructed through the temporariness and the open-endedness of emigration, as well as semi-settler's, who often travels to Lithuania, position (Galasinska and Kozłowska 2009; White 2011).

Sunlinee:

I know, I will come back to Lithuania, visit my friends and will raise my wings to fly again. [...] While today I cannot see any gleam of hope of staying in Lithuania for longer. [...] I love my land, however, I want to live and make a living, I want a safe life and a secure future for my children, which my land cannot offer me today. It's a pity...

While returning is framed through semi-settler's position, the temporary nature of return comes from the insecurity of life in Lithuania

From Sunlinee's position, we can see that while returning is framed through semi-settler's position, the temporary nature of return comes from the insecurity of life in Lithuania. Therefore, permanent return, even if desirable, is not a rational one.

In Sunlinee's as well as other's letters, loyalty to Lithuania is expressed through a wish to return, even if the possibility of returning is minimal. Two authors used 'voluntary exile' or 'voluntary prison' as phrases that emphasise the preference for staying in Lithuania (i.e., through the words 'exile' and 'prison'), as well as impossibility of this because of the lack of 'normality' (i.e., through the word 'voluntary'). In the discourse of the search for normality, ethnicity and national identity were not seen as 'lost' while one is living abroad. Moreover, it was not seen as important as it was in the discourse of the easiest choice. Mirroring Bauman's (2004) argument, concepts of ethnicity and national identity appear to have lost their value. As the state was

not securing sufficient well-being for its citizens, in the face of uncertainties citizens' wish to identify with it diminishes. This idea is expressed well in Vaiska's letter:

It seems little naïve to be proud of a country simply because it EXISTS, because we do not choose were to be born. We can be proud of achievements, but not of the mere existence [...] However, I would defend Lithuania not to see its name on the map, but so the people would not be more wronged.

Hence, the well-being of the ethnic community or nation is more important than just an idea of nation-state, which, without any of its achievements, is seen as simply a concept and not worthy of praise. In this way, Vaiska resists 'the infantile ethnic trap' (Rex 1997: 271), constructing her own ideas about why she should embrace her national identity.

Foucault (1990: 100) states that discourse 'can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy'. Thus, the search for normality discourse, where emigration decisions are defended by the need of a secure life that is not possible in Lithuania, can be seen as resistance to the discourse of migration as the easiest choice. One of the authors, Oleandrea, writes her letter as a response to the ideas expressed by the speaker of Lithuanian parliament, who have framed emigration in the easiest choice discourse and claimed that she cannot understand how people can leave their homeland for economic reasons. In resistance, Oleandrea gives an account of her life in Lithuania, where she did not feel valued and had financial struggles even when she has worked hard, whilst through the emigration to the United Kingdom she has managed to achieve 'normality'. Other letters were not directly framed as a response to the easiest choice discourse, however. These offered stories similar to Oleandrea's, where life in Lithuania is shown as a struggle despite hard work and life in a foreign country as 'normal'. They also can be seen as resisting the easiest choice discourse by rejecting the idea that they, as emigrants, are just looking for a comfortable life without wanting to put any effort to achieve it.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the discourses that are used by Lithuanian emigrants in construction of economic migration and how those discourses frame ethnicity and national identity. The first discourse, the easiest choice discourse, constructs migration as a simple choice employed by those who are reluctant to put some effort in order to create a 'good' life for themselves and their national community. This discourse can be seen as reflecting the emigration ideology (Garapich 2008), where economic migration is perceived in a purely negative light. Ethnicity and national identity are seen as primordial but easily corruptible by emigration. The second discourse, the search for normality discourse, constructs emigration as difficult yet, in light of complicated life conditions, inevitable action that could make 'normal' life more accessible. This discourse has also been employed by Polish post-accession migrants and can be found in several researches (Galasinka and Kozłowska 2009; Galasinka 2010; Rabikowska 2010a, 2010b;

Ryan 2010; White 2011). Through the search for normality discourse, ethnicity and national identity are perceived critically; value to these concepts is attached not simply for ideological reasons, but because one feels the deserved respect for their native country. I have argued that the search for normality discourse can be seen as resistance to the easiest choice discourse, as it rejects the ideas that emigrants have not tried hard enough in Lithuania before leaving and that emigrants are only looking for an effortless life. This research has tried to add to the literature on emigrants' accounts of their lives, by offering an insight of the emigrants' ideas about their economic migration and by showing how the perceptions of ethnicity and national identity are

constructed in migration. It has revealed that there are competing discourses among emigrants themselves, and supported the idea that emigration as well as its effects on ethnic and national identities cannot be seen as one-dimensional. This research has presented only two different discourses of economic migration. However, because of the existence of various different experiences

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of emigration, the presented discourses cannot be seen as conclusive. Despite extensive coverage of emigration experiences, ethnicity and national identity were given less attention in the letters of emigrants. Furthermore, the analysis of these letters did not allow for understanding why economic emigration is constructed in the presented discourses. Hence, to better cover these topics and questions, it would be useful to add semi-structured interviews with post-accession Lithuanian emigrants to the research. This method offers the possibility of probing the desired topics, as well as allowing the respondents to answer in their own ways, which helps to research 'why' questions (May 2001). Moreover, following the emigrants notes for a longer period of time could reveal if the perceptions of economic migration and its effects to ethnicity and national identity are changing.

Emigration as well as its effects on ethnic and national identities cannot be seen as one-dimensional

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