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“WE CANNOT EVEN TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN CITIZENS”

Symbolic boundaries and perceptions of intergroup threat in
citizens' initiatives on immigration

ABSTRACT

Roosa Mäkelä: “We cannot even take care of our own citizens” Symbolic boundaries and perceptions of intergroup threat in citizens’ initiatives on immigration

Master’s Thesis

Tampere University

Master’s Degree Programme in Peace, Mediation and Conflict Research

April 2022

This master’s thesis focuses on citizens’ initiatives on immigration. By conducting discourse analysis, it examines how symbolic boundaries and perceptions of intergroup threat are visible in immigration-related citizens’ initiatives with over 1 000 signatures. Whereas symbolic boundaries maintain inequalities by creating inclusion and exclusion by categorizing people and groups, intergroup threat theory offers a way to examine these in-group – out-group divisions and boundaries through the concept of threat. The analysis shows that divisions between “Finnish people” and “immigrants” are maintained through depicting immigrants as economic threats, cultural or symbolic threats, and physical threats. Additionally, the concept of “citizenship” is used to solidify these boundaries. It is argued that the examined citizens’ initiatives contain features of cultural and structural violence, and that the initiatives are part of larger processes and discourses where anti-immigrant sentiments are attempted to be made more visible. As such, this research adds to existing research by examining citizens’ initiatives as a “new” site where anti-immigrant sentiments can be voiced. Moreover, it connects to peace and conflict research by bringing attention to the fact that forms of violence can and do exist also within societies that are considered “peaceful”. Finally, despite of the restrictive nature of the majority of examined initiatives, it is also noted that the initiatives contain rhetoric that challenges these prevailing views of immigrants as a “threat”.

Keywords: citizens’ initiatives, immigration, symbolic boundaries, intergroup threat theory, cultural violence, structural violence

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1. Introduction

Immigration to Europe has generated growing media and public attention in Finland and in Europe in recent years, notably during and after the so-called refugee “crisis” in 2015 (see for example Nedergaard 2019). Especially since 2015, the topic of immigration has become increasingly heated and polarized, with many European states adopting more restrictive immigration policies. This was the case, for instance, in 2016 when humanitarian protection was removed as a basis to grant residence permits in Finland (Finnish Immigration Service 2016). In addition, previous studies have shown that this perceived “crisis” has increased negative attitudes towards immigration and immigrants (Bruneau, Kteily & Laustsen 2018). In this context, examining the ways in which these restrictive policies and anti-immigrant attitudes are justified and constructed in different settings are of increasing importance.

Thus, the focus of this thesis is citizens’ initiatives concerning immigration in Finland. Citizens’ initiatives are a form of direct participatory democracy through which Finnish citizens are able to propose laws or changes in legislature on the topics they deem important and topical. The Finnish parliament is obliged to consider (but not necessarily approve) proposed initiatives if they reach 50 000 signatures during a set time-period of six months. After their adoption in 2012, citizens’ initiatives have been produced on a variety of topics. One recurring theme in the initiatives is immigration, as a number immigration-related initiatives have been written since 2012 till today. As will be established later, a significant amount of these immigration-related initiatives, that is nearly all of them, have a negative stance towards immigration and immigrants. Thus, the initiatives can be posited as part of wider societal processes in which anti-immigration is made visible through normalized racist and xenophobic speech.

Particular focus will be on those initiatives that reflect negative attitudes towards immigration and immigrants. These initiatives will be examined using discourse analysis and by applying the concept of symbolic boundaries and intergroup threat theory in their analysis. Whereas discourse analysis focuses on how we structure and categorize our social reality through speech, symbolic boundaries do the same by directing focus to how we make distinctions in categorizing people, time, and space. Symbolic boundaries, ideas of what separates “us” from “them”, are used to create inclusion and exclusion (Lamont et al. 2015). Intergroup threat theory adds to this by directing focus to how ideas and perceptions of “threats” are created. The theory offers a way to examine divisions between in-group and out-group by focusing on how the out-group is constructed as a perceived “threat” to the in-group. The focus of the analysis is on how the initiatives aim at maintaining boundaries between

