

ARTICLE

Who is expected to make contact? Interpretative repertoires related to an intergroup encounter between Finnish majority mothers and immigrant mothers

Reetta Riikonen^{1,2}  | Eerika Finell^{1,2}  | Eero Suoninen² |
Paula Paajanen^{1,2}  | Clifford Stevenson³ 

¹University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, Finland

²Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

³Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, UK

Correspondence

Reetta Riikonen, University of Eastern Finland, Faculty of Social Sciences and Business Studies, Kuopio Campus, P.O. Box 1627, FI-70211, Finland.

Email: reetta.riikonen@uef.fi

Funding information

The City of Helsinki; Kone Foundation, Grant/Award Number: 201805064; The Finnish Cultural Foundation, Grant/Award Number: 00180809; The Alli Paasikivi Foundation

Abstract

Although the benefits of contact for positive intergroup relations are widely acknowledged, less is known about how group members construct the agency and responsibility of contact participants in intergroup encounters. Using critical discursive psychology, we analysed the interpretative repertoires that Finnish majority mothers ($N = 13$) and mothers with an immigrant background ($N = 10$) used when talking about a hypothetical intergroup encounter among Finnish and immigrant mothers in a ‘family café’ (a group for mothers and children). Our analysis identified five interpretative repertoires that differed in terms of the levels of categorization used (individual, group, motherhood) and how agency and responsibility for initiating contact were discursively attributed to the parties in the intergroup encounter. Overall, constructing someone as agentic did not automatically result in their being portrayed as more responsible for making contact. Respondents described contact to occur with only two repertoires, in which both agency and responsibility for initiating contact were discursively attributed to the same

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2022 The Authors. *British Journal of Social Psychology* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of British Psychological Society.

party. This highlights the need to consider both agency and sense of responsibility as possible factors preceding intergroup contact.

KEYWORDS

agency, critical discursive psychology, intergroup contact, mothers, responsibility

INTRODUCTION

The positive effects of intergroup contact on intergroup relations, such as decreased intergroup anxiety and increased support for integration, are well known (Pettigrew et al., 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). However, these benefits do not always pertain when contact occurs in complex real-life settings (Dixon et al., 2005; McKeown & Dixon, 2017). Therefore, researchers have identified a need to study intergroup contact in ways that pay attention to broader socio-historical contexts and local sense-making practices (Connolly, 2000; Dixon et al., 2005). One way to better understand everyday practices related to intergroup encounters is to investigate what such encounters signify in the context of their occurrence (Dixon & Reicher, 1997).

Following the above rationale, numerous studies have demonstrated how various structural, behavioural and discursive practices produce and sustain segregation in different contexts (Dixon et al., 2020; Durrheim & Dixon, 2005a, 2005b). For example, it has been shown that segregation is sustained by everyday mobility practices in public spaces (Dixon et al., 2020) and by the unutilized opportunities for intergroup contact even when members of different groups spend time in physical proximity (Alexander & Tredoux, 2010; Dixon & Durrheim, 2003; Paajanen, Seppälä, Stevenson, Riikonen, & Finell, 2022). In addition, research has shown that ordinary people's explanations of their intergroup encounters and relations sustain segregation and unequal group relations by, for example, providing justifications for withdrawal from contact (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005a).

Critical contact research has also shown that people's definitions of what counts as intergroup contact are diverse (Halualani, 2008, 2010; Keil & Koschate, 2020), and people define 'intergroup contact' and related social categories and practices in many ways (Dixon & Reicher, 1997). Nonetheless, to our knowledge, no attention has been paid to how group members construct the different rights and responsibilities of social actors with regard to making contact in intergroup encounters resulting in a limited understanding of whose actions are treated as relevant for the realization of contact. Such attention is important because it may further develop understanding of how people legitimate and delegitimate specific behaviours towards outgroup members and hence justify and make sense of the occurrence and outcomes of intergroup contact (see Dixon & Reicher, 1997; Durrheim et al., 2014).

This paper studies Finnish majority and immigrant mothers' discursive practices related to one type of everyday intergroup contact: an encounter among Finnish and immigrant mothers at 'family café'. We utilize a vignette (a brief fictionalized scenario) to elicit talk about intergroup encounters, and critical discursive psychology (Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell & Potter, 1988) to identify the interpretative repertoires our respondents use. We analyse how our respondents use these repertoires as resources to position (Wetherell & Edley, 1999) Finnish and immigrant mothers in terms of agency and responsibility for initiating contact. We focus on mothers from different ethnic groups because of the intersectional nature of this category, which affords the use of a wide variety of repertoires and categorizations.

Agency and responsibility in intergroup encounters

Engaging in intergroup contact is often an agentic act, involving the choice to make and maintain contact. Intergroup encounters vary in terms of how much control people have over whether to engage in contact and which mode of contact to choose (Harwood, 2021). In some contexts, intergroup contact is volitional: contact occurs because an individual actively and intentionally seeks it. In other contexts, contact is realized through situational factors that are unaffected by individuals' choices (Bagci et al., 2021). Most previous intergroup contact research (especially experimental research and interventions) has focused on situations where people have limited control (Mazziotta et al., 2011; Turner et al., 2007). Less is known about the choices people make in situations where they have control regarding 'if and how to have contact' (Harwood, 2021, p. 159). Where research has been undertaken, it has shown that people give different explanations for their own and outgroup members' contact avoidance (i.e. pluralistic ignorance): they explain their own behaviour as caused by fear of rejection, whereas outgroup members' as lack of interest (Shelton & Richeson, 2005). Therefore, our interest lies in people's choices and justifications in intergroup encounters where contact between members of different groups is possible and people have a choice regarding whether to engage in contact.

Intergroup contact research has mainly considered agency in relation to 'contact self-efficacy', that is, the individual's confidence in their ability to have a positive interaction with outgroup members (Mazziotta et al., 2011; Turner & Cameron, 2016). Contact self-efficacy predicts positive intergroup attitudes and willingness to engage in contact (Mazziotta et al., 2011). A related concept, cross-ethnic friendship self-efficacy, predicts the quality and quantity of cross-ethnic friendships (Bagci et al., 2019). However, research on contact self-efficacy has been somewhat individualistic, apart from recent work on collective contact efficacy, that is belief in an entire group's ability to successfully have contact (Stevenson et al., 2021). In light of suggestions that intergroup contact research should shift focus from individual-level processes to wider social contexts (Connolly, 2000; Dixon et al., 2005), we take a broader view of agency.

We understand agency in terms of who is constructed as able to initiate intergroup contact. Intergroup contact research has been criticized for assuming that individuals have equal agency in intergroup encounters, and for ignoring hierarchical relations between groups (Hughes, 2018). We recognize that individuals' agency in intergroup encounters is embedded in wider social structures and status relations between majority and minority groups. These structures and relations may impact constructions of who can make contact. For example, majority group members typically have more control over their intergroup encounters in terms of when and how to engage in intergroup contact (Harwood, 2021). In addition, high-status groups are generally considered to possess more agency than low-status groups (Nier et al., 2012; Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2007), and intergroup encounters with the majority can even lead minority group members to lose autonomy and agency (Blackwood et al., 2012). On the other hand, intergroup contact can be experienced as positive even when agency is limited (Colvin & Volet, 2014).

