

## Original Research Reports

# Interpretative Repertoires of Multiculturalism – Supporting and Challenging Hierarchical Intergroup Relations

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## Abstract

Social psychological research on immigrant integration has predominantly examined multiculturalism from the perspective of majority members, and has seen it to be in conflict with that of minority members. In this discursive psychological study, we analyzed how members of the Finnish majority and different immigrant groups discussed managing ethnic and cultural diversity. As a result, four different interpretative repertoires of multiculturalism were identified. The first two repertoires normalize the hierarchical relations between immigrants and hosts. The other two repertoires questioned and criticized multiculturalism as an official policy or as everyday practices that highlight the importance of ethnic and cultural group memberships and that enable the discriminatory and essentializing treatment of immigrants. Our analysis showed that both minority and majority members can make sense of and orient towards multiculturalism in many different ways and that, contrary to the common assumption based on previous research, the viewpoints presented are not always clearly divided between the groups. Finally, implications of the results for multiculturalism as an ideology and as practices are discussed.

**Keywords:** multiculturalism, intergroup relations, discursive psychology, qualitative analysis

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Most countries can be said to be multicultural in a sense that their population consists of various ethnic and cultural groups. This ethno-cultural diversity has fuelled discussions on the ways in which relations between different groups should be organized and how immigrants may become integrated. The management of ethno-cultural diversity and intergroup relations can draw from different models or ideologies, multiculturalism being among the most established. The term itself has been used to refer to several different things, such as demographic composition (see e.g., Harris, 2001), political philosophy concerning intergroup relations (e.g., Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994; Vertovec, 2007), or as an expectation of acculturation among the dominant group (Berry, 2011). Verkuyten's (2007) definition of multiculturalism as an ideology emphasizing "equality between and respect for the pluralism of cultures and group identities" (p. 280) is typical for social and acculturation psychological research.

For a long time multiculturalism was discussed as an ideal form of organizing intergroup relations and managing diversity. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, many European politicians declared multiculturalist politics to have failed (for analyses of these discussions, see e.g., [Koopmans, 2013](#); [Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2009](#)). Concerns have been expressed that multiculturalism can, e.g., lead to reified, essentialist group distinctions that promote group stereotyping, as well as negative out-group feelings, ultimately rationalizing and justifying segregation and separation (e.g., [Brewer, 1997](#); [Haidt, Rosenberg, & Hom, 2003](#); [Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000](#)). Multiculturalism has also been seen to endanger social cohesion ([Putnam, 2001](#)) and to contradict the ideals of individualism (see e.g., [Barry, 2001](#)).

Moreover, even though scholars have argued that multiculturalism as an ideology promotes *mutual* cultural differences and equal chances and opportunities ([Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2003](#)), it has been found that multiculturalism is typically supported more by minorities than the majority, as it is seen to serve the interests of the minority and threaten those of majority (for an overview, see [Rattan & Ambady, 2013](#)). For example, in an interview study by [Verkuyten \(2004\)](#), multiculturalism was criticized by Dutch majority group members, who argued that it represents a threat to their culture and has a negative influence on social stability and unity. In a similar vein, the integration acculturation orientation, which accentuates the maintenance of minorities' cultural identities while promoting their participation in mainstream society, thus being in line with multiculturalism ([Berry, 2011](#)), has been found to be perceived differently by majority and minority group members. While the former tend to support more assimilation-like integration of minorities into mainstream culture, the latter are more in favour of integration that secures the maintenance of their cultural heritage ([Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Horenczyk, & Schmitz, 2003](#); [Verkuyten, 2005](#); see also [Bowskill, Lyons, & Coyle, 2007](#)).

To summarize, much effort has been made to theorize and empirically test the pros and cons of multiculturalism as an ideology and as a policy to manage ethno-cultural diversity. Social psychological research on this topic has to a large extent focused on the (lack of) support for multiculturalism among majority and minority group members and a social community at large. However, as [Verkuyten \(2006\)](#) puts it, “the question (...) is not simply about the level of public support [for multiculturalism] but also about the notions or meanings that exist in society and that fuel the nature of the public debate” (p. 152). As quantitative research often reproduces notions and meanings defined by researchers, there is only so much this research can give to the current scientific inquiry of multiculturalism, which is a highly complex, contested and political topic (see [Verkuyten, 2004, 2006](#)).

Importantly, different theoretical-methodological traditions can be used to answer different research questions. While it is useful to measure levels of support for multiculturalism, for example, to get empirically generalizable information on the attitude climate within the population, the cognitively oriented, mainstream social psychological approach to multiculturalism does not address the ways in which this concept is constructed and used in social interaction (for further discussion, see e.g., [Chirkov, 2009](#); [Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005](#); [Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006](#); [Howarth, Wagner, Magnusson, & Sammut, 2014](#)). As proposed by [Howarth and Andreouli \(2012, p. 8\)](#), more attention should be paid to “the contextual, dynamic and political aspects of intercultural relations and people’s sense-making in relation to multiculturalism.”

In our study, employing the principles of discursive psychology (DP) we focus on how multiculturalism and intergroup relations are socially constructed and discussed. DP treats language use as social action with various functions and consequences and examines the construction and display of psychological issues in social interaction ([Potter, 2012](#)). Following the line of DP focusing on “interpretative repertoires”, we examine how recurring patterns of talk,

including metaphors and figures of speech serve as a resource for making claims and building social action (Potter, 2012; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). We share Verkuyten's (2004) interest in the different versions of multiculturalism as well as the discursive consequences of deploying them. However, while the participants in Verkuyten's (ibid.) study were Dutch majority members, we also recruited members of immigrant groups in addition to the Finnish majority group members—as multiculturalism is a topic that very much concerns all members of society.

With our analysis we aimed to identify ways in which the participants of our study discussed multiculturalism as managing ethno-cultural diversity in Finland. We call these patterns of talk *interpretative repertoires of multiculturalism*. It is important to be noted that multiculturalism was introduced by the researchers already in the invitation as the context of this study (see also Potter & Litton, 1985) and the prompts used in focus groups were phrased to elicit discussion around multiculturalism as demographic diversity and political ideology. However, in line with Potter and Litton (ibid.), in the analysis, we were sensitive to the variability, functionality, and the situated nature of the participants' use of language: the ways in which they made sense of multiculturalism and the discursive functions of different constructions of multiculturalism. We believe that analyzing the ways in which ordinary members of both majority and minorities construct and negotiate multiculturalism not only provides interesting insight of our social reality, but it is also valuable and relevant for integration politics (Howarth & Andreouli, 2012). For example, one cannot assume that integration programs and campaigns function properly if the language used to address the public constructs the topics differently from how the same topics are constructed by the “targets” of the campaigns. Further, using data from both majority and minority members allows us to discuss the assumed conflict of immigrants' and majority members' views on multiculturalism (see e.g., Rattan & Ambady, 2013; Verkuyten, 2005). Last but not least, analyzing how people discuss and orient themselves towards multiculturalism may open up possibilities for improving current theoretizations of multicultural societies or creating new ones (Verkuyten, 2004).

## The Socio-Political Context

Finland turned from a country of emigration into an immigrant receiving country as recently as in the 1990s and currently houses one of the smallest immigrant populations (in absolute terms and relative to the whole population) in Europe. By the end of 2013 the foreign language speaking population comprised 5.3 percent of the total population, largest immigrant groups being Russian, Estonian, and Somali speakers (Statistics Finland, 2014). The immigrant population is strongly concentrated in the southern capital region: 27 percent of the country's immigrants reside in Helsinki (Helsinki City Urban Facts, 2014).

Opinion polls show that issues concerning immigration and intergroup relations divide the Finns into supporters and opponents of ethno-cultural diversity. For instance, according to an opinion poll conducted in 2012 (Haavisto, 2012), 46 percent of the population living in Finland evaluated immigration to be beneficial for Finland while 61 percent considered increasing internationalization to be a threat to the Finnish culture. According to another opinion poll conducted in 2015 (Penttilä, 2015), 60 percent of the Finns have a somewhat positive attitude towards immigration and multiculturalism. However, the results of this survey also showed that Finns have the most positive attitudes towards immigrants who are perceived to be similar to the majority in terms of culture and appearance. Out of the three largest immigrant groups only Estonians were evaluated positively, whereas the attitudes towards Russian and Somali immigrants were mostly negative.

When it comes to policies and legal norms, Finland is officially one of the most multiculturalist countries in Europe (Saukkonen, 2013). In its official policies Finnish society acknowledges, appreciates and supports its ethnic and cultural diversity in various ways. In an international policy comparison (Multiculturalism Policy Index) conducted in 2010, Finland was placed in the group of countries of strong multiculturalism. However, according to Saukkonen (2013), this official support for multiculturalism is not directly translated into implementation: multiculturalist policies are often seen as a practical tool facilitating one-way integration and the adaptation of immigrants but not the majority.

The public discussion concerning multiculturalism picked up in Finland after the municipal elections in 2008 when the populist Finns Party gained popularity in Finnish politics mainly with its anti-EU and anti-immigration (or immigration sceptic as the party calls it) agenda. At the time of our data collection, the Finns Party had gained a position as the third-largest party in Finland, and after the parliamentary elections of April 2015, became part of the Finnish government. The party has, however, played a significant role in the formation of the polarized public discourse around immigration related issues already before that (Horsti & Nikunen, 2013).

## Method

Our data consists of seven focus group discussions held in Helsinki from May 2014 to February 2015. In line with many other discursive psychological studies (e.g., Gibson, 2015), we chose focus groups as our method of data collection as they offer an ideal space for generating talk which draws on ideological themes and interpretative repertoires (Potter, 2012). Part of this data has been previously analyzed and discussed from the perspective of cultural citizenship and negotiations of belonging (Varjonen, Nortio, Mähönen, & Jasinskaja-Lahti, in press).

### Participants and Procedure

In order to inform and invite people from various backgrounds, we placed advertisements in which we invited people to discuss “the thoughts and experiences concerning multicultural Finland”, in grocery stores, libraries and other public spaces in different parts of Helsinki. We also created a public profile for our research on Facebook and posted the advertisement to the pages of different events and networks. The participants were promised snacks, coffee and tea and that they would take part in a lottery of movie tickets. The advertisements for all participants including the non-native Finnish speakers were written in Finnish. We also explicitly mentioned in the advertisement that the discussion would be held in Finnish in order to make sure that those volunteered would be able to express themselves in Finnish.

Altogether 17 majority Finns and 17 immigrants living in Helsinki took part in these discussions. We organized three groups with the members of the Finnish majority (Fi 1–3) as well as four groups with Russian-speaking (Ru), Estonian-speaking (Est) and Somali-speaking participants (Som 1–2), separately. Each group is described in detail below. We included everyone who was willing to take part in the research; thus, the differences in the sizes of the focus groups are due to practical reasons, not the deliberate choice of the researchers.

Fi 1 ( $n = 9$ , 5 males) was held in a resident facility (RF)<sup>i</sup> in a working class neighborhood. The participants were all regulars in or members of the staff of the RF and they knew each other at least by name. The group was diverse in terms of age, with the youngest participant being in his 20s and oldest in his 90s. In the course of the discussion some of the participants left while others joined in late. 4 out of 9 participants were present for the entire discussion.

Fi 2 ( $n = 4$ , 1 male) was organized in a RF of one of the wealthiest areas of Helsinki. Two of the participants indicated knowing each other beforehand. This group was rather homogeneous in terms of age, all the participants were in their 50s or 60s.

Fi 3 ( $n = 4$ , 1 male) was held in the premises of the University of Helsinki. The participants were students of the University of Helsinki and they were all in their 20s. They were recruited via mailing lists and by visiting courses.

Ru ( $n = 8$ , all females) was organized in the premises of a foundation related to the Russian-speaking minority in Finland. The participants were recruited by visiting events of the foundation, sending invitations to our contacts via Facebook and by advertising the research in an interview in the Russian language radio Sputnik. The participants were from their 20s to their 60s. Two of the participants brought up that they knew each other beforehand.

Est ( $n = 3$ , all females) was organized in the premises of the University of Helsinki. The participants were recruited using the contact information obtained during a survey study conducted by the research team earlier that year. The participants were of working age, all in their 30s or 40s.

Som 1 ( $n = 4$ , 2 males) was organized in an office of an NGO that works in the social- and healthcare sector to promote gender equality and the integration of immigrants. One of the male participants, who was contacted by the fourth author, gathered the group.

Som 2 ( $n = 2$ , both females) was organized in a culture center maintained by the City of Helsinki. Both participants were spontaneously recruited on the spot, because all the participants who had earlier signed up for the discussion failed to arrive. The participants were friends, both in their 20s.

All participants were informed that participating in study was voluntary and anonymous. The study was introduced to the participants as being about multicultural Finland, and especially about their own thoughts and experiences instead of factual knowledge on the subject. The moderators (two first authors of this paper) adopted a fairly passive role and mainly joined in the discussions encouraging participants to share their views or asking for clarifications.

Applying the qualitative approach to attitudes (see e.g., [Peltola & Vesala, 2013](#); [Pyysiäinen & Vesala, 2013](#)), the moderators did not define multiculturalism to the participants, but used prompts to produce rich commenting on the topic of the study to create comparability between different focus groups. The moderators showed the participants of each focus group 4-5 prompts, one at a time, and encouraged participants to respond to and freely discuss the prompts. The interview guide included the following prompts:

1. Multiculturalism is a good thing.
2. When in Rome, do as the Romans do.
3. Finns should accept that Finnish society consists of groups with different cultural backgrounds.
4. Finns have different attitudes towards immigrants from different countries.
5. What do you think about other immigrants in Finland? (Posed to immigrants only.)

The prompts were chosen to facilitate discussion concerning multiculturalism, intergroup relations and diversity in Finland. The first prompt was phrased as generically as possible: the aim was to enable participants to produce general evaluations and descriptions of multiculturalism. The second prompt was chosen because it is very fre-

quently used in public discourse on immigration and ethnic diversity in Finland among politicians, media and lay people alike. It is also a statement that has been mentioned in previous research on multiculturalism as “one of the oldest and constant expectations that settled groups have brought against nomadic ones” (Joppke, 1996, p. 487). While the second prompt was thought to elicit discussion on the pressure of newcomers to adapt, the third prompt was picked from the Multicultural ideology scale (Berry & Kalin, 1995) to elicit discussion on the adaptation of majority group members (cf. the notion of mutual, reciprocal acculturation, Berry, 2005). The last two prompts were formulated to facilitate discussion concerning ethnic hierarchies prevailing in Finnish intergroup context (see Section 2).

Discussions were audiorecorded and transcribed verbatim. Extracts presented in this paper were translated from Finnish to English by the authors. The translation has been kept as literal as possible. Transcription notations are listed in the [Appendix](#).

## Method of Analysis

In this analysis we focus on the language use of our participants in the focus groups. Following the framework of discursive psychology, we see language use as being situated and action-oriented, both constructed and constructing social reality (e.g. Edwards & Potter, 2001; Potter, 2012). To be more precise, we adopt a *synthetic* approach to studying our participants’ discourse (Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). This means that while paying attention to the immediate interaction situation we also take into account that talk is not isolated from the societal power structures. For the analysis of the interviews this means, that the data is “analyzed as joint productions or constructions of a meaningful social world” (Wetherell, 2003, p. 23) by looking at, for example, how psychological phenomena, such as attitudes, identities, norms and values are mobilized in talk and how this talk is situated in the wider socio-political context.

Interpretative repertoires are an example of the discursive resources used in constructing reality. They have been defined as “relatively coherent ways of talking about objects and events in the world” (Edley, 2001, p. 198), “broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors and vivid images” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 90) and “the cultural/ideological resources for building arguments about the topic in question” (van den Berg, 2003, p. 121).

In our analysis, we focus on distinguishing between different interpretative repertoires of multiculturalism in the focus group data. We are interested in the make up of interpretative repertoires of multiculturalism and how they are used for different purposes (see e.g., Potter, 1996).

More specifically, when identifying the repertoires, we focus on the talk about how intergroup relations and ethnic and cultural diversity should be managed in Finland, e.g. how immigrants and the majority should orient towards each other, as well as the rights and responsibilities assigned to different groups. As a result of this focus, some very general accounts of multiculturalism, such as short comments stating that different cultures have an enriching effect on Finland, are not included in our analysis of interpretative repertoires as they did not explicitly comment on organizing or managing diversity.

## Results: Interpretative Repertoires of Multiculturalism

We identified four interpretative repertoires which were employed to discuss multiculturalism. All of these repertoires deal with the question of how ethno-cultural diversity in Finland should be managed and how relations between immigrants and majority Finns should be organized.

### Repertoire of Polite Guests

This repertoire portrays immigrants as guests and emphasizes their responsibility to show respect towards their hosts. Showing respect was often equalled with adopting a strategy of assimilation in public. This repertoire typically occurred in the discussion after the ‘When in Rome do as the Romans do’ prompt was presented; participants also referred to the proverb several times when using this repertoire. In addition, this repertoire also came up in responses to prompts ‘Multiculturalism is a good thing’ and ‘Finns have different attitudes towards immigrants from different countries’, as well as the question ‘What do you think of other immigrants in Finland?’ The repertoire of polite guests was used several times in the discussions with Russian- and Estonian-speaking immigrants. It also appeared in the focus group discussions among majority Finns (in two out of three groups) whereas the Somalis did not use this interpretative repertoire.

In our data, the responsibility to respect and conform to the ways of the majority was often presented as a natural consequence of voluntary migration. This is exemplified by the first extract, which is from the focus group held with Estonian-speaking immigrants. It follows a conversation related to the prompt ‘Finns should accept that Finnish society consists of different ethnic groups’ and the moderators’ further suggestion for participants to consider this prompt together with an earlier presented prompt ‘When in Rome, do as the Romans do’.

#### Extract 1

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*Evelin: Well but that is generally like if I go like if I for example go and visit someone and that person has a big like a rug on the wall, I will not go and drag it down from there and carry it to the bin even though it isn't like part of my culture. So on the other hand I then expect that if she<sup>ii</sup> comes to me for a visit she will not put that rug on the wall for me. So of course that one must respect the culture of the country if one is voluntarily here. But like- That is- this is the Finns' only country which is their country so there is no alternative. (Est)*

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In this account a rug is used as a metaphor for cultural expression and immigrants are presented as guests who should make sure they do not disturb their hosts by judging the local culture or by putting up their own cultural display. This is in line with how [Modood \(2014\)](#) has described assimilation: “The newcomers do little to disturb the society they are settling in and become as much like their new compatriots as possible” (p. 203). The voluntary nature of migration is referred to when justifying the obligation of guests to respect their hosts and, further, equaling respect with conforming to the ways of the majority. Finally, by noting that Finland is the ‘Finns’ only country’, nationalist ideology is mobilized to back up this claim.

This recurrent pattern of defining migration to Finland as voluntary as well as presenting assimilation as the preferred way of organizing relations between immigrants and the majority works to oppose multiculturalism as an ideology and practice. This is in line with [Verkuyten's \(2005\)](#) research on the rhetorical functions of different ways of talking about immigration. The findings of this research on Dutch majority members’ talk showed that stressing the migrant’s personal choice of emigrating was related to supporting assimilation and lower support for multiculturalism.

Kymlicka (1995) has also made a distinction between voluntary and involuntary groups in multicultural societies and suggests that compared to the “old” minorities, such as native Americans, who have not chosen to become minorities, (voluntary) migrants have chosen to give up the rights or access to their culture when leaving their countries of origin and, thus, cannot claim to have similar cultural rights.

The next extract is from a focus group discussion held with the majority members. This extract follows participants’ brief expressions of agreement to the prompt ‘Finns have different attitudes towards immigrants from different countries’.

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Extract 2

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MOD: *If we go back to this prompt, it seemed that you all like unambiguously agreed with would you like to comment on that in some way.*

Liisa: *Well it is just that which cultures condescend to like adapt to us, that is, not place terrible controversies straightaway. Vietnamese are typical, hardworking people who have blended in well. They do not push themselves forward.*

Maija: *And humble*

Liisa: *Yes a humble people yes. (Until–)*

Maija: *But that is just like who comes, like with what ((kind of)) attitude a person comes here.*

MOD: *[Mm.]*

Maija: *That’s how people relate to that person. I have such a conception.*

MOD: *Yeah.*

Maija: *Mm.*

Liisa: *And that is our, that is said in our own culture too if one thinks of a work place (that) a new person comes. Then one always teaches that you do not immediately bring up your own things what you want. Think a little first and you watch and little by little- (Fi 2)*

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Unlike in [Extract 1](#), in this excerpt ‘respect’ is not explicitly mentioned and no reference to voluntary migration is made. The relationship between the hosts and migrants nevertheless resembles the one in [Extract 1](#) in that the migrants are expected to conform and ‘blend in’.

Liisa offers an explanation on why Finns’ attitudes towards different groups might vary. By mobilizing the concept of culture she defines the attitudes of Finns as a direct result of the adaptation attitudes different cultures have: ‘Well it is just that which cultures condescend to like adapt here to us, that is not place terrible controversies straightaway’. Mobilizing culture instead of ethnic origin could also function to present this account as more acceptable. This account implicitly blames some cultures for arrogance and causing controversy and reproduces the norm of immigrants acting as polite guests. This works to place responsibility purely on migrants to ensure good group relations while also normalizing the discrimination or unequal treatment potentially received by migrants.

The participants together construct Vietnamese as an exemplary group of immigrants characterizing them as ‘hardworking’ and ‘humble’ people who ‘do not push themselves forward’. After this Maija offers further confirmation for migrants as responsible, a theory first put forward by Liisa. Maija finishes her argument with a pre-empting statement defining the presented view as her personal perception, making it difficult for others to challenge.

Further support for the principle of adaptation and conforming as the migrants’ duty comes from Liisa who makes an analogy between migrants and new employees, suggesting that both are expected to keep their head down at the beginning. This, together with the expression ‘not place terrible controversies straightaway’ implies that, with time, a migrant is perhaps entitled to a more equal position among the majority members. References to

hardworking Vietnamese as well as presenting migrants alone responsible for good intergroup relations and adaptation could also be seen to use the repertoire of “effortfulness” (Gibson, 2009) as a resource.

The two extracts presented here exemplify patterns of arguments that were typical for this repertoire: the majority is entitled to expect that immigrants actively show respect towards them and this presented in a self-evident way. The traditions and practices differing from those of the majority were presented as problematic, especially if not confined to the private sphere.

## Repertoire of Securing the Majority Culture

While the repertoire of polite guests emphasizes the importance of immigrants conforming to the local ways as a guiding principle, the repertoire of securing the majority culture takes the majority’s point of view, discussing whether and to what extent the majority should accommodate minority cultures. This was typically either done by referring to importance of protecting Finnish traditions or by emphasizing that the Finns are entitled to keep their ways. Multiculturalism and diversity are, thus, implicitly or explicitly oriented towards as posing a (potential) threat for the cultural majority. This is similar to one of the two main interpretations of multiculturalism found among Dutch majority members (Verkuyten, 2004).

The repertoire of securing the majority culture was used among Russian- and Estonian-speaking immigrants and in all three focus groups held with majority members when discussing these prompts: ‘Multiculturalism is a good thing’, ‘When in Rome, do as the Romans do’, and ‘Finns should accept that Finnish society consists of different ethnic groups’. While this repertoire (as well as the other three repertoires presented in this paper) was predominantly employed to present personal views, in the Finnish majority groups this repertoire was occasionally used also when referring to other people’s views, and contrasting those with the views presented as personal opinions.

**Extract 3** presents an example from the discussion with Russian-speaking immigrants, where this repertoire was mostly used by Anna who is the main speaker also in this example. This account is given in response to the prompt ‘Multiculturalism is a good thing’. While discussing this prompt Anna had stated that multiculturalism is a good thing, ‘as long as it doesn’t go too far’ which the moderator then encouraged the participants to discuss.

### Extract 3

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- Anna: Frankly speaking, now that, well now for example, also now, was it in today’s paper, that the chancellor of justice had received [letters about]*
- Olga: [that was a mistake]*
- Anna: yes*
- Olga: yes, I [agree]*
- Anna: [so] there was one grandmother who wrote that in the kindergarden of her grandchild in ((name of a district in Helsinki)) the Christmas celebration was all about [jungle drums]*
- Olga: [drumming]*
- Anna: about drums. And because there are three Somali kids and I know, my child has got a music teacher who used to work also as a nursery school teacher or as an assistant, I don’t know now which position she had in ((name of the district)) nursery school, so they said that there are these Muslim kids and Finnish nursery school teachers make sure that there are no Finnish traditions. She herself is from ((country)) and for her these Christian traditions are important and she said that no candles, no Christmas songs and there they ((Finnish teachers)) are so, well, nose on the ground in front of them Muslims that keeping any Finnish traditions is no longer allowed and this is no good thing. (Ru)*
-

The account consists of a description of Christmas celebrations of one particular nursery school in Helsinki as an example of problematic multiculturalism, allowing speaker to conclude that “this is no good thing” as an answer to the prompt ‘Multiculturalism is a good thing’, presented by the moderator. The opening of this account by Anna, ‘Frankly speaking’, implies that the topic in question is potentially sensitive and not always openly discussed. Two independent witness reports are referred to which create consensus and help factualize the description put forward (Potter, 1996). The first witness mentioned is a grandmother who reportedly has written the chancellor of justice about the Christmas celebrations being only about ‘jungle drums’.

