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Author(s): Bontenbal, Ilona

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The good, the bad and the advantageous: Migrants' attitudes towards other migrants

Ilona Bontenbal *

University of Jyväskylä, Seminaarinkatu 15, 40014 Jyväskylä, Finland

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing number of various ethnic groups in Finland. The attitudes and categorizations that host country nationals have and make regarding migrants is frequently researched. The attitudes that migrants have towards other migrants has, however, been much less researched. This paper provides an in-depth analysis that considers what factors are behind the attitudes that migrants form of other migrants and how these impact categorizations and hierarchies. The empirical research material of this study is based on 77 qualitative interviews with migrants living in Finland, carried out in 2018–2019. In the analysis, various theories of minority relations are applied.

The research finds that migrants evaluate other migrants according to their perceived advantageousness and, based on these evaluations, they form hierarchies, which are to some extent ethnic. Perceived advantageousness is based on being integrated (especially in economic terms), hard-working, non-threatening, pliable, similar to Finns (or an ideal of perceived Finnishness), "white", and not being dependent on welfare benefits. As a fear of being lumped together and then discriminated against, migrants emphasise their distinctiveness from other migrant groups in a subjugating manner. Certain characteristics tend to be ascribed to certain backgrounds and ethnicities and, thus, migrant groups become categorized according to their positions in a hierarchy. Not being advantageous is attributed to personal shortcomings and even 'racial' attributes. A shared commonness of the majority population is presumed and functions as the underlying assumption which guides the idea of how and what people should be like in order to fit in.

Introduction

This article explores the attitudes that migrants in Finland have towards other migrants. There is a growing number of various ethnic groups in European societies, also in Finland. The total number of migrants has grown and so has the variety of backgrounds. This is one reason why it is necessary to consider the understanding that migrants have of another. In plural societies, intergroup relations are no longer determined by the quality of only majority-minority relation but also by the quality of interactions between minority groups (Brylka et al., 2016). Minorities have different stereotypes and preconceptions towards each other, and there is also racism between ethnic groups in Finland that may lead to ethnic conflicts (Pauha & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2017). Prejudice is manifested as belittling, underestimating and mental and physical violence against another ethnic group (Kyllönen, 2016).

The attitudes and categorizations that host country nationals have and make regarding migrants is frequently researched, also in

* Correspondence to: Jyväskylän yliopisto, PL 35, FI-40014, Finland.
E-mail address: ilona.bontenbal@jyu.fi.

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Finland (see Jaakkola, 2000; Nshom, 2017). Studies focusing mostly on quantitative methods have found that some migrant groups are categorized more favourably than others and thus ethnic hierarchies tend to be formed (De Coninck, 2020; Hagendoorn, 1995; Hagendoorn, Drogendijk, Tumanov & Hraba, 1998). Understanding what kind of attitudes and hierarchies are formed and what ideas they are based on is important since these hierarchies have been found to strongly relate to opportunities in entering the labour market (Ahmad, 2020) or finding places to life (Öblom & Antfolk, 2017).

This research focuses on how migrants hierarchically perceive other migrants living in Finland. Although the interest in this topic has been growing (Kingumets & Sippola, 2022; Alho & Sippola, 2019; Brulka et al., 2017), migrants' attitudes towards other migrants has not been researched extensively yet, especially not from a qualitative perspective. More research on the topic is needed in different contexts. Besides knowing what the attitudes of the majority population are towards minorities, it is also important to know what minorities think of each other. Increased knowledge of the topic may, for example, prevent discrimination and confrontations between different groups. Instead of finding out the rank of ethnicities, this research provides an in-depth analysis that considers what factors are behind the attitudes that migrants form of other migrants and how these impact categorizations and hierarchies. In Finland, migrants´attitudes have previously been studied mainly among Estonian migrants, whereas in this study the focus is on migrants from outside the European Union.

This paper aims to investigate (1) how migrants themselves regard other migrants from their own country of origin and from other countries of origin and **(2)** whether hierarchical categorizations of migrants into different groups are made and what these are based on. In the analysis, the concept of "advantageousness", amounting from the thematic analysis, is deployed to make sense of the attitudes that migrants have and the hierarchies that are created. In line with Krivonos (2018), the aim of the paper is not to depict migrants a racist but to analyse the way that the participants comprehend and form ideas about other migrants and how they, in doing so, defend themselves against their own racial stigma.

Attitudes towards migrants and the forming of ethnic hierarchies

Multi-ethnic societies tend to form hierarchies of their ethnic groups (Hagendoorn, 1995; Hagendoorn et al., 1998). Once people are divided as belonging to a certain ethnic group, these groups are then commonly categorized into a hierarchy of which there is some kind of a social consensus. Not all groups enjoy the same societal respect and status which is why an ethnic and social hierarchy is formed (Gesthuizen et al., 2021; Pauha & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2017). People from the same ethnic or national group tend to agree on their preference of ethnic out-groups (Hagendoorn, 1995).