“Finnish people” (us) and “immigrants” (them). The main research question is: *What discourses maintaining symbolic boundaries do the initiatives contain?* This main research question is supplemented with a secondary research question of: *How is the perception of intergroup threat visible in these boundary-maintaining discourses?*

The thesis additionally adopts theories of cultural violence and structural violence. It is argued that the rhetoric maintaining symbolic boundaries and feeling of intergroup threat in the initiatives is a form of cultural violence that serves to legitimate structural violence, that is violence within society’s structures that restricts people and groups from accessing material and non-material resources (Galtung 1969).

In this context, the initiatives are considered, first, as part of ongoing processes where people and groups (not necessarily always big in size) aim to justify and establish more restrictive immigration policies by normalizing ways of speech that can be considered racist and xenophobic. Second, the initiatives are considered as an additional “platform” or site where Finnish citizens are able to make these attitudes more visible by proposing changes in Finland’s legislature. For these two reasons the initiatives on immigration should be examined.

Lastly, a central notion about citizens’ initiatives is that they are by default restrictive. Only people with a Finnish citizenship are able to propose and to sign them. Those without citizenship are not able sign the initiatives and through them attempt to influence policies in Finland. This restricts and minimizes immigrants’ own agency, which is particularly problematic when they are the targets of the restrictive policies the initiatives aim to establish by arguing that immigrants are a “threat”.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. First, the aim of the background section is to offer better understanding of the environment that the initiatives have been created in by examining how immigration became a politicized topic in Finland in the early 2000’s. The background section continues by examining some of the main characteristics and sites of anti-immigrant discussion in Finland and briefly in general terms. The third section of the background chapter examines citizens’ initiatives as a form of political and societal participation in addition to considering immigrants’ (restricted) political participation. The chapter on the theoretical framework discusses symbolic boundaries and intergroup threat theory as well the concepts of cultural and structural violence. This is followed by the chapter on data and methodology and subsequently, the analysis of the data. Lastly, the discussion section discusses the findings of the analysis in more detail, followed by the conclusions chapter.

2. Background and literature review

The aim of this chapter is to situate the citizens' initiatives on immigration in a Finnish political landscape that has seen the politicization of immigration issues simultaneously as far-right, populist Finns Party (previously the True Finns) gained increasing electoral support especially in 2008 (although the party's success is not the only explanatory factor for the politicization of the topic). The first two parts of the chapter (2.1. and 2.2.) examine the rise of immigration as a political issue in Finland in the early 2000's and subsequently highlights some of the main characteristics of the rhetoric used in anti-immigrant discourses. As shown later in the analysis, the rhetoric used in the citizens' initiatives has similarities with anti-immigrant rhetoric in general as well as the rhetoric that political populist parties use. This suggests that the initiatives on immigration have been created in an environment where similar justification to anti-immigrant policies are deployed in politics, in public discussion and, as in the case of the initiatives, in processes of direct participatory democracy where citizens aim to change legislature. Indeed, the similarities between the initiatives and argumentation used by anti-immigrant movements posits the initiatives as a part of these movements and as a "forum" in which anti-immigrant sentiments can be voiced. Chapter 2.2.1., in turn, highlights immigrants' own agency along with civil society in protesting against restrictive policies.

The last part of the chapter (2.3.) examines citizens' initiatives as a part of civil society and as a form of political participation that, while facilitating political participation of other groups, leaves other groups (non-citizens) outside of its scope. Moreover, as already noted, the initiatives offer a sort of "one-way lane" for societal participation where Finnish citizens are able to present their anti-immigrant sentiments but where the voices of immigrants are not heard.