Agency is also related to responsibility, although these concepts have rarely been investigated in relation to one another in intergroup contact research. We understand responsibility in terms of who is portrayed as responsible for making contact. In conflict situations, an outgroup's agency may be strategically emphasized in order to place responsibility for the conflict on that group, thereby avoiding blame for the ingroup (Kerr et al., 2017). In addition, minority group members sometimes feel they are held responsible and thus blamed in public discourse for a lack of contact between majority and minority groups (Hopkins et al., 2007). However, no previous research has explored in detail how people explain and justify intergroup contact decisions in terms of agency and responsibility for initiating contact.

A discursive approach to intergroup contact

We adopt a discursive approach to study how agency and responsibility for initiating contact are discursively attributed to Finnish and immigrant mothers in a single intergroup encounter. From this

perspective, agency and responsibility are not fixed and stable features of individuals or groups but constructed and displayed in social interaction (Reynolds et al., 2007; Weatherall, 2020). Thus, the agency and responsibility of Finnish and immigrant mothers can shift and be portrayed differently as individuals draw on different cultural and discursive resources in their talk about who can and ought to act. In accordance with the discursive approach, we view attributions as discursive actions (Edwards & Potter, 1993).

We use critical discursive psychology because it allows us to pay attention to language as situational, action-oriented and simultaneously connected to broader social, cultural and historical contexts (Wetherell, 1998, 2003; Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Wetherell & Potter, 1988, 1992; see for critique Hammersley, 2003). According to critical discursive psychology, language has both intended and unintended consequences. Language's functions range from the situational, such as justification or blame, to broader ideological functions, such as legitimation for one group's societal power (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). For our purposes, an especially important function is 'positioning', which refers to how people define and portray themselves and others in relation to a particular topic, taking on 'positions' as particular types of person (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). We apply this concept to analyse the positions constructed for Finnish and immigrant mothers in terms of agency and responsibility for making contact.

Previous discursive studies have shown that any intergroup contact situation can be flexibly defined in relation to different categories: for example, contact can be depicted as occurring between individuals or between groups (Condor et al., 2006; Maoz et al., 2002). These categorizations organize the contact, its course and its outcomes differently, and thus legitimate different behaviours and reactions in intergroup encounters (Dixon & Reicher, 1997). Constructions of contact may justify, maintain or criticize asymmetrical power relations between majority and minority groups, either reproducing or resisting systems of inequality (Dixon & Reicher, 1997; Durrheim et al., 2014). Our study is built on these theoretical ideas.

Context of the study

We conducted our study in Finland, which has a relatively short history of immigration compared with many other European countries. Immigration began to increase in Finland in the 1990s. Since then, the proportion of people with foreign backgrounds has steadily increased. Currently 8% of the Finnish population (441,031 people) have a foreign background. Half of these people live in the Helsinki metropolitan area where already one in four under school-age children has a foreign background (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021).

In Helsinki, intergroup contacts and friendships between Finnish majority mothers and immigrant mothers are quite rare (Paajanen, Seppälä, Stevenson, & Finell, 2022; Paajanen, Seppälä, Stevenson, Riikonen, & Finell, 2022). One way to better understand this phenomenon is to investigate whose actions are constructed as leading to contact or its avoidance. This knowledge may help to provide well suited, context-specific ways to support intergroup contact between mothers. This is important because contact can improve intergroup relations (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and mothers' intergroup attitudes are known to also affect their children's attitudes (Degner & Dalege, 2013).

One way Finnish and immigrant mothers can meet is through a 'family café'. It is a widely known concept in Finland and refers to a low-threshold (e.g. free-of-charge) indoor meeting for mothers and children, usually organized by non-profit family-related organizations. Although family cafés are open to all parents, fathers rarely visit them (Hokkanen et al., 2001). Some family cafés are framed as multicultural with spoken languages of Finnish and English. Still, all family cafés are open to all families regardless of their backgrounds, and the participants can vary each time, making them an ideal place for making intergroup contact. Therefore, we chose it as the setting for our vignette's hypothetical intergroup encounter.

METHOD

Participants and interviews

Our data consist of responses to a vignette from semi-structured interviews with 23 mothers (aged 22–38) recruited from child healthcare centres, through various clubs and activities for mothers and small children, and via snowballing in two multi-ethnic neighbourhoods in Helsinki. The interviewees had between one and four children. Ten interviewees had migrated to Finland from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe or Latin America between 18 months and 16 years ago. Thirteen interviewees were born in Finland, they were white and spoke Finnish as their mother tongue. The interviewees were interviewed three times in a year by the fourth author in Finnish (19), English (3) or Spanish (1), depending on interviewees' wishes. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis (see [Appendix A](#) for transcription notations). The Tampere Region Ethics Committee awarded our research a positive ethical review.

Vignette

In this article, we use data from the third interviews where interviewees were presented with three vignettes. We focus on the first. We used the vignette to elicit accounts regarding everyday intergroup encounters. We chose this method because we had observed that during the first and second interviews, respondents with a Finnish background rarely discussed mothers' interethnic relations even though their neighbourhood was ethnically diverse. The narrative style and hypothetical nature of vignettes offer an opportunity to discuss sensitive topics in a non-confrontational manner (Azman & Mahadhir, 2017; Jenkins et al., 2010). The vignette was:

A mother with an immigrant background [a native Finnish mother] arrives at the family café with her child, but her acquaintances are not coming today. On the sofas in the lounge a group of native Finnish mothers [mothers with an immigrant background] sit with their children. There is some space left on the sofas.

The vignette was modified to match respondents' ethnic backgrounds (Hughes & Huby, 2004): Finnish respondents were presented with a situation in which a mother with an immigrant background arrives at the family café, whereas respondents with an immigrant background a situation with a native Finnish mother entering the café (see Extracts 5 and 9 in the Results for how the two versions were delivered). The wording of the vignette did not vary between respondents as the interviewer read it every time from paper. Respondents were then asked to explain how the situation would continue. If prompts were needed, they were asked 'what happens next?', 'what feelings might the mothers experience in this situation?' or 'what is the importance of language in this situation?' Lastly, respondents were asked if they recalled any similar real-life situations. The length of responses ranged from 140 words to 2730 words.

The vignette was constructed based on: (1) intergroup contact situations described by mothers with an immigrant background during our data generation; (2) a vignette used in previous intergroup research (Shelton & Richeson, 2005); (3) previous qualitative studies using vignettes (Barter & Renold, 2000; Hughes, 1998). It was constructed so that respondents were asked to discuss how their ingroup would receive an outgroup member in a situation where everyone else was an ingroup member. We did not define the concepts 'native Finnish mother' and 'mother with an immigrant background' to leave room for respondents' own categorizations. We could expect our respondents to be familiar with the concepts due to their common use in public discourse in Finland. In the subsequent analyses, we use shorter versions 'Finnish mother' and 'immigrant mother' of the concepts.

Analytical approach

The generated data was analysed using critical discursive psychology (Wetherell, 1998, 2003; Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Wetherell & Potter, 1988). This approach typically falls into two parts: (1) identifying and analysing interpretative repertoires; (2) explaining and theorizing those repertoires (Wetherell, 2003). Interpretative repertoires refer to culturally familiar resources or formulations of talk that comprise specific sets of arguments, themes and rhetoric, construct different positions for people and can be used to construct different actions, events and phenomena (Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell & Potter, 1988, 1992).

We began our analysis by identifying variation in each respondent's talk regarding the vignette focusing on language content. We paid close attention to the shifts and contradictions in each respondent's talk to identify different ways of making sense of the scenario. All talk related to the scenario was gathered and organized into an Excel spreadsheet in which the collected extracts (about 20,000 words) were sorted according to (1) the respondent, (2) a short initial description of what happens and how mothers are positioned and (3) the cultural or discursive resource drawn on by the respondent. Then, we looked for shared and recurring ways of making sense of the scenario and from these identified potential interpretative repertoires (Wetherell, 2003). These repertoires were discussed many times among all authors and the authors' interpretations were compared. Through careful re-readings of data extracts, we distinguished interpretative repertoires that differed in the levels of categorization used (e.g. individual, group, motherhood) and the positioning of Finnish and immigrant mothers in terms of agency and responsibility for initiating contact.

The data extracts presented below have been translated from Finnish to English by the first author. If the extract is from an interview in English, it is mentioned in the context of the extract. To protect respondents' privacy, we use pseudonyms, and the data are not publicly available.

RESULTS

We identified five interpretative repertoires: *individuality*, *practical constraints*, *Finns' reservedness*, *active helping* and *shared motherhood*. In what follows, we begin with the repertoire that uses individual-level categorization, then move to repertoires that use group-level categorizations, and end with the repertoire that describes motherhood as a bond between Finnish and immigrant mothers.¹

Individuality

In the *individuality* repertoire, respondents characterize the occurrence of intergroup contact as depending largely on the outgroup mother's personal characteristics. Mothers are portrayed as individuals rather than members of groups. Because most respondents describe features that hinder contact, such as shyness and tiredness, the realization of contact is presented as uncertain. At the same time, contact is portrayed as a personal choice of the outgroup mother in the vignette. In the extract below, Viola refers to personal characteristics when talking about the immigrant mother's actions in the vignette's scenario:

Extract 1 (Viola, Finnish background)

I: What would happen then?

R: Well, hopefully she would go. Hopefully she would be up to it. (--) But not everyone is so (.) so. People are (.) more or less extroverts and introverts. Or (.) yes. Maybe she (.) momentarily does not have enough energy (.) to go and meet new people and that is (.) also fine. You do not always have

¹The concepts 'outgroup mother' and 'ingroup mothers' are used in relation to respondent's group membership.

the energy. You do not always have the energy () to explain who you are. Sometimes you just want to stay in the familiar and safe. So then it's the person's own choice.

Viola differentiates people into two individual-level categories, 'extroverts and introverts'. She then explains, empathetically and in detail, that the outgroup mother might not have enough 'energy' to make contact, thereby depicting engagement in contact as a laborious task that requires extra effort. Viola also explains that it is 'fine' if the outgroup mother chooses not to make contact because it is her 'own choice'. Thus, Viola discursively attributes agency but not responsibility for contact to the outgroup mother. This attribution is deployed by all respondents who use the *individuality* repertoire: the onus is on the outgroup mother to make contact, but only if she wishes. In the next extract Sirpa frames contact as a matter of personality and interest:

Extract 2 (Sirpa, Finnish background)

I: What would happen then?

R: [...] I cannot think it like () that it would matter where you come from. It only depends on her () personality [laughs] [...] My way of thinking is that of course join the circle [of mothers] () to learn and to listen () and if it's in her interests [laughs].

Here, Sirpa first explains how difficult it is to think 'that it would matter where you come from' – an act that can be interpreted as an expression of colour blindness (e.g. Apfelbaum et al., 2008) that serves here to distance the speaker from interpretations of personal investment in the category memberships presented in the vignette and to portray the respondent as unprejudiced and empathetic. This kind of talk about treating people as individuals instead of representatives of groups is common in discussions about ethnic and cultural diversity in Finland (e.g. Nortio et al., 2016). Next, Sirpa downplays the intergroup context by adding that contact 'only depends on' the outgroup mother's 'personality'; thus she locates agency with the outgroup mother, as Viola did. At the same time, the outgroup mother is not required to make contact; she can approach the other mothers 'if it's in her interests'. Finally, Sirpa explains that the outgroup mother might join the other mothers 'to learn and to listen'. Thus, although the outgroup mother is presented as an agentic individual, Sirpa's account constructs asymmetrical power relations between the one who needs to learn (the outgroup mother) and those who provide a model (the ingroup mothers). The fact that Sirpa laughs twice when talking about the scenario displays recognition of the delicacy of the situation and the discrepancy in her construction of the outgroup mother as simultaneously agentic and in need of learning (Van Nijnatten & Suoninen, 2013). By putting emphasis on the outgroup mother, the repertoire constructs a rather difficult position for the outgroup mother as the sole agent in the contact situation and legitimizes the group's passive behaviour.

Practical constraints

In the *practical constraints* repertoire, respondents present the encounter's practical aspects as barriers to contact. Contact is described as prevented by the immutable constraints of the situation, and thus the repertoire discursively attributes agency to nobody. Although these constraints are sometimes presented as unfortunate and regrettable, they are always beyond the mothers' control (see also Wetherell & Potter, 1988). Some accounts frame the encounter as intergroup by focusing on difficulties that are specific to intergroup contact, such as language. Other accounts focus on intragroup aspects. For example, the following extract presents an intense conversation between ingroup mothers as a barrier that prevents the group from noticing the outgroup mother:

Extract 3 (Irina, Eastern European background)

I: What could she [the Finnish mother] feel?

R: She may feel like okay, this place is occupied and something is happening. Okay, I'll go to another room with my children because there are more toys (.) and I'll look at something on my phone [laughs].

I: How about the mothers sitting on the sofas?

R: They are having a conversation and they don't see anything. [laughs] Who went away. They don't see anything.

Irina argues that there will be no contact between the outgroup mother and the ingroup mothers in the scenario. She explains that the outgroup mother supposes that the place is already 'occupied' and thus chooses to 'go to another room', whereas the ingroup mothers are so focused on 'a conversation' that they 'don't see anything'. The double use of the extreme-case formulation 'anything' constructs the group's behaviour and the consequent lack of contact in the scenario as inevitable (Pomerantz, 1986). The lack of contact is presented as a certain and natural outcome of the encounter; no one is portrayed as agentic or responsible for initiating contact. The next extract illustrates how this repertoire is used when the contact situation is even more clearly framed as intergroup.

Extract 4 (Xaawo, African background)

I: What kinds of emotions could the mothers who are already sitting there on the sofas experience?

R: Well, it is quite (.) frankly speaking, it is boring if you do not have a friend. [...] When most of us speak the same language (.) then it (just goes like that) (.) there are two people or one who are always having a conversation (.) and the others just babble and chat (.) (like that, yes-). Frankly speaking, normally (.) you [the single outgroup mother] just end up alone (.) with [your] phone [laughter].

Xaawo presents the lack of a common language as an impermeable barrier to contact that is beyond the mothers' control. She argues that the outgroup mother will 'normally just end up alone' because 'frankly speaking' the situation is 'boring' for her. The double use of 'frankly speaking' implies that the topic is 'sensitive and not always openly discussed' (Nortio et al., 2016, p. 632), framing Xaawo's description as a factual and objective version of the course of the scenario's encounter. All respondents with this repertoire use similar rhetorical expressions of certainty and objectivity, through which they position themselves as fair-minded, practical realists who rationally acknowledge the regrettable facts of the situation and simultaneously maintain their image as good persons (Condor et al., 2006; Wetherell & Potter, 1988). This way this repertoire makes it possible to speak about problems related to intergroup encounters, but it simultaneously relieves the speaker of responsibility for changing the situation as lack of intergroup contact is presented as the natural outcome.

Finns' reservedness

The *Finns' reservedness* repertoire portrays Finnish mothers' shyness and reservedness as a barrier to intergroup contact. The repertoire portrays mothers as representatives of their group: mothers' behaviour is explained by their group characteristics. All respondents focus on the role of Finnish mothers in intergroup encounters, rarely mentioning immigrant mothers. This occurs regardless of which group is the numerical majority in the scenario. If immigrant mothers are mentioned, it is only by way of contrast with Finns. The repertoire draws on cultural stereotypes of Finnish behaviour (Olbertz-Siitonen & Siitonen, 2015), which in this context are used to explain Finnish mothers' lack of contact as the following extract shows:

Extract 5 (Bian, Asian background)

I: A native Finnish mother arrives at the family café with her child, but her acquaintances are not coming today. On the sofas in the lounge a group of mothers with an immigrant background sit with their children. There is some space left on the sofas.

R: [smiles shortly] She'll sit (.) in a different place then. [She] does not go with the others (.) as there are no acquaintances of her around. [...]

I: Why do you think she'd do that?

R: In my opinion, a Finnish (.) person always keeps their distance from others. And when there are no familiar people around, [a Finn] does not easily come (.) too near (.) even though [her] child is there. Of course, a child does not yet know what (.) private space [is] so they go there to play together but (.) still mothers (.) or adults (.) keep their distance in their thoughts.

Bian argues that contact will not occur in the scenario because Finns typically avoid it. She generalizes Finns' tendency to 'keep their distance' with the extreme-case formulation 'always' (Pomerantz, 1986) and by arguing that the behaviour concerns all Finnish 'adults', not just 'mothers'. By doing so Bian constructs a connection between ethnicity and culture that is essential and self-evident (Verkuyten, 2003). Bian also contrasts Finnish mothers with their children: as 'a child does not yet know' how Finns deal with privacy, they 'play together' with the other children. However, the word 'yet' constructs this tendency as something that Finnish children will eventually learn and internalize as part of their culture (see also Verkuyten, 2003). Thus, Bian explains outgroup mothers' behaviour in terms of group characteristics, and she constructs an asymmetry of agency and control along ethnic/national lines: although Finnish mothers have agency and power in the scenario as their behaviour determines the outcome, they are dispositionally reserved and so are absolved of responsibility for initiating contact. This asymmetry is not criticized, but is presented in a neutral or even positive light as in the next extract. Here Irina explains why she stated that the Finnish mother would go 'to a seat which is available but as far as possible' from the other mothers:

Extract 6 (Irina, Eastern European background)

I: Why would she go as far as possible?

R: The first thing may be that all Finns are very polite and do not want to disturb other people. It can also happen within a group of Finns and also then the native Finn would go as far as possible [from the others].

Irina explains that 'the native Finn' will not join the other mothers in the scenario because, like 'all Finns', she will be 'very polite' and not want to disturb them. Finns' contact avoidance is characterized as intended to benefit others, making it acceptable and even kind. Because this kind of politeness is described as characteristic to all Finns, they are not expected to make contact and thus are not positioned as responsible for this. This is typical in essentialist discourses about culture: if culture determines people's behaviour, people do not have control and hence no agency or responsibility over it (Verkuyten, 2003). In addition, Irina argues that 'the native Finn' would behave in the same way with 'a group of Finns', portraying reservedness as independent of intergroup context and hence as reflective of Finns' fixed disposition rather than, for example, group-based prejudice. In the next extract Saana contrasts Finns with immigrants when encouraged to talk more about the outgroup mother in the scenario:

Extract 7 (Saana, Finnish background)

I: Or [how] this mother [feels] who comes there.

R: Yeah.

I: ..and whose (.) friends are not there.

R: [...] Or some [immigrant mothers] I feel like they are more like (.) a lot more social than [laughs] us Finns. Some might even come to you (.) in a laid-back way to say (.) hello.

Saana's account demonstrates that stereotypes about Finns can also be flexibly used to justify ingroup's lack of intergroup behaviour. Saana contrasts Finnish mothers with immigrant mothers, who are 'a lot more social' and 'might even' greet others, thereby reproducing the stereotype of the silent Finn (Olbertz-Siitonen & Siitonen, 2015). By talking about 'us Finns', Saana categorizes herself as a Finn, subtly indicating that if put in a similar situation, she would not make contact herself. Thus, the *Finns' reservedness* repertoire presents

intergroup contact as highly unlikely due to Finnish mothers' reserved national character and legitimizes Finns' contact avoidance.

Active helping

The *active helping* repertoire focuses on ingroup mothers' actions to engage with the outgroup mother in the scenario and presents contact between mothers as the desired outcome. All respondents describe it as the ingroup's responsibility to make contact and take care of the outgroup mother, as they comprise the numerical majority in the scenario and portray the single outgroup mother as insecure and unsure about what to do for being alone. Some emphasize the intergroup nature of the encounter by explaining the outgroup mother's uncertainty as caused by being the only outgroup member in the scenario, as in the following extract:

Extract 8 (Khadija, African background)

I: So what do you think happens now?