Anna also cites a Latvian origin personal acquaintance as a witness. Referring to the experiences of this witness, Anna builds an analogy between Finnish and Christian traditions which are contrasted with jungle drums and Somali kids who are named as Muslims. Mentioning the small and exact number of Muslim children (‘three’) together with the description that ‘keeping any Finnish traditions is no longer allowed’ portrays the situation as unreasonable. Throughout the account similar extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) are used to highlight the extent and worrying nature of multiculturalism practised in Finland, e.g.: ‘all about jungle drums’, ‘no Finnish traditions’, ‘no candles, no Christmas songs’. For further discussion on the use of personal and other people’s experiences in making claims and creating corroboration see Xenitidou and Greco-Morasso’s (2014) study on parents discussing cultural, ethnic and racial “others”.

In their research focusing on British media discourses on faith schooling Bowskill and colleagues (2007, p. 806) characterize the analyzed media texts as follows: “While mainstream tolerance is maximized through a constructed willingness to ‘accommodate ... special needs’ and make ‘compromises’, Muslims are positioned as exploitative transgressors of reasonableness in the sense that they make ‘demands’ in spite of mainstream concessions and, moreover, ‘expect’ such concessions to be made”. Although in our example it is made clear that it is due to the ‘three Muslim kids’ that the Christmas celebrations in this nursery school have been changed, the larger Muslim community is not directly blamed. Rather it is the majority Finns who are presented as acting foolish, trying desperately to please Somalis: ‘nose on the ground in front of them Muslims’, losing their own culture along the way.

The next extract is from a focus group discussion with majority Finns. It is part of a lengthy discussion which started as a response to the moderator’s prompt ‘Finns should accept that Finnish society consists of different ethnic groups’.

#### Extract 4

- 
- Kalevi:* As long as they won’t start influencing so that they try to turn Finns into people from their cultural background. That is they may keep their own like but-
- Jari:* And if a Finn wants from that culture, whatever she wants, then that is of course only a good thing too, isn’t it, but one must of course be able to keep one’s own. (Fi 1)
- 

Interpreted in the context of the prompt presented by the moderator, Finns’ acceptance of ‘different ethnic groups’ as part of Finnish society is constructed as conditional. Following the built-in assumption of the prompt, Kalevi and Jari treat the position of ‘different ethnic groups’ as a matter for Finns to decide—and not for instance as negotiable issue between various equal groups, Finns among others. Adopting the majority position also allows the speakers to define the conditions for acceptance as dependent on how the different groups behave towards the majority.

Unlike in the previous extract, there are no specific events referred to in the argumentation. Instead a vague threat scenario in which ‘they’ take over Finns is created. Using a made-up noun, just one word ‘kulttuuritaustalaiset’ in Finnish, roughly translating as ‘people from their cultural background’, Kalevi refers to a group or an identity ‘they’ might force Finns into. A concession ‘they may keep their own’ helps to construct the position taken as well considered and balanced (Antaki & Wetherell, 1999). Jari joins in with what could be seen as another concession, pointing out that a Finn might want something from the other culture, thus presenting multiculturalism as offering opportunities for the majority in addition to minorities. Jari’s comment is exceptional in the data in the sense that it brings to the fore the possibility that a member of the majority would change as a result of migration.

After the concessions, the main argument is put forward as self-evident: ‘one must of course be able to keep one’s own’, which in this context seems to denote the Finns. Both speakers draw from a common argument “nobody should be compelled”, which is one of the ten *rhetorically self-sufficient arguments* identified and listed by Wetherell and Potter (1992). A common feature in the use of the repertoire of securing majority culture was that it was not employed to directly reject multiculturalism but to criticize it by offering examples of multiculturalism ‘going too far’. Both Extracts 3 and 4 can be interpreted as presenting multiculturalism as potentially violating the principle “Minority opinion should not carry more weight than majority opinion”, another self-sufficient argument identified and listed by Wetherell and Potter (ibid.).

This repertoire, as well as the previous one, draws on banal nationalism (Billig, 1995; see also Lyons, Madden, Chamberlain, & Carr, 2011), the unchallenged idea of a nation, which is in this case Finns and Finnishness (as well as other cultural and ethnic groups) being natural entities, and further, Finns deserving a priority position in Finland. It is important to note that this simplistic use of the category Finns was also present in many of the prompts.

As a diversity ideology multiculturalism has been said to be potentially threatening for, or to exclude, majority group members (Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011; Verkuyten, 2006). In a study by Haavisto (2012, p. 88) almost 70 percent of Finns agreed that “Finns should effectively protect the uniqueness of their culture against the ever increasing globalization”. Interestingly, in our data it was not only majority members, but also *minority* members who emphasized the importance of protecting the majority culture. One explanation for this is that, for immigrants, this repertoire serves to show solidarity towards the hosts and distance themselves from most stigmatized immigrant groups. It is also possible that multiculturalism is argued differently in different contexts of talk. For example Jensen (2016) recently found in her study about trust and everyday relations in a culturally diverse neighbourhood in Copenhagen that, while the residents of both ethnic minority and majority backgrounds shared an understanding of immigrant integration as “conforming to Danish norms and rules” (p. 29) in general, when talking about their own neighbourhood this idea of cultural assimilation was often contested.

## Repertoire of Stigmatizing Multiculturalism

This repertoire presents multiculturalism as an ideology or as practices related to that ideology in which immigrant background exposes one to unjust categorization and othering by the authorities and by people encountered in the course of everyday life.

This repertoire was used in Russian- and Somali-speaking immigrants’ discussions and in connection to the prompts ‘Finns should accept that Finnish society consists of groups with different cultural backgrounds’, ‘Finns have different attitudes towards immigrants from different countries’ and ‘What do you think about other immigrants in Finland’. The repertoire of stigmatizing multiculturalism was used to criticize multiculturalist practices, such as

categorizing children with immigrant parents as non-native Finnish speakers, which were often portrayed as related to stereotyping and discrimination. In most of the accounts participants resisted these practices by drawing from their own experiences or witness reports.

The first extract exemplifying the use of the repertoire of stigmatizing multiculturalism is taken from the discussion following the prompt 'Finns should accept that Finnish society consists of groups with different cultural backgrounds'. At this point the discussion had diverted to other topics and the participants had for some time discussed whether their children could be seen as Finns. [Extract 5](#) is a part of a long stretch of talk in which Anna first accounts for the Finnishness of her children by bringing up that her daughter's teachers did not even realize that she speaks Russian at home. It should also be noted that earlier in the discussion Anna presented herself first as a Finn and later as an Ingrian Finn<sup>iii</sup>, i.e. an ethnic migrant returning to her home country. Thus, by invoking her ethnic roots she was able to claim that she is Finnish and, thus, does not need special services targeted for immigrants.