According to data from the European Social Survey, there is a clear hierarchy of preferred type of migrants in the European context. The most preferred people are from within Europe and the same race or ethnic group as the majority. (De Coninck, 2020.) Also, the attitudes of members of Finnish society towards migrants and the forming of ethnic hierarchies of the various ethnic groups living in Finland has been researched actively (see e.g., Avonius & Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2018; Koskela, 2014).

In Finland, migrants from North European countries, North Americans and Germans are more preferred migrants than, for example, migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, or Somalia (Taloustutkimus, 2015). Similar findings are confirmed in job application situations, in which people who are considered to represent white Finns and English speakers are much preferred as job applicants than people considered Iraqi or Somali. Those considered Russian, on the other hand, are found somewhere in the middle. (Ahmad, 2019.) Especially students, academically educated, over 65-year-olds, and those that consider the EU positively are more in favour of migration to Finland (Haavisto, 2019). So called "useful migrants", such as experts, students, and entrepreneurs, are seen more positively than those migrants who have come to Finland on humanitarian grounds (Jaakkola, 2000).

The preference for some migrants over others is often anchored according to a wider perspective, such as deservingness (de Coninck & Matthijs, 2020; Blachnicka-Ciacek, Trąbka, Budginaite-Mackine, Parutis & Pustulka, 2021), voluntariness (Verkuyten et al., 2018) or perceived threat (Landmann et al., 2019). For example, some migrants are more preferred because they are considered more deserving than others, which is often also related to welfare benefit reception (Van Oorschot, 2006). In Finland, Estonians have been found to distinguish themselves from 'others' who are in their opinion 'non-deserving' migrants who 'do not contribute' to the Finnish welfare state (Alho & Sippola, 2019). In terms of voluntariness, Dempster & Hargrave (2017) have found that people tend to be more favourably disposed towards those recognized as refugees than they are towards asylum seekers, whose claim has not been investigated or formalized yet. These wider perspectives are commonly used in the research field to make sense of people's attitudes towards migrants and they will also be considered in the analysis of this study. An additional perspective of "advantageousness" will be put forward in this paper. The rationale for this will be elaborated in the analysis section.

Hierarchies among migrants

There are several theories and hypotheses that are frequently used within the research field that set out to explain relations between ethnic groups. These theories, which will shortly be introduced in this chapter, and several others not introduced here as extensively but important and often referred to in the field of social psychology and prejudice (e.g., contact theory, integrated threat theory and the threat-benefit model) will be used to interpret the analysis.

The formulation of categorizations and hierarchies among migrants needs to be considered from a somewhat different perspective than the formulation of hierarchies among the majority population. The hierarchies formed by migrants need to be understood, for example, in terms of the various strategies immigrants may use in response to ethnic discrimination. According to Krivonos (2018), migrants resist imposed categorisations and carve out space for respectability and worth through subjugating other vulnerable groups. The need to dissociate themselves from other ethnic groups may lead to minority groups deriving at a similar ethnic hierarchy as used

by the majority group to justify their position within the ethnic hierarchy (Hagendoorn, 1995). For example, the subordinate position of Estonians in Finland is an incentive for Estonian migrants to present themselves in a positive light, above other migrants (Alho & Sippola, 2019).

Koskela (2014) finds that, in Finland, migrants have a relatively clear understanding of who are considered "wanted" migrants versus "unwanted" migrants. According to an influential work in prejudice studies by Allport (1954), the minority can be expected to adopt the opinions and thus prejudices of the majority, since the majority functions as the reference group for the minority. Similar findings have also been made in more recent studies: Minority groups that are seeking acceptance from the majority group are found to assume societal stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes from the majority (Hindriks et al., 2014). Furthermore, the attitudes that minorities have towards each other often reflect the general ethnic rank order that prevails in society (Pauha & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2017), and the rank order in which the out-groups are preferred or rejected remains largely the same. The ethnic groups that are at the bottom of the hierarchy are rejected both by the majority group and by other minority groups (Hagendoorn, 1995).

Also, the degree of similarity is found to govern relations and attitudes between ethnic groups. The Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), is based on the idea that the individual's self-worth and identity stem from the groups to which they identify themselves to belong to. Being different from other groups justifies the group's existence and determines its relations with other groups (Jetten et al., 2004). This leads to group members trying to differentiate their group from other groups and thus making estimates about their own group by comparing it to other groups. People tend to assign positive characteristics to members of the in-group they belong to and negative characteristics to members of out-groups that they do not belong to (Hagendoorn, 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Discriminatory behaviour is often motivated primarily by a desire to promote one's own in-group rather than by direct hostility towards out-group members (Allport, 1954).

If groups are very different from each other, they can find it difficult to see each other positively, according to the reflective distinctiveness hypothesis (Jetten et al., 2004). On the other hand, more similar groups are evaluated more positively (Hindriks et al., 2014) because their values and beliefs are more familiar (Pauha & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2017). There is, however, also a contrary hypothesis, the reactive distinctiveness hypothesis, which is grounded in the idea that groups strive to differentiate from other groups. According to this hypothesis, a threat to the in-group identity is posed when the distinctiveness between groups is low and groups are thus too similar to one another. As a reaction to similarity, there is a tendency to try to restore distinctiveness. (Jetten et al., 2004.) This may lead to horizontal hostility, which is a form of prejudice that arises when members of a minority group perceive a threat to their minority identity from members of a similar, more mainstream out-group (White & Langer, 1999). More similar groups may thus form a threat for the separateness of the groups (Pauha & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2017), which may lead to groups trying to dissociate themselves from each other. Minority groups identify as separate because of the potential that outsiders would otherwise lump different groups together, which would threaten the groups' distinctiveness. If a group becomes less distinctive and anyone can be considered a member, belonging to the group may lose value. (White & Langer, 1999.).

Migrants and ethnic groups in Finland

Of people living in Finland, about 7% have been born abroad. The bulk of these people have a foreign background, meaning that neither of their parents are originally from Finland. The largest groups, by country of origin, are individuals from the former Soviet Union, Estonia, Sweden, Russia, China, and Somalia. (Statistics Finland, 2022.) In 2022, Ukrainians have become the largest group of new arrivals, but at the time of data collection their presence was not as significant. Although the percentage of migrants is still somewhat small compared to most other OECD countries, the number of migration has grown especially since the 1990 s, which had to do especially with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the accession of Finland to the European Union in 1995 and the arrival of asylum seekers from Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Chile, Iran, and Somalia. Before this, Finland did not attract many migrants. Even during recent history, more people have tended to leave Finland than to go there, which means that there are no large-scale historic patterns or roots of ethnic and religious diversity in Finland. Russians and Swedes have been the most significant migrant groups throughout history, although more people from Finland have moved to Sweden than the other way around. Estonians, who come to Finland mainly for work, have also become a very significant migrant group in Finland, especially after Estonia's 2004 accession to the European Union (Sippola and Kall, 2016). Most migrants in Finland are settled in the Southern Finland in the capital area, but Russian migrants are also prominent in the Eastern border area. Most migrants came to Finland for family reasons, to work, or to study (Migri Statistics, 2022). Seeking international protection does not constitute one of the most common reasons for migration to Finland (in most years). However, the arrival of asylum seekers has publicly been much discussed in recent years (especially after the "reception crisis" since 2015 and now after the war in Ukraine). This should be kept in mind when considering the findings. During the time of the study, most asylum seekers to Finland were coming from Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria, and Russia.

Method

The empirical research material of this study is based on 77 interviews with migrants living in the larger cities in Finland in 2017–2019 Finland. A part of the interviews was collected during the Horizon2020 funded "name of project" research project (Reference: number of reference). The interviewees consist of first-generation migrants that have migrated to Finland from a wide range of non-EU countries (Russia, China, Iraq, Somalia, Iran, Syria, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Nepal, Pakistan, Colombia, and Ukraine), the largest groups being interviewees from Russia (35), Iraq (10), Somalia (8), and China (6). The interviewees were found through NGOs, email lists, language classes and snow balling technique. 40 of the interviewees had arrived before the sudden increase in asylum applications in 2015, whereas 37 had arrived after or during this time, most as asylum seekers.

The interviews were carried out face-to-face and lasted 45–100 min. The interviews were conducted mainly in Finnish or English, or in the preferred language of the country of origin with the use of research assistants and interpreters. The interviews were semi-structured, and the interviewees were asked questions on what they think about migration in terms of their own life, their country of origin and their country of settlement. The interviewees were also asked questions on their thoughts of other migrants, and requested to reflect on their own integration, on the integration of migrants from the same background (their in-group) and that of other migrant groups. The analysis of this article will focus on attitudes towards other migrants living in the country of settlement.

The use of different labels and categories to describe individuals who are moving transnationally has become politicised in the European context, especially after the increase of asylum applications since 2014 (de Coninck, 2020; Sajjad, 2018). The concepts of 'refugee' and 'migrant' have been used to legitimize the reasons for moving and claims to international protection, and as such to justify policies of exclusion and containment (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). During the interviews, the participants were asked about their perception of other 'migrants' and the arrival of 'asylum seekers'. What was meant by "migrant" was not strictly pre-defined. Instead, the interviewees were allowed to define what they mean by it themselves. Mostly it seems to have been understood as an umbrella category under which people who have come to Finland for different reasons, such as for work, studies, family, or international protection, are further categorized.

Before conducting the interviews, the individuals were presented information about the research, both orally and in written form, and asked to sign a consent form. The quotations that are used in the article are verbatim except for identifying names and places being removed and minor grammar mistakes fixed to make them more readable. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded using qualitative analysis software.

The analytic strategy was to first use open ended coding and thus nominate the transcribed interview records with initial codes. Then the codes were categorized to produce overarching themes. Based on these categories, a first version of analysis was produced, focusing on the different factors which determine whether migrants are considered positively or not. The first version of analysis was then re-coded by using pre-defined codes that responded to the various theories used in the field to make sense of intercultural relations. Based on the re-coding the second version of analysis was produced.

As a qualitative research, the article focuses on individual migrants' perceptions of each other without discussing whether these represent the perception of the migrant group (in terms of country of origin or ethnicity). This would require a different kind of data collection.

Understanding migrants' attitudes towards other migrants

As noted in the literature section, often wider categories such as deservingness or voluntariness are used to make sense of how people form their attitudes of migrants and categorize them hierarchically. Based on the thematic coding in the process of analysis, this research finds that in this context the key to understanding migrants' attitudes towards other migrants lies in perceptions of presumed advantageousness (or not). Migrants evaluate other migrants on the basis of their perceived advantageousness. Based on the evaluations, hierarchies are formed, which are to some extent also ethnic. How advantageousness is used as a perspective by migrants is discussed in the following subchapters.

Advantageousness is based on willingness and capability to integrate (into the labour market)

The analysis indicates that a perceived level of integration into Finnish society, and especially labour market, is used as one of the primary factors in evaluating other migrants and categorizing them into a hierarchy. To understand migrants' attitudes towards other migrants, we must understand the expectations and preferences regarding what immigrants should do when they come to Finland.

According to the interviewees, some migrants are more integrated or more likely to integrate, and thus advantageous and preferred, than others who are considered not to be integrated or able to integrate into society. This is in line with findings from Sippola et al. (2022), according to which migrants in Finland often distinguish between the "good" minority members who have learned local habits and language properly and the "lazy" ones who have not bothered to do so. Motivation and perceived willingness to adapt are considered central. An interviewee from Iraq (M., 24 y.), who has been in Finland since 2015, described why migrants from his in-group are "*good migrants*" since "*When they came to Finland or to all Europe, immediately they go to society, because they want to integrate so fast - -*".

The idea behind the hierarchy is that "when in Rome, do as the Romans do", in other words, the migrants consider that they themselves, as well as other migrants, should conform to the mainstream and assimilate to their host society, instead of bringing their own culture and ideas to Finland (see similar findings by Alho & Sippola, 2019; and Kingumets & Sippola, 2022), since they are the ones who are newcomers. This is an interesting finding since previous studies have identified that minority members often favour integration instead of assimilation (Berry, 1997; Nshom & Croucher, 2017; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). Among the interviewees, and emphasised especially by the Russian interviewees (in line with Varjonen, Nortio, Mähönen & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2018), the preference is on becoming similar to the local population whilst simultaneously maintaining only some elements of one's own culture in a way that does not impose on the perceived majority culture. This is a somewhat different finding to Varjonen et al. (2018) who found that most Vietnamese refugees and most Somalian migrants in Finland were not willing to abandon their own culture and to assimilate.

What further becomes apparent from the interviews is that the migrants' idea of advantageousness is constructed primarily in terms of being active, which often means being employed. The migrants strongly relate integration to employment, reflecting Finland's overall integration policy framework, which is highly focused on getting migrants into the labour market. Employed migrants are considered integrated and advantageous to Finland, whereas unemployed migrants are considered a burden. This echoes previous

findings, according to which the public prefers those refugees and migrants who they judge to be economically beneficial to their country (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017; Mäkinen, 2017). The economic advantageousness attached to certain people is also racialized since some ethnic groups are considered more likely employed and 'active' than others.

Instead of focusing on structural inequalities or discrimination, the interviewees mainly consider that not being employed is attributed to personal shortcomings and even 'racial' attributes (in line with findings from Alho & Sippola, 2019). According to previous findings, migrants in Finland, especially those who speak Russian, Estonian, Arabic, or Somali, consider that it is mostly up to yourself how well you succeed in life (Pitkänen et al., 2019). Emphasising that one's own in-group is especially hard-working, compared to other migrant groups, is stressed by several interviewees. Those who come to Finland for economic reasons are also considered more hard-working than those who come for other reasons, such as asylum seeking. An interviewee from China (F., 31 y.), who has been in Finland since 2009, noted that according to her "*it was better before, when only hard-working migrants came and those really wanted a better life for themselves*" (China 3.b.12). Through assigning the perceived asylum seekers the place of cultural lack or work ethic, a space is created for claiming one's own strong work ethic and consequently for belonging and entitlement (Krivonos, 2018). The discourse according to which things were "better before" is also noted by Kingumets & Sippola (2022) who find that migrants tend to position themselves as "experts" who have experienced the worsening societal situation themselves, which they contribute to society becoming less white.

The economic advantage that certain migrants can bring to Finland is mainly brought up in line with two different frames: the first is that employed migrants can bring advantage simply by being part of the labour market and performing a (low skilled) job that Finns do not prefer to do. An interviewee from Russia (M., 29 y., since 2018), noted: "- - *that for the economy it is a good thing* (= that there are migrants), *because everyone needs floors to be cleaned haha, and that stuff.*" On the other hand, some of the interviewees emphasise that it is especially skilled migrants who are most advantageous to Finland, and thus the most preferred type of migrants (see Koskela, 2014). In such an evaluation, the ethnicity is not the main factor and the interviewees bring up that skilled migrants can come from any ethnicity, although the general idea seems to be that they mainly come through economic migration and not as asylum seekers.

Simultaneously, those migrants who are considered to be dependent on state welfare services are less preferred since they are considered less advantageous. The interviews illustrate that migrants have adopted discourses that have also been visible in public discourse in Finland, according to which migrants, especially asylum seekers, are a heavy burden on the welfare state (see similar findings Krivonos, 2018). Especially in Northwestern European countries with strong welfare systems, which assure that migrants receive shelter, education, health benefits etc., and thereby access social welfare funds, the perception of negative economic costs related to migration has been present (De Coninck, 2020). In line with this, some individuals are considered to be "takers" whereas others are "givers" (Lawlor and Tolley, 2017), and thus others are considered to be more deserving of existing welfare services and benefits than others, such as migrants (Van Oorschot, 2006). The interviewees strive to distinguish themselves from 'others' who are in their opinion 'non-deserving' migrants who 'do not contribute' to the Finnish welfare state (in line with Alho & Sippola, 2019), as not to become classified as 'welfare abusers' (see Krivonos, 2018). An interviewee from Russia (F., 24 y., since 2014) noted that migrants should not all be categorized together since there are those who "*came really to work and to live honestly - - paying taxes, - - and are trying to make their life better*" and those who are "*living their whole lives on this unemployment money*".

Advantageousness is similarity (because it makes integration easier)

Besides categorizing migrants based on their perceived integration, also cultural proximity is considered important, as suggested by the social identity theory. According to Hagendoorn (1995), individuals who are perceived as most culturally distant are ranked lower on the ethnic hierarchy and more discriminated against. The similar groups can be seen in a more positive light because their values and beliefs are more familiar (Pauha & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2017). The likeliness of successful integration and thus being advantageous to Finland is, according to the interviewees, largely based on similarity: those migrants who come from cultures that are nearby or otherwise considered more similar to Finnish culture, are assumed to integrate more easily and thus preferred. This idea is widely shared among the interviewees and brought up both by those who themselves come from cultures that are perceived very different as well as those who are considered to come from more similar backgrounds. Similar findings have been made by Jakobson, Järvinen-Alenius, Pitkänen, Ruutsoo, Keski-Hirvelä, and Kalev (2012) and Kingumets & Sippola (2022) who find that Estonian respondents living in Finland emphasised that they are well adapted to Finnish society in comparison with the other migrants who were considered to be in conflict with Finnish traditions. In relation to similarity, especially culture and religion are emphasised. For example, having similar religion or no religion at all is preferred by many compared to having a religion that is considered too different.

Many interviewees noted that integration is much easier for migrants from neighbouring countries than it is for migrants from outside Europe, which then influences migrant preferences. An Interviewee from China (F., 26 y., since 2014) discussed this, in relation to the integration of her own in-group (Chinese migrants). According to the interviewee, the integration of her in-group compares favourably with some other groups like migrants from Africa and Middle East but not with migrants from neighbouring countries. The similarity of Russian and Estonian migrants to the Finnish majority is emphasised by several interviewees, and not only by the Russian interviewees themselves, whereas Swedes or other Nordic migrants are interestingly not brought up at all. Because similarity in culture is presumed to make integration easier, migrants from neighbouring countries are thus seen as the preferred migrants.

A shared commonness of the majority population or a kind of monoculture is presumed and functions as the underlying assumption, which guides the idea of how and what people should be like to fit in. The basis of the hierarchy thus lies in an imagined community (in terms of Anderson, 1983), which is considered to have a unified culture and identity, in line with nationalistic ideologies. The idea of this presumed collective and what it is like, is what guides the hierarchies that migrants form: those who are considered to fit the

presumed characteristics of the collective are ranked higher than those who are not.

This leads to some migrants being found to come from backgrounds or cultures that are too different from the perceived Finnish culture. Some migrant groups are considered to embody complete otherness and thus least preferred. The findings thus give support to the reflective distinctiveness hypothesis, according to which large differences can stand in the way of groups having positive intergroup relations. An interviewee (F., 27 y.) from Russia, who has been in Finland since 2012, noted: "- - *those Muslim men that have come here in recent years when we had the asylum seekers and refugees, that their culture is so far away from Finnish culture and that the difference is so vast that ouch ouch. The things that have started to happen, murder and other things.*" In this example, the interviewee uses downward intergroup comparisons (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) to achieve a positive evaluation of Russian migrants, i.e., the in-group. Several interviewees emphasise that especially for "*Arabs*", "*people from the Middle-East*" and "*Muslims*" integration is more difficult since they are perceived to come from societies and cultures that are too different from the Finnish one.

The ideas of who is considered integratable and who not seems also to be connected to ideas of "whiteness". Those who are considered less white are also considered to fit the Finnish society less and thus integrate less. On similar lines, Fox (2013) found that in the UK, Hungarians and Romanians assign other minorities the status of "less white", Kingumets and Sippola (2022) found that Estonians underline their own whiteness compared to others, and Ryan (2010) has found that Polish migrants in the UK use whiteness to distinguish themselves from other migrants. Non-white migrants are perceived more likely to lack the needed skills, ability, ethics and/or motivation to contribute productively, through their work, to society. As noted by Krivonos (2018), whiteness is not a factual or ontological category, instead it is socially constructed.

Whiteness is also related to discrimination. The interviewees perceive that people who look more similar are less likely to be discriminated against. This also illustrates that an ethnic hierarchy within society is recognized and thus there is the awareness of potential discrimination and racism if lumped together with a less favourable group. An interviewee from China (F., 29 y.), who has been in Finland since 2014, noted that it is easier for white people to integrate since "*naturally Finnish people trust Finnish people or white people that look like Finnish people*".

Advantageousness is not changing things too much

Both the idea of whiteness and that of cultural proximity are grounded in the idea that Finland should remain unchanged. An interviewee (M., 29 y.), who has come to Finland in 2018 from Russia, noted: "*It is a nice small society and then if there are more migrants here, I mean not Russians because Russian they could integrate, but if Asian and Africans, they look… They can break this you know picture of like happy Finland people.*" Migrants are portrayed as decreasing the homogeneity and peacefulness of society, which also the interviewed migrants consider that they themselves are enjoying. This is why further migration should not be permitted. This preference to keep things as they are signals that many of the interviewees already identify themselves as part of the in-group population living in Finland (in line with Pitkänen et al., 2019) in contrast to newly arriving migrants who are considered the out-group. In the Finnish context, it has been found that the stronger Russian migrants identify themselves with the native population, the less they support activities aiming at enhancing migrants' social status (Pauha & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2017).

Migrants who are considered more similar to the majority are preferred also because they are considered less likely to cause conflict. According to integrated threat theory (ITT), in-group members are likely to have negative attitudes towards out-group members, such as immigrants, and negatively prejudice them if they perceive them as a threat (Nshom, Khalimzoda, Sadaf & Shaymardanov, 2022). Since newcomers tend to be represented in negative and stereotypical ways in the news media and often get linked to criminal activities (Jacobs et al., 2016), this has also affected the opinions of other migrants. One interviewee (F., 29 y., since 2014) from China noted: "*Let's say the people coming from Asia may be just fine - -. But for example people coming from some area of the world with religious backgrounds, and the language, and the belief system is very different and contradictory to this Finnish society, then adopting a multiculturalism policy and also approach to integrating migrants is very vital for Finland's future because if it failed it can lead to very bad consequences, like we are seeing in France and Belgium.*" The narrative of this quotation invokes the idea of migrants as both a realistic threat and a symbolic threat. The realistic threat refers to the physical and material well-being being threatened (Nshom et al., 2022), whereas the symbolic threat refers to the threat to "the way of life" posed by immigrants having different values, culture and morals (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). This quotation also relates to Muslim migrants being prejudiced as more dangerous due the tendency to associate Muslims with violence, terrorism (Nshom et al., 2022), cultural clashes and the destruction of "Western civilization" (Kingumets & Sippola, 2022) which also influences the overall attitude towards recently arrived asylum seekers, a large majority of whom are Muslim.

According to a previous study, whether migration, among migrants in Finland, is seen as positive or negative varies greatly according to the country of origin. Whereas up to 77% of Estonian migrants do not consider it positively, 71% of Somalians consider it very positively. (Pitkänen et al., 2019.) Interestingly, most interviewees for this research had critical remarks about migration and especially further migration to Finland, in line with findings from Koskela (2014). One interviewee, who is from Iraq and has been in Finland since 2011, noted: "*It is safe here since there are not many people. It is good for us. It is better that there are only few Iraqis.*" A fear among the interviewees can be detected of Finnish society becoming ruined by outsider influences, which would also negatively affect the interviewees' lives. One interviewee (F., 31 y., from China), who has been in Finland since 2009, noted: "*If migrants are asylum seekers, who will mess up the whole country, it is not sensible to let them in, especially if you consider the horrible things that have happened, for example in Turku. There is no use in messing up the peace of the own people of this country.*"