R: Well, I think () it would be hard for her to just join the circle [of mothers] and [...] I would certainly try to consciously take her [the Finnish mother] into account () because [...] if it was me who was alone () and all the others were for example native Finns () I would feel a little nervous () so I would get it. [...] So I would try to take her into account.

Khadija empathetically explains that she would try to 'take' the outgroup mother 'into account' because she would 'feel a little nervous' if she were the only outgroup mother in a similar scenario. Thus Khadija assumes agency and responsibility for contact as a member of the scenario's numerical majority, simultaneously positioning the outgroup mother as vulnerable and needing help. Some respondents also emphasize the lengths they would go to make contact thus presenting themselves as motivated helpers (see also Durrheim et al., 2014). For example, Saana, a respondent with a Finnish background, describes the various actions she would take ('I would welcome her there [...] make room so she could join the group and if she doesn't speak Finnish then try English [...] or use Google to ask what language she [speaks]'). In the next extract, Viola similarly constructs contact as a helping practice:

Extract 9 (Viola, Finnish background)

I: A mother with an immigrant background arrives at the family café with her child, but her acquaintances are not coming today. On the sofas in the lounge a group of native Finnish mothers sit with their children. There is some space left on the sofas..

R: Well, () she. Wait a minute. So should I think about what the mother does or what the others do..?

I: What is going on in the overall situation here, () what do you assume?

R: Well, I would certainly hope that there would be a mother among the native Finns who would notice that a person is a bit lost and does not know if she has the courage, () or if she dares, () if it's worth the trouble, () or if she is allowed to join. So there should be somebody, () among the mothers, who would say 'hey, you can come here, () there's space'.

Viola states that the outgroup mother would be 'a bit lost' in the scenario. She illustrates this uncertainty by listing four worries the outgroup mother might have about joining the ingroup mothers (e.g. 'if she is allowed to join'). Thus she places the outgroup mother in a weaker position. Viola also emphasizes her 'hope' that one of 'the native Finns' 'would notice' the outgroup mother and welcome her by saying 'hey, you can come here, there's space' thus depicting ingroup mothers as agentic and responsible for initiating contact and portraying herself as a warm and caring person who is open to intergroup contact. While the *active helping* repertoire presents contact as the desired and likely outcome of the scenario, it also constructs contact as a helping practice rather than as an encounter of equals.

Shared motherhood

The *shared motherhood* repertoire portrays motherhood and the related shared experiences and interests as facilitators of contact. This is the only repertoire to emphasize that there is something common and shared among all the mothers in the scenario and thus portrays contact participants as first and foremost mothers. Consequently, it presents contact as an easy and unproblematic encounter between equals. In the following extract, English speaking Amber discusses the mothers' feelings in the scenario:

Extract 10 (Amber, African background)

I: What do you think, what kind of feelings all these mothers could feel in this situation?

R: When she approaches them and sits with them then they feel like 'oh yeah () we are all together in this and it's not about () we being immigrants and she being a native () speaker' or () you understand () 'our cultural backgrounds is not a dividing line. We are mothers and that's the platform with which we relate to her'.

Amber portrays motherhood as a common identity that exceeds all differences between mothers and thus removes barriers to contact. By saying 'we are all together in this' and 'we are mothers', she categorizes both herself and other mothers as part of the same group. Thus, intergroup contact becomes characterized as intragroup contact. Amber discursively attributes agency to the outgroup mother by saying it is the outgroup mother who 'approaches them'. This is typical of this repertoire. However, when respondents talk about their own experiences inspired by the vignette, rather than about the vignette per se, they discursively attribute agency to both in- and outgroup mothers. For example, Elaine, a respondent with Asian background, describes the initiation of contact as a joint action ('you're just looking at the mother, she's looking at you, you're just smiling'). Given the depiction of the interaction as collaborative, it is less important who makes the first move. In the next extract, Miina explains that the shared experiences of motherhood would make it easy for the immigrant mother to approach the group in the vignette:

Extract 11 (Miina, Finnish background)

I: So what about the one who is coming to the circle [of mothers]. What kind of feelings could [she] have?

R: [...] It does not require anything other than listening to what others are talking about and then, as it is about a group of mothers after all, you could definitely also share your own experiences and story.

Miina argues that 'it does not require anything other than listening to' the other mothers, as there will be similar experiences and things to share, because it is 'a group of mothers after all'. This way Miina constructs sociality among mothers as natural and effortless; the shared interests and experiences make initiating contact easy. When motherhood is portrayed as a unifying feature that renders differences insignificant, there is no reason to avoid contact. Thus, it is presented as the individual mother's responsibility to join the other mothers in the scenario. This repertoire provides both the motivation and the entitlement to initiate contact and join the other mothers. The next extract illustrates how the repertoire is used to describe real-life experiences inspired by the vignette:

Extract 12 (Maija, Finnish background)

I: Do you recall having experienced this kind of situations, () based on this example?

R: Well, no other than the surprising encounter I had with the Chinese mother on the train [...] It was somehow so easy to start talking because even if you would not necessarily talk to the mother, it is of course nowadays so easy, because you have a child, to like make faces or smile or to say something to other kids. After that talking with the other mother may also start naturally.

Maija describes her 'surprising encounter' with a 'Chinese mother on the train' that was 'so easy to start'. She relates this easiness of making contact to having children and parenting in public by explaining how

the tendency to 'make faces or smile' to other children 'naturally' results in communication with the other mother. Thus Maija portrays initiating contact with other mothers as uniquely easy, like Amber and Miina. While they all focus on different aspects related to motherhood, they describe contact as unaffected by mothers' group membership. Therefore, Finnish and immigrant mothers are uniquely constructed in relatively equal positions within this repertoire.

Summary of the interpretative repertoires

We identified five interpretative repertoires: *individuality*, *practical constraints*, *Finns' reservedness*, *active helping* and *shared motherhood*. The repertoires differed in terms of how mothers were categorized, and how agency and responsibility for initiating contact were discursively attributed to Finnish and immigrant mothers. The summary of the repertoires is presented in Table 1.

DISCUSSION

We have explored interpretative repertoires in the context of a vignette depicting a hypothetical intergroup encounter between mothers. We focused on how the repertoires positioned Finnish and immigrant mothers in terms of agency and responsibility for initiating contact. We identified five interpretative repertoires from respondents' talk generated by the vignette.