#### Extract 5

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*Anna: Yeah but like we were full members of the society. No one pointed it out to us that hey you are Finns that's why you have to be Finns you have to maintain that Finnish language and you shall remember, keep in mind that you are Finns. Like I don't wish for this (even though) there are signs of it in this society. Like previously there was this that they tried to dispel one's own identity and make ((us)) Finnish now we've gone to the opposite end. That one is constantly reminded that you are not Finns that we will encourage you to maintain your own culture and keep in mind that you are Russians even though we are not Russians. I have said that I will never say that I am a Russian. But I speak Russian and my children speak Russian. (Ru)*

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The account starts with Anna first referring to her experiences in Russia before migration to Finland, as having been taken as a full member of the society regardless of being a member of an ethnic minority. A contrast is then constructed in relation to the treatment received in Finland where a person who has migrated to the country does not have the power to define her social identity by herself, but becomes categorized by unspecified others (for the notion of ascribed identities, see e.g. [Verkuyten, 2005](#)). Comparing the treatment in the two countries, thus, enables her to evaluate Finnish practices as exclusive. These practices are also compared to the assimilative treatment (that required 'dispelling one's own identity') which immigrants used to receive in Finland in the past. In these comparisons the present multiculturalist practices, such as encouraging the maintenance of one's own culture, are evaluated negatively, as moving from from one bad option to another ('we've gone to the opposite end').

Anna actively voices ([Potter, 1996](#)) the message sent by the authorities through multicultural practices: 'We will encourage you to maintain your own culture'. Although the word 'encourage' implies that it is possible to choose not to maintain one's own culture, the end of the quote 'and keep in mind that you are Russians' leaves no room for choosing. By repetitive use of expressions referring to reminding ('you shall remember', 'keep in mind', and being 'constantly reminded') Anna presents herself as being actively denied the category of a Finn. This rejection is, thus, presented to be veiled in a benevolent tone while forcing a person into a category she did not choose herself.

[Extract 6](#) followed the prompt 'Finns have different attitudes towards immigrants from different countries'. The participants had earlier discussed how ethnic background negatively affects the treatment immigrants receive from the majority and the situations in which immigrants are defined solely based on their ethnic or cultural group membership. After the prompt was presented, however, mostly positive experiences of encounters in which their

ethnic background were brought up. In one of these accounts Anna claimed that artists and musicians from Russia are appreciated and, if anything, being Russian might be considered a positive thing. [Extract 6](#) presents Maria's response, in which she challenges this claim.

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Extract 6

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*Maria: I have one point to this. I talked to a Russian musician, she already got her master's degree here in ((name of the school)) and she plays electric kantele<sup>iv</sup> and now she thought to, like, proceed, become a doctor and then she had these entrance exams and all of those professors laughed that she is Russian why does she play a Finnish instrument, electric kantele, why electric kantele. And then, why won't she play gusli. She says, well I did play gusli, yes, but I don't want to research this anymore because I did that already and then, I want to advance professionally. And they were like oh no hahaha what a shame. It would suit us better this gusli thing because that would be the only one. But she is the only one playing electric kantele. (Ru)*

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In this extract Maria uses a witness report ([Potter, 1996](#)) and presents herself as simply passing on information, without elaborating on her relationship to the witness, who is presented as just a musician from Russia. This enables Maria to present herself as objective and to gain credibility for the account. Active voicing of both the witness's ("well I did play gusli, yes...") and the professors' ("oh no hahaha what a shame...") comments furthers the impression that Maria is simply reporting events. When describing how a Russian musician was expected to study a Russian instrument, gusli, the witness is presented as having been evaluated only based on her nationality, not as a professional (see [Lahti, 2013](#), on ascribed cultural identities of Russian professionals in Finland). By using an extreme case formulation "all the professors", this kind of discrimination is presented as a norm shared at a high institutional level.

Maria's account is primarily constructed in a form of an objective report. However, she ends her account with a personal evaluation of the reported episode (not included in [Extract 6](#)): 'It is a bad thing because they don't accept it ((that a Russian musician would want to study a Finnish instrument)).' The other participants reacted to Maria's story by sharing similar experiences indicating that this kind of account was easy for them to relate to.

Unlike [Extract 5](#), in which authoritative practices were criticized, Maria's account in [Extract 6](#) deconstructs the experience of being stereotyped. Together these two extracts represent the functions the repertoire of stigmatizing multiculturalism served. Firstly, the accounts of being stereotyped were often used to call for the right to choose required services instead of automatically receiving immigrant-targeted services, as well as the freedom to define oneself using labels other than ethnic and minority ones. Secondly, using this repertoire allowed the participants to abandon the position of a powerless subject of multicultural procedures and practices, and present themselves as actors who are capable of criticizing those practices.

The repertoire of stigmatizing multiculturalism also makes it visible how well-intending multiculturalist practices, which are supposed to benefit immigrants, can be worked up as maintaining inequalities between the majority and immigrants. As ([Verkuyten, 2006](#)) notes:

Considering the psychological and social importance of ethnic and racial identities, a focus on groups and group differences is understandable and, to a certain extent, useful. It can, however, also lead to a situation in which these identities become overwhelming or unidimensional, and society, outgroups, and ingroups oblige people to place this particular identity in the forefront of their minds and make it central in their behaviour. (p. 178)

## Repertoire of Individualism

This repertoire portrays treating people as individuals, instead of as members of groups or categories, as an ideal. The expression ‘a person as a person’ was used in three different discussions and variants of it, such as ‘it is the people that count’ (Est), ‘every person has their own personality’ (Fi 1), and ‘people are individuals’ (Som 2) occurred several times in four discussions. The repertoire of individualism was used in discussions among the majority as well as immigrants (Fi 1, Est, Som 1 and Som 2) and after four prompts: ‘Multiculturalism is a good thing’, ‘Finns should accept that Finnish society consists of groups with different cultural backgrounds’, ‘Finns have different attitudes towards immigrants from different countries’ and ‘What do you think about other immigrants in Finland?’

This repertoire was used in resisting the treatment of people as representatives of groups or categories and multiculturalism, as was the repertoire of stigmatizing multiculturalism. However, there were significant differences between these two repertoires. Firstly, the repertoire of individualism was used to construct an ideal of how people should generally orient towards others, i.e., as individuals, instead of criticizing specific practices or politics, which was the case in the repertoire of stigmatizing multiculturalism. Secondly, the discursive tools and the vocabulary used were different in these repertoires. For instance, the use of witness reports or references to personal experiences that were constitutive of the repertoire of stigmatizing multiculturalism were not part of the repertoire of individualism.