The arrival of other migrants, especially new migrants, is considered critically also because of the potential influence this might have on the migrants already living in the country. Some note that there might be more competition which might lead to their own situation getting worse (similarly as found by Krivonos, 2018). According to conflict theory, discrimination and xenophobia increase

when different groups come in contact with each other, when the relative size of the minority grows and when the majority and the minority have to compete for the same resources (Liebkind, 2000). The sense of competition relates especially to migrants feeling that not all migrant groups are treated equally, which causes feelings of injustice. One interviewee from Iraq (M., 28 y., since 2015) noted that people from his country are not given the same opportunity to integrate as Russian or Estonian migrants. A sense of injustice also relates to the way that migration and integration policies are structured. Some interviewees consider it unfair how asylum seekers are treated, compared to how other migrants are treated. An Interviewee from China (F., 31 y., since 2009) reported: "*One thing that offends us* (= Chinese migrants) *is that it is quite difficult for migrant workers to get visas, but refugees get it really easily, and that is offensive. The others do not do anything and can just stay here and lay around and get money*." The way that the integration services in Finland are structured does thus seem to put migrants against each other and influence intercultural relations negatively. Unlike in most other European countries, in Finland a wide variety of 'official' integration services, offered by municipalities and employment offices, are available for *unemployed* migrants (both EU citizens and third country nationals), not just refugees. In determining the availability of services, the main distinction is made between those who are employed and those who are not (instead of for example reason for migration), which also seems to reflect to the categorization made by migrants regarding other migrants. An interviewee from China (F., 29 y.) noted that "*the resources distributed for helping the integration of migrants is very uneven. Because it is mainly targeted towards refugees and family migrants who are maybe unemployed*". Although the integration services are not only targeted at refugees (they are not available for asylum seekers), they are often especially important for them, since finding employment is often difficult in the beginning.

Asylum seekers are not considered advantageous

Many interviewees did steer the discussion towards asylum seekers arriving to Finland and their attitudes towards these people. Some of the interviewees talk about "mass migration" and "an uncontrolled flood of migrants". Some interviewees, especially those with a refugee background, expressed sympathy towards arriving asylum seekers and especially those whose asylum applications are not accepted. However, although the perceived involuntariness of migration does seem to elicit feelings of empathy among the interviewees (in line with Verkuyten et al., 2018), this does not automatically translate into the support of accepting new asylum seekers to Finland. Some interviewees note that more migration, especially more asylum seekers, has led to more negative reactions among native Finns towards migration and migrants in general, which can also negatively affect the lives of those migrants who have been in the country for a longer time. An interviewee (F., 24 y.) from Russia, who has been in Finland since 2013, noted: "*But these migrants which are bad migrants, let's say I will use this word. I think that they are useless and actually harmful for Finland, and they are harmful for Russians. Because of these kinds of people, people think bad about me*". Some of the interviewees fear that they will get lumped together with arriving less advantageous and less settled migrants and thus try to distance themselves from them (Ryan, 2010). In line with social identity theory, being different from other groups justifies the group's existence and determines its relations with other groups. Thus, although on the other hand the feeling of being discriminated may unite different minority groups, it may also cause rivalry between groups. In line with the reactive distinctiveness hypothesis, migrants emphasise the differences between their migrant group and that of others, as not to get lumped together in a negative way by the majority. Because of this, those migrants that have already been living in the country for a longer time are preferred to newcomers, who are understood mainly to be asylum seekers and refugees.

There seem to be two main reasons why asylum seekers are not preferred. The first reason relates to asylum seekers not being considered economically advantageous to Finnish society, since they are more likely to be unemployed. Due to the focus on economic advantageousness, it seems that migrants who have migrated to Finland for work-related reasons are the preferred migrants, in contrast to for example asylum seekers (cf. Wyszynski et al., 2020). Ethnic stigma also partly explains this, since people coming from certain countries are considered not to be as hard-working. The second reason relates to a mistrust in asylum seekers and their reasons for coming to Finland. Some interviewees note that a difference needs to be made between 'real asylum seekers' who are deserving of help and 'fake asylum seekers', who are considered just to come to Finland for a better living standard. This mistrust possibly relates to the stark increase in asylum applications in 2015 and the backflash that followed in political and public discourse. This mistrust can be noted especially among those interviewees who themselves have not come to Finland as asylum seekers. The preference for other migrants than asylum seekers and refugees is an interesting finding, since previous studies have found that people (not specified as other migrants) generally hold more positive attitudes towards 'refugees' than towards 'immigrants' (de Coninck, 2020), at least in Western European countries (cf. Findor, Hruška, Jankovská & Pobudováb, 2021 in Eastern European countries). In line with previous studies, those asylum seekers who have higher employability, have more consistent asylum testimonies and severe vulnerabilities, and are Christian rather than Muslim received the greatest public support (Bansak et al., 2016).

Discussion and conclusions

The research adds to the understanding of intergroup relations, from the perspective of migrants' perception of migration and other migrants. Based on the findings, it should not be taken as self-evident that migrant minorities feel an automatic sense of solidarity towards other migrant groups or towards migration in general. The interviewed migrants were rather critical about further migration to the country of settlement (see also Koskela, 2014). Thus, although migration can lead to more migration through migration pathways/systems, social remittances on the migration process, and migrants acting as pioneers (Bakewell et al., 2012), the research provides confirmation to the phenomenon according to which migrants seek to close the door behind them. Especially Finland becoming less homogeneous and less "white" seems to worry the interviewed migrants.

The research also confirms that migrants form ethnic hierarchies of other migrants, which is done in relation to ethnic hierarchies

formed by the majority (in line with Allport, 1954; Hindriks et al., 2014; Pauha & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2017). The data does not, however, inform how much perspectives carried over from the country of origin influence the formed attitudes. The identity of migrants as "the good migrants" is formed in relation to differentiation from other migrants. Differentiation is found important especially because of a fear of being lumped together. The ethnic hierarchy within society is recognized and thus there is the awareness of potential discrimination and racism if lumped together with a less favourable group. This is in line with findings from Krivonos (2018) and Alho & Sippola (2019), who find that the subordinate position of migrants is what leads them to a present themselves in a subjugating manner, above other migrants. However, it would be too simplistic to state that migrants form hierarchies of other migrants only or primarily based on their ethnicity. Setting the research apart from other studies that have investigated hierarchies, for example from the perspective of deservingness (de Coninck & Matthijs, 2020; Blachnicka-Ciacek et al., 2021) or voluntariness (Verkuyten et al., 2018), in this study the analysis draws upon the concept of advantageousness. This is done based on theoretical and practical implications: While the concept of deservingness implies that the deserving citizen can receive something from the state, the notion of advantageousness signals that citizens owe something to the state, in line with the neoliberalist citizen regime (Mäkinen 2017). As such these concepts reflect diverging attitudes towards the welfare state. According to the interviewees, advantageousness is based on migrants being integrated, especially in economic terms, hard-working, non-threatening, amiable/pliable, similar to Finns (or an ideal of perceived Finnishness) and not dependent on welfare benefits.

It is especially the ideal of fitting in which is at the basis of the categorization. Those who are perceived too different are considered not to be able to fit in and thus not advantageous, and these people are often considered to be non-white. People from certain backgrounds or ethnicities are considered less likely to conform in a harmonized way which is why they are viewed as too different. The attitudes towards other migrants are also influenced by a perception of competition and fear of being lumped together, which is why groups strive to differentiate from other migrant groups. Migrants do consider other migrants, especially asylum seekers, as a potential symbolic and realistic threat, in line with the integrated threat theory (see Nshom et al., 2022).

In the Finnish context, besides the role of existing welfare, also the way that integration services are structured needs to be acknowledged. Since integration services put much emphasis on labour market integration and categorize people based on their labour market position (Author A, 2022), it is understandable that migrants adopt similar attitudes. The way that migrants perceive that they are viewed by the majority and especially by migration and integration policy influences how they perceive and understand other migrants. Measuring economic integration is something that most migrants in Finland are familiar with and that they can understand, which also makes it easy to categorize others through this perspective. This enables migrants to make sense of their position in society.

The attitudes on advantageousness are very similar among migrants from different backgrounds and in different positions in society. For example, both employed migrants and unemployed migrants emphasised the role of labour market integration. Moreover, both migrants from neighbouring countries and from countries further away emphasised that cultural similarity and proximity are preferable. The largest differences could be noted among migrants who had arrived as asylum seekers and those who had arrived for other reasons: those with an asylum seeking background tended to have less negative perceptions of other asylum seekers and refugees.

Migrants' attitudes towards other migrants seem to be largely based on their own generalizations and migrants use racializing discourses. However, many of the interviewees also emphasise the individual differences between people and note that people should not be lumped together. Being aware that generalizations are often not useful, nor do they depict reality, does not seem to reflect into practice. Generalizations can be detected from the interviewees' discourse, even though they are simultaneously disapproved of.

Although the research does provide a new viewpoint to the phenomenon, there are also several limitations to the study and several topics are identified for future studies. For example, the research does not explore more deeply how migrants have acquired their attitudes. Also, the role of attitudes carried over from country of origin would need more specific contextualised research, since conflicts and grudges from the countries of origin can get carried over to the host societies (Kyllönen, 2016). Furthermore, in this study the perception of only those who have migrated from outside the European Union to Finland is considered. However, in Finland many migrants come from neighbouring countries that are part of the EU. How attitudes towards migrants, especially Russian migrants, and the perception of asylum seekers will change in relation to the war in Ukraine and the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, remains to be seen.

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Declarations of interest

None.

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