The *individuality* repertoire constructed the single outgroup mother as an individual agent who is capable but not required to make contact, and thus presented contact as unlikely, whereas the *practical constraints* repertoire discursively attributed agency and responsibility to nobody thus presenting the realization of contact as impossible. Like the first two repertoires, also the *Finns' reservedness* repertoire implied that contact would not occur. The repertoire constructed agency and power to Finnish mothers but did not position them as responsible for making contact. In contrast, the *active helping* and *shared motherhood* repertoires presented contact as the desired and likely outcome of the scenario. The *active helping* repertoire positioned the group of ingroup mothers as agentic and responsible for making contact, whereas the *shared motherhood* repertoire constructed agency and responsibility as shared between all mothers. Overall, the repertoires showed that: (1) constructing an actor as agentic did not automatically entail holding them accountable for making contact; (2) agency was discursively attributed more

TABLE 1 Agency, responsibility and probability of contact in interpretative repertoires

	Who has agency to make (or not make) contact?	Who has responsibility for making contact?	Will there be contact?
Individuality	Individual outgroup mother	Nobody – outgroup mother can do as she likes	Unlikely – depends on outgroup mother's actions and wishes
Practical constraints	Nobody – practical constraints bind every mother's behaviour	Nobody – practical constraints cannot be changed	No – practical constraints prevent contact
Finns' reservedness	Finnish mothers	Nobody – Finns' national character prevents contact	No – unless immigrant mothers initiate it (considered highly unlikely)
Active helping	Group of ingroup mothers	Group of ingroup mothers	Yes
Shared motherhood	Both Finnish and immigrant mothers (does not matter)	Both Finnish and immigrant mothers	Yes – due to bond, interests and experiences shared as mothers

to Finnish mothers; (3) respondents' accounts implied contact to occur only when a person was constructed as both agentic and responsible.

Our results contribute to existing research in many ways. First, our results demonstrate that the respondents' different categorizations of contact participants in the vignette (i.e. individual, group, mothers) constructed agency differently for in- and outgroup mothers, and these categorizations justified different types of intergroup behaviour in the scenario. These results are in line with previous discursive research: contact participants' categorizations can frame their interpretation of the intergroup situation, expected intergroup behaviour and hierarchical relations between groups (Condor et al., 2006; Dixon & Reicher, 1997; Maoz et al., 2002). However, to our knowledge this is the first study to explore in detail how different categorizations produce varied descriptions regarding who can and ought to make contact. Our research provides new insight into people's constructions of what leads to or prevents contact, and the reasons and choices people connect with contact-making in contexts where it is possible to choose whether and how to engage in contact (Harwood, 2021).

Second, our results show that just as broader intergroup relations can be rhetorically constructed to the ingroup's advantage (Stevenson et al., 2007), agency and responsibility in intergroup encounters can be flexibly used to position the ingroup as less prejudiced and less blameworthy for the outcome of the contact situation. On one hand, respondents constructed the outgroup as agentic while presenting their ingroup as passive, minimizing the ingroup's blameworthiness for the lack of contact (*individuality*). This result is in line with Kerr et al.'s (2017) finding regarding conflict situations: the ingroup's responsibility for the conflict can be minimized through the rhetorical attribution of agency to others. However, our results demonstrate that in talk regarding everyday intergroup encounters, the interrelation between agency and responsibility is more complex. For example, our analysis revealed that in some cases constructing someone as agentic did not entail holding them responsible for making contact (*individuality* and *Finns' reservedness*). Indeed, the Finnish majority's reservedness was used to downplay the majority's accountability for their lack of activity. This shows that agency does not automatically result in responsibility even when the outgroup is the one constructed as agentic. On the other hand, we also found that in some cases both agency and responsibility were discursively attributed to one's ingroup (e.g. *active helping*), which depicted both oneself and one's ingroup as active, kind and unprejudiced (Condor et al., 2006), further demonstrating that different constructions of agency and responsibility can serve different functions.

Third, our analysis revealed that respondents did not discursively attribute equal choice and control to both groups: contact was not depicted as equally volitional for Finnish and immigrant mothers in the scenario (see also Bagci et al., 2021). Agency was discursively attributed to Finnish mothers based on their ethnic/national group membership (*Finns' reservedness*), but not to immigrant mothers. This result supports quantitative research findings regarding stereotypes: high-status groups are typically viewed as more agentic than low-status groups (Nier et al., 2012; Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2007). However, our discursive research elaborated on this by showing that in the majority of repertoires agency and control were not constructed for Finnish mothers (the majority group) thus revealing the complexity and situativeness of constructions of contact participants' choice and control in intergroup encounters.

Finally, although our vignette's context was a family café, a place to which mothers come to interact with other mothers (Hokkanen et al., 2001), our respondents explained mothers' actions as leading to contact only in two out of five repertoires. Our research found that contact was described to occur only when both agency and responsibility were discursively attributed to the same group (*active helping* and *shared motherhood*). This finding contributes to research on contact self-efficacy, which has shown that confidence in one's ability to have positive interaction predicts intergroup contact (Bagci et al., 2019; Mazziotto et al., 2011; Turner & Cameron, 2016). However, our research demonstrates that in respondents' accounts agency (i.e. ability to make contact) is only one part of the construction of whether contact will occur; a sense of responsibility for making contact is equally necessary. When an actor was portrayed to have neither agency nor responsibility (*practical constraints*) or was constructed in terms of agency only (*individuality* and *Finns' reservedness*), contact was presented as unlikely. This important finding may offer new insight regarding why intergroup contact is sometimes

avoided in real-life contexts (Alexander & Tredoux, 2010; Dixon & Durrheim, 2003). Mothers' accounts suggest that even in contexts where intergroup contact is supported, the lack of a sense of responsibility might lead to passive intergroup behaviour, whereas a clear attribution of responsibility can lead to active engagement. Future research should explore how the sense-making of who is responsible for (and capable of) intergroup contact can be harnessed to facilitate positive intergroup encounters. This research could focus on naturally occurring interactions in, for example, family clubs or playgrounds to examine how encounters between the majority and immigrants unfold in their immediate context. The benefit of such approach is its ability to capture the delicacy of real time interaction in everyday contexts without the influence of researcher's questions or presence (Potter, 2011, 2012).

Of course, our research has limitations. First, using a vignette may have guided and limited our respondents' interpretative processes. Analysing naturally occurring conversations or group discussions could have produced more variety in descriptions and allowed a more detailed analysis of the respondents' discursive actions in micro context (see Wetherell, 1998). Alternatively undertaking extensive ethnographic observation could shed more light on the situated nature of these intergroup encounters when they do occur (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Geertz, 1973). However, using the vignette was necessary to elicit talk regarding intergroup contact, as Finnish respondents had rarely talked about the topic in previous interviews. Second, the vignette provided a clear two-group framework. A two-group focus has been criticized in intergroup contact research for not representing the more common multigroup compositions of everyday interethnic relations (Kerr et al., 2017). However, the two-group framework also has advantages: it is especially useful for studying power relations between majorities and minorities. Thus, it was beneficial for studying how constructions of agency and responsibility reflect hierarchical group relations. Third, we utilized only one contact scenario. Other contact scenarios might have produced different constructions, as the context in which contact occurs affects the definition of contact (Keil & Koschate, 2020). However, the focus on a single scenario allowed us to study it in more detail and consider the range of spontaneous accounts of intergroup encounters that flowed from it. Future research should consider a wider range of intergroup scenarios, possibly with multiple groups, to deepen our understanding of agency, responsibility and their effect on the realization of contact.

From a practical viewpoint, our results suggest that mothers use various repertoires about who can and who is expected to make contact in intergroup encounters. These repertoires should be considered in the design of contact interventions and multicultural family activities, because they can legitimate specific behaviours in mothers' intergroup encounters and thus affect whether contact will occur (see Dixon & Reicher, 1997; Durrheim et al., 2014). Based on our results, the most promising way to support mothers' intergroup contact is to promote mothers' similarities to one another through a focus on shared interests and experiences as mothers that allow women to encounter one another as mothers, not just as women. Contact initiatives based on a shared sense of motherhood will provide a context within which both majority and minority mothers can share agency and responsibility as well as equal status. While this cannot guarantee the occurrence of positive contact, it will likely remove some of the discursive barriers to its occurrence.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Reetta Riikonen: Conceptualization; formal analysis; methodology; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. **Eerika Finell:** Conceptualization; formal analysis; funding acquisition; project administration; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. **Eero Suoninen:** Conceptualization; methodology; writing – review and editing. **Paula Paajanen:** Conceptualization; funding acquisition; investigation; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. **Clifford Stevenson:** Conceptualization; writing – review and editing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research has been funded by The Finnish Cultural Foundation (00180809), Kone Foundation (201805064), The City of Helsinki and The Alli Paasikivi Foundation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data are not publicly available.

ORCID

Reetta Riikonen  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2716-5054>

Eerika Finell  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9605-610X>

Paula Paajanen  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9858-7270>

Clifford Stevenson  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2438-6425>

REFERENCES

- Alexander, L., & Tredoux, C. (2010). The spaces between us: A spatial analysis of informal segregation at a south African university. *Journal of Social Issues, 66*(2), 367–386. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2010.01650.x>
- Apfelbaum, E. P., Sommers, S. R., & Norton, M. I. (2008). Seeing race and seeming racist? Evaluating strategic colorblindness in social interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 95*(4), 918–932. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0011990>
- Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and participant observation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 248–261). Sage.
- Azman, H., & Mahadhir, M. (2017). Application of the vignette technique in a qualitative paradigm. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies, 17*(4), 27–44. <https://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2017-1704-03>
- Bagci, S. C., Cameron, L., Turner, R. N., Morais, C., Carby, A., Ndhlovu, M., & Leney, A. (2019). Cross-ethnic friendship self-efficacy: A new predictor of cross-ethnic friendships among children. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 23*(7), 1049–1065. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430219879219>
- Bagci, S. C., Husnu, S., Turnuklu, A., & Tercan, M. (2021). Do I really want to engage in contact? Volition as a new dimension of intergroup contact. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 51*(2), 269–284. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2733>
- Barter, C., & Renold, E. (2000). I wanna tell you a story: Exploring the application of vignettes in qualitative research with children and young people. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 3*(4), 307–323. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570050178594>
- Blackwood, L., Hopkins, N., & Reicher, S. (2012). I know who I am, but who do they think I am? Muslim perspectives on encounters with airport authorities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 36*(6), 1090–1108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.645845>
- Colvin, C., & Volet, S. (2014). Scrutinising local students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions: A multidimensional analysis. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 42*, 77–92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2014.06.004>
- Condor, S., Figgou, L., Abell, J., Gibson, S., & Stevenson, C. (2006). 'They're not racist...': Prejudice denial, mitigation and suppression in dialogue. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 45*(3), 441–462. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466605X66817>
- Connolly, P. (2000). What now for the contact hypothesis? Towards a new research agenda. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 3*(2), 169–193. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320050074023>
- Degner, J., & Dalege, J. (2013). The apple does not fall far from the tree, or does it? A meta-analysis of parent–child similarity in intergroup attitudes. *Psychological Bulletin, 139*(6), 1270–1304. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031436>
- Dixon, J., & Durrheim, K. (2003). Contact and the ecology of racial division: Some varieties of informal segregation. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 42*(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466603763276090>
- Dixon, J., Durrheim, K., & Tredoux, C. (2005). Beyond the optimal contact strategy: A reality check for the contact hypothesis. *American Psychologist, 60*(7), 697–711. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.7.697>
- Dixon, J., Tredoux, C., Davies, G., Huck, J., Hocking, B., Sturgeon, B., Whyatt, D., Jarman, N., & Bryan, D. (2020). Parallel lives: Intergroup contact, threat, and the segregation of everyday activity spaces. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 118*(3), 457–480. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000191>
- Dixon, J. A., & Reicher, S. (1997). Intergroup contact and desegregation in the new South Africa. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 36*(3), 361–381. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1997.tb01137.x>
- Durrheim, K., & Dixon, J. (2005a). *Racial encounter: The social psychology of contact and desegregation*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203715093>
- Durrheim, K., & Dixon, J. (2005b). Studying talk and embodied practices: Toward a psychology of materiality of 'race relations'. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 15*(6), 446–460. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.839>

- Durrheim, K., Jacobs, N., & Dixon, J. (2014). Explaining the paradoxical effects of intergroup contact: Paternalistic relations and system justification in domestic labour in South Africa. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 41, 150–164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2013.11.006>
- Edwards, D., & Potter, J. (1993). Language and causation: A discursive action model of description and attribution. *Psychological Review*, 100(1), 23–41. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.100.1.23>
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. Basic Books.
- Halualani, R. T. (2008). How do multicultural university students define and make sense of intercultural contact? A qualitative study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 32(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2007.10.006>
- Halualani, R. T. (2010). Interactant-based definitions of intercultural interaction at a multicultural university. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 21(3), 247–272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2010.496666>
- Hammersley, M. (2003). Conversation analysis and discourse analysis: Methods or paradigms? *Discourse and Society*, 14(6), 751–781. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09579265030146004>
- Harwood, J. (2021). Modes of intergroup contact: If and how to interact with the outgroup. *Journal of Social Issues*, 77(1), 154–170. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12421>
- Hokkanen, L., Kinnunen, P., Kauppinen, R., & Parhankangas, O. (2001). Tartu toimeen! Käyttäjien kokemuksia yhdistelmästä [take action! User experiences of combined unemployment assistance]. *Sosiaali- ja terveysviesti*, 3, 4–35.
- Hopkins, N., Greenwood, R. M., & Birchall, M. (2007). Minority understandings of the dynamics to intergroup contact encounters: British Muslims' (sometimes ambivalent) experiences of representing their group to others. *South Africa Journal of Psychology*, 37(4), 679–701. <https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630703700402>
- Hughes, J. (2018). Agency versus structure in reconciliation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41(4), 624–642. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2018.1381340>
- Hughes, R. (1998). Considering the vignette technique and its application to a study of drug injecting and HIV risk and safer behaviour. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 20(3), 381–400. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.00107>
- Hughes, R., & Huby, M. (2004). The construction and interpretation of vignettes in social research. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review*, 11(1), 36–51. <https://doi.org/10.1921/17466105.11.1.36>
- Jenkins, N., Bloor, M., Fischer, J., Berney, L., & Neale, J. (2010). Putting it in context: The use of vignettes in qualitative interviewing. *Qualitative Research*, 10(2), 175–198. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794109356737>
- Keil, T. F., & Koschate, M. (2020). Variations in subjective definitions of everyday situations as intergroup contact. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 59(4), 965–991. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12372>
- Kerr, P., Durrheim, K., & Dixon, J. (2017). Beyond the two-group paradigm in studies of intergroup conflict and inequality: Third parties and intergroup alliances in xenophobic violence in South Africa. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 56(1), 47–63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12163>
- Maoz, I., Steinberg, S., Bar-On, D., & Fakhereldeen, M. (2002). The dialogue between the 'self' and the 'other': A process analysis of Palestinian-Jewish encounters in Israel. *Human Relations*, 55(8), 931–962. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726702055008178>
- Mazziotta, A., Mummendey, A., & Wright, S. C. (2011). Vicarious intergroup contact effects: Applying social-cognitive theory to intergroup contact research. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 14(2), 255–274. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430210390533>
- McKeown, S., & Dixon, J. (2017). The 'contact hypothesis': Critical reflections and future directions. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 11(1), e12295. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12295>
- Nier, J. A., Bajaj, P., McLean, M. C., & Schwartz, E. (2012). Group status, perceptions of agency, and the correspondence bias: Attributional processes in the formation of stereotypes about high and low status groups. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 16(4), 476–487. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430212454925>
- Nortio, E., Varjonen, S., Mähönen, T. A., & Jasinskaja-Lahti, I. (2016). Interpretative repertoires of multiculturalism: Supporting and challenging hierarchical intergroup relations. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 4(2), 623–645. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jsp.p.v4i2.639>
- Official Statistics of Finland. (2021, May 28). *Population structure*. http://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/2020/02/vaerak_2020_02_2021-05-28_tie_001_en.html
- Olbertz-Siitonen, M., & Siitonen, M. (2015). The silence of the Finns: Exploring the anatomy of an academic myth. *Sociologia*, 52(4), 318–333.
- Oldmeadow, J., & Fiske, S. T. (2007). System-justifying ideologies moderate status = competence stereotypes: Roles for belief in a just world and social dominance orientation. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 37(6), 1135–1148. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.428>
- Paajanen, P., Seppälä, T., Stevenson, C., & Finell, E. (2022). Child's presence shapes immigrant women's experiences of everyday intergroup contact. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 10(2), 430–444. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jsp.p.7477>
- Paajanen, P., Seppälä, T., Stevenson, C., Riikonen, R., & Finell, E. (2022). Keeping apart on the playground: Construction of informal segregation on public playgrounds in multi-ethnic neighborhoods. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 1–21. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01902725221116632>
- Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(5), 751–783. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.5.751>
- Pettigrew, T. F., Tropp, L. R., Wagner, U., & Christ, O. (2011). Recent advances in intergroup contact theory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(3), 271–280. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.03.001>
- Pomerantz, A. (1986). Extreme case formulations: A way of legitimizing claims. *Human Studies*, 9, 219–229. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00148128>

- Potter, J. (2011). Discursive psychology and the study of naturally occurring talk. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research. Issues of theory, method and practice* (pp. 187–207). Sage.
- Potter, J. (2012). Re-reading discourse and social psychology: Transforming social psychology. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 51(3), 436–455. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.2011.02085.x>
- Reynolds, J., Wetherell, M., & Taylor, S. (2007). Choice and chance: Negotiating agency in narratives of singleness. *The Sociological Review*, 55(2), 331–351. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2007.00708.x>
- Shelton, J. N., & Richeson, J. A. (2005). Intergroup contact and pluralistic ignorance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88(1), 91–107. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.1.91>
- Stevenson, C., Condor, S., & Abell, J. (2007). The minority-majority conundrum in Northern Ireland: An Orange order perspective. *Political Psychology*, 28(1), 105–125. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2007.00554.x>
- Stevenson, C., Turner, R., & Costa, S. (2021). ‘Welcome to our neighbourhood’: Collective confidence in contact facilitates successful mixing in residential settings. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 24(8), 1448–1466. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430220961151>
- Turner, R. N., & Cameron, L. (2016). Confidence in contact: A new perspective on promoting cross-group friendship among children and adolescents. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 10(1), 212–246. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12023>
- Turner, R. N., Crisp, R. J., & Lambert, E. (2007). Imagining intergroup contact can improve intergroup attitudes. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 10(4), 427–441. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430207081533>
- Van Nijnatten, C., & Suoninen, E. (2013). Delicacy in social work interaction. In C. Hall, K. Juhila, M. Matarese, & C. van Nijnatten (Eds.), *Analysing social work communication: Discourse in practice* (pp. 136–153). Routledge.
- Verkuyten, M. (2003). Discourses about ethnic group (de-)essentialism: Oppressive and progressive aspects. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 42(3), 371–391. <https://doi.org/10.1348/01446660322438215>
- Weatherall, A. (2020). Constituting agency in the delivery of telephone-mediated victim support. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 17(3), 396–412. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1725951>
- Wetherell, M. (1998). Positioning and interpretative repertoires: Conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue. *Discourse and Society*, 9(3), 387–412. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926598009003005>
- Wetherell, M. (2003). Racism and the analysis of cultural resources in interviews. In H. van den Berg, M. Wetherell, & H. Houtkoop-Steenstra (Eds.), *Analysing race talk: Multidisciplinary perspectives on the research interview* (pp. 11–30). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511489792>
- Wetherell, M., & Edley, N. (1999). Negotiating hegemonic masculinity: Imaginary positions and psycho-discursive practices. *Feminism & Psychology*, 9(3), 335–356. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353599009003012>
- Wetherell, M., & Potter, P. (1988). Discourse analysis and the identification of interpretative repertoires. In C. Antaki (Ed.), *Analysing everyday explanation: A casebook of methods* (pp. 168–183). Sage.
- Wetherell, M., & Potter, P. (1992). *Mapping the language of racism: Discourse and the legitimation of exploitation*. Columbia University Press.

How to cite this article: Riikonen, R., Finell, E., Suoninen, E., Paajanen, P., & Stevenson, C. (2023). Who is expected to make contact? Interpretative repertoires related to an intergroup encounter between Finnish majority mothers and immigrant mothers. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 62, 264–280. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12580>

APPENDIX A

Transcription conventions.

- (.) Short untimed pause
 - .. Interrupted or continued statement
 - (–) Omitted word or part of word
 - (–) Omitted part of speech
 - (word) Unclear word or uncertain spelling
 - [...] Material deliberately omitted
 - [brackets] Insertions made by researchers
- Punctuation is given to make reading easy and does not indicate speech patterns.