**Extract 7** presents Jari’s comment to the prompt ‘Finns have different attitudes towards immigrants from different countries’. Before Jari’s comment the participants had discussed the prompt for a while and the moderator was suggesting moving on to the next prompt when Jari asked if he could make one more comment. This comment was, thus, a conclusion of the discussion on the prompt. The repertoire of individualism was often used in this manner, at the end of the discussion, in the concluding comments, which were hardly challenged or even reacted to.

### Extract 7

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*Jari: That, if only people could be met as people. One would not have to, like, even go through this kind of statement that Finns as a nation would meet immigrants as a group but there one person, I, receive another person just as the kind of person she comes ((as she is)). One can maintain that certain critical stance there in between and certain identifications whatever there is in normal interaction, that would be, like, it (where one should aim at). (Fi 1)*

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In his response to the prompt presented by the moderator, Jari evaluates the group-level description as irrelevant and problematic, and offers individual-level encounters as a preferred option. Jari’s account, as well as the repertoire in general, draws on the binary between individual and group member and is based on the assumption that everyone wants to be encountered as an individual (for the discussion on the binary between good and bad, see [Jiwani & Richardson, 2011](#)). By using a first person pronoun ‘I’, the speaker constructs personal commitment for the ideal of treating everyone as individuals. However, a concession (‘one can maintain...’) is worked up to show that the opposite argument, i.e., encountering people as representatives of groups, has been considered.

In **Extract 8** the participants were discussing the prompt ‘Finns should accept that Finnish society consists of groups with different cultural backgrounds’. Before the stretch of talk presented in the extract, Abdi questioned and re-defined the categories ‘Finns’ and ‘groups with different cultural backgrounds’ used in the prompt. He stated that there has always been people with different cultural backgrounds in Finland and that they are not always

immigrants. Abdi then went on arguing that in the media the concept of multiculturalism only refers to Somalis. Another speaker, Saido, challenged Abdi's account by arguing that multiculturalism refers to different kinds of people, not just the Somalis, and this led the participants to discuss the meanings of multiculturalism. In the following account, Abdi works up his ideal of multiculturalism by contrasting it with group-based treatment, which is typically considered as one of the core ideas of multiculturalism.

## Extract 8

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*Abdi:* My multiculturalism means that freedom and calm. (...) Not any private- like special groups  
*Saido:* [Yeah]  
*MOD:* [Yes]  
*Abdi:* gets mentioned everywhere.  
*MOD:* Yes yes.  
*Abdi:* It shouldn't- is not multiculturalism. But multiculturalism is that interaction skills, seeing people as people, that one values other other ((each other)), respect their tradition, no mocking, not saying that, like- prejudice raising, this should not be multiculturalism. (Som 1)

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After offering his definition of multiculturalism, Abdi brings up once more how multiculturalism can be used to only point to 'special groups', perhaps referring to Somalis and the characteristics that separate them from the Finnish majority, such as skin color or religion. Through the list of six features ('interaction skills, seeing people as people, valuing each other, respecting their tradition, no mocking, no prejudice raising') Abdi constructs an alternative for that kind of multiculturalism. Abdi's list mostly consists of features that are generally considered as making encounters between people easier. In this way, multiculturalism is constructed as a mundane phenomenon touching everyone, not just immigrants or Somalis. The idea of respecting traditions is the only item on the list referring to group-based multiculturalism, whereas the trope 'seeing people as people', among other things listed, is used to oppose the kind of multiculturalism that puts groups to the fore.

This study is not the first one to recognize the role of individualist ideology in the field of intergroup relations. In the interactive acculturation model (Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997) individualism is recognized as an acculturation orientation and as an ideology that can shape state policies. Also the colour-blind approach, which has been considered as an alternative or competing ideology for multiculturalism (e.g. Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Verkuyten, 2009; Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000), draws on individualist arguments. The advocates of colour-blindness (e.g. Barry, 2001) suggest that to create harmonious relations between the majority and minorities, everyone should first and foremost be treated as individuals, not as representatives of ethnic groups or categories. However, as can be seen from the review of research on multiculturalism and colour-blindness by Rattan and Ambady (2013), colour-blindness also has its downsides, e.g., when it comes to acknowledging group-based discrimination and maintaining minority cultures. As pointed out by the authors, neither multiculturalism nor colour-blindness can be seen as a panacea for intergroup conflicts, and more should be known about the context-specific and everyday understandings of each ideology (ibid., pp. 18-20). By focusing on lay talk on multiculturalism, this study has aimed to contribute to this call for research.

## Discussion

Contrary to the multiculturalism ideology as typically defined in academic literature (e.g. Verkuyten, 2007) in our participants' talk on multiculturalism, the main emphasis was not on the importance of recognition and appreciation of diversity as such, but on how diversity should be managed and on whose terms. The central questions our participants addressed concerned the extent to which the majority should compromise its own position and the extent to which people should be treated as members of their groups or as individuals.

The four interpretative repertoires identified in this study form two pairs. The first two repertoires discuss multiculturalism by taking hierarchical relations between immigrants and hosts as a self-evident and acceptable starting point and normalizing the subordinate position of immigrants. The second two repertoires question and criticize multiculturalism as everyday practices or as an official policy that highlights the importance of ethnic and cultural group memberships, and enable the discriminatory and essentializing treatment of immigrants.

Each of the four repertoires can be used to oppose the main tenets of multiculturalism: respect and support for ethno-cultural differences. Furthermore, the repertoires of polite guests and securing the majority culture present immigrants and Finns in a hierarchical relation. From this viewpoint, these repertoires can also be seen to ignore equality, one of the cornerstones of multiculturalism (Berry & Ward, 2016).

These repertoires, thus, function to support the status quo, which is in line with Skey's (2010) findings concerning the ways in which the majority uses nationalist rhetoric to maintain a sense of ontological security. Also Verkuyten's (2004, see also Lyons et al., 2011) analysis on the arguments used for and against multiculturalism among Dutch majority members reveals that a threat to nation's unity was one of the most frequently used arguments to oppose multiculturalism and to support assimilation. While the studies of Skey (2010) and Verkuyten (2004) show the ways in which status quo was supported in the nationalist and anti-multiculturalism rhetoric of the majority, in our study also minority members mobilized this kind of argumentation in the form of the first two repertoires. When used by immigrants, these repertoires may be seen as gestures of solidarity towards the majority. They can, thus, provide tools for performing or demonstrating integration. However, from the point of view of equality, this may be seen as problematic, because it maintains the lower status of immigrants compared to hosts, resulting in integration on subordinated terms (Anthias, 2013).

Our analysis of the first two repertoires showed how power relations are being legitimated and reproduced through language practices. This is a typical focus in discursively oriented research on immigration (see e.g., Augoustinos & Every, 2007). The analysis of the last two repertoires, however, also shows how dominance can be deconstructed and fought against. By using the repertoires of stigmatizing multiculturalism and individualism, group categorizations were presented as producing inequality. The repertoire of stigmatizing multiculturalism, unlike other repertoires, was used to criticize the way the majority treats immigrant minorities in Finland. In this repertoire official practices and everyday encounters were presented as discriminatory and harmful for minorities, especially for the Somalis. As one Somali participant put it: 'Multiculturalism is not a good thing for a person who is regarded as multicultural.' This is a novel and somewhat surprising way of discussing multiculturalism. It also contrasts the arguments put forward by the proponents of multiculturalism (e.g., Parekh, 2002; Taylor, 1994) who argue that the recognition of ethnic or cultural difference and granting minorities rights based on their group identities ensures the equal treatment of individuals.

The repertoire of individualism was also used to oppose multiculturalist discourse, but instead of addressing issues related to intergroup relations, it enabled the participants to distance themselves from categories such as ‘immigrants’ or the ‘majority’, which were offered by the researchers in the prompts (see also Bourhis et al., 1997). Of the four interpretative repertoires presented here, the repertoire of individualism was the only one that enabled the participants to challenge these categories. This challenging was presented as a way to improve relations between the majority and immigrants while also proposing the treatment of people primarily as individuals as an ideal starting point for social interaction in general.

To our knowledge this is the first study that focuses on the ways in which multiculturalism is discussed among majority *and* minority groups. This allows us to address the concerns raised in previous studies (Plaut et al., 2011; Verkuyten, 2006) that views on multiculturalism are strongly divided between these groups. As a result of our methodological approach we cannot confirm or falsify previous findings obtained in cognitive, quantitative research tradition. However, our discursive analysis can still be used to question essentialist divisions between majority and minority viewpoints.

In our data there was no clear difference between the majority Finns and immigrants when it comes to the use of interpretative repertoires of multiculturalism, with the exception of the repertoire of stigmatizing multiculturalism, which was not used by the majority group at all. Between different immigrant groups, however, some interesting diverging patterns were found. Russian- and Estonian- speaking participants often used the repertoire of polite guests and the repertoire of securing the majority culture, both of which construct intergroup relations as hierarchical and maintain the dominant position of the majority. This allowed speakers to distance themselves from the more stigmatized immigrant groups, such as the Somalis, and to show solidarity towards or even take sides with the majority. The Somali-speaking participants, on the other hand, often used the repertoire of stigmatizing multiculturalism and the repertoire of individualism, which enabled them to criticize ethnic and cultural categorization and resist the label of “the multicultural group in Finland”, as one participant phrased it.

Our results, thus, show that the assumption of clear differences in evaluations of multiculturalism between the majority and minority groups can be questioned, as three out of four repertoires—i.e., repertoires of polite guests, securing the majority culture and individualism—were used by both majority and minority group members, implying that several different evaluations of multiculturalism may be constructed and employed by both majority and minority members in a given social situation.

Finally, it is time to reflect the limitations of this study. Firstly, the results cannot be generalized. This means that instead of postulating that our results represent *the* four ways in which people in general talk about multiculturalism, we have shown four *possible* ways to make sense of the issue (for further discussion, see e.g. Hosking & Hjort, 2004). Secondly, even though the moderators paid attention to producing informality in the focus groups, the research setting could be seen as an institutional interaction situation (Puchta & Potter, 2004), in which e.g. the roles of researchers and participants can guide the way the participants manage their talk.

These limitations, however, do not imply that our results tell nothing about the social reality outside this data. The participants drew on rhetorical and discursive resources that reach beyond a particular interaction situation (see Wetherell, 2003). Furthermore, the focus groups were very different in terms of size and composition; in some groups the participants knew each other and in others they had never met before. We regard this variability as a strength and, in line with Wetherell (ibid.), we consider this data as a rich sample of the variety of ways lay people can discuss multiculturalism and the resources available to them “for telling their patch of the world” (p. 13).

## Conclusions

The aim of multiculturalist integration policies is to support cultural diversity and to enable equal and harmonious relations between the majority and immigrants (e.g., [Berry & Ward, 2016](#)). However, in light of our results, multiculturalism as an ideology and related practices seems to present problems and threats not only for the majority but for also immigrants.

[Bloemraad and Wright \(2014, p. 321\)](#) argue that “pluralism policies and discourse are most successful where multiculturalism is cast as something relevant for all residents, minority and majority, and where it feeds into re-imaginings of national identity.” Based on the four repertoires identified, we suggest that, regardless of the multiculturalist policies Finland has adopted, an inclusive Finnish identity or a narrative of multicultural Finland seems to be missing in the lay discourse of multiculturalism. This could reflect a European tendency to perceive societies as ready-built socio-cultural entities with fixed ethnic boundaries rather than viewing them as constantly evolving through immigration, an approach more typical for “classic” immigration countries, such as Canada, USA and Australia ([Rodríguez-García, 2010](#)).

The results of our analysis do not suggest that multiculturalism *per se* has failed, but rather that the ways in which lay people discuss multiculturalism as a lived ideology ([Billig et al., 1988](#)) do not necessarily go together with the academic or policy discourse. Therefore, when planning official practices and policies it should be kept in mind that the term multiculturalism bears different meanings and that the very idea of respecting and supporting ethno-cultural diversity can be interpreted as stigmatizing and marginalizing for those people who are categorized as multicultural. These issues need to be addressed and discussed on a national level, being mindful of the various versions of multiculturalism, including those which oppose it as harmful for the minorities, while also looking for the possibility of an updated, more inclusive and shared notion of multiculturalism.

## Notes

- i) Resident facilities are spaces maintained by City of Helsinki social services. They are meant for the adult residents of the area and serve as public meeting points where events are organized, locals can use the internet, or have coffee and lunch. (<http://www.hel.fi/www/Helsinki/en/social-health/resident/residents/>)
- ii) In the Finnish language there is one third-person pronoun, which is gender neutral. For the sake of readability we use the pronoun “she”.
- iii) Ingrian Finn is the name used to describe a group of people living in Russia who have Finnish roots. Members of this group were able to migrate to Finland with special status of “returning migrants”. See [Varjonen, Arnold and Jasinskaja-Lahti \(2013\)](#) for further discussion on the background and identity negotiations of Ingrian Finnish migrants to Finland.
- iv) A traditional Finnish instrument.

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The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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## Appendix: Transcription Notation

(( )) Insertions made by researchers

() Unclear word

– word interrupted or not completed

[] Overlapping speech