2.1. Politization of immigration in Finland

Immigration as a topic of media, and thought that public, discussion largely appeared in Finland during 1990's with the arrival of Somali and Bosnian refugees as well as Ingrian Finns in Finland (Raittila 2009, 68; Avonius & Kestilä-Kekkonen 2018, 79). Raittila (2009) notes that until 2008, media discussion on immigration was for the most part characterized with wishes to appear "correct" while simultaneously disregarding possible challenges in respect of immigration. During these years particularly work-based immigration received general positive attitudes. This is interesting as, according to Raittila (ibid., 69) studies on public opinion indicated that people had less positive views of immigration than what was portrayed in media. He notes that "simultaneously as politically correct

journalism wiped open racism from its columns, it also for the most part kept quiet about the racism in Finnish society and citizens' suspicions towards immigration" (ibid.).

Raittila (ibid.) continues by noting that to understand later public and media discussions on immigration, three aspects of media discussion on immigration during the early 2000's are particularly important to consider. First, media's narrow portrayal of immigration and disregard of anxieties and suspicion related to the topic led to growing dissatisfaction and to people moving to social media and different forums to voice their opinions. Research has suggested that it was namely social media forums where Finnish anti-immigrant movement was born (Ylä-Anttila 2020; Hatakka 2017, 2026-2027). Social media not only created a platform where people with similar ideas were able to gather and share their views, but it also facilitated increased support of individual commentators, some of which would later rise to notable political positions (Mäkinen 2017, 221). For instance, a former party leader of the populist Finns Party first gained support online through his Islamophobic blog posts that focused on the perceived "fall of the West" due to "multiculturalism" (ibid. 222).

Raittila (2009, 68-71) argues that the second influential factor in shaping later public discussion on the topic is that during the early 2000's, politicians were unwilling to take active part in public discussion on themes connected to immigration, such as on ethnic discrimination in Finland. This, then, left issues such as racism largely uncontested. Third factor to consider on the media discussion at the time is the absence of immigrant voices. As immigrants were often left out of the discussions concerning themselves, their representation largely remained one-sided and often stereotypical. (ibid.)

It seems, then, that following Raittila's (2009) three notions on media discussion on immigration in the early 2000's, the politization of immigration started from a point where media was seemingly neutral towards immigration but simultaneously over-represented immigrants in regard to crime, overlooked immigrant voices and neglected diverse ways of representation, and did not address racism in Finnish society. Concurrently, unwillingness to address people's anxieties towards immigration had its part in people moving to online media forums, where individuals sharing anti-immigrant sentiments were able to create their own communities, as noted by for instance Ylä-Anttila 2020.

The seemingly careful media approach to discussing immigration changed in 2008 after the success of Finns Party in two consecutive elections made the party one of the most popular parties in Finland and brought about the politization of immigration (Keskinen 2009; Hatakka 2017, 2026). Finns Party

were able to unexpectedly increase their support first in municipal elections held late 2008 and a few months later in EU parliamentary elections. In both elections, immigration was the party's central theme, and the sudden success brought the party extensive media attention. Many of the newly elected True Finn municipal representatives held critical views towards immigration, and controversial, racist claims made by the representatives were noted both by media and other political parties.

Finns Party were able to create and expand public discussion around immigration as other political parties in Finland reacted to the party's claims either in support or against. Indeed, soon the topic of immigration became politicized, contested issue, and Finnish political parties were central in this change (Keskinen 2009, 33-36.) Although Finns Party were not the only political representatives making anti-immigrant statements, it has been suggested that as the initiative to talk about immigration first came from them, they were also largely able to define the ways of discussion as well as the main issues (Keskinen 2019; Horsti 2015, 351). This was evident both in political debates as well as in media discourses, as noted by Keskinen (2009, 33): "open racism transferred from online forums and websites to be a part of public discussion through media opinion columns and interviews of 'immigration critics'". Alongside with the increase of anti-immigrant sentiments in public discussion, Keskinen (2009, 34-37) notes how suspicion towards immigration was evident in a concrete policy level as well, as more receptive immigrant policy suggestions and, for instance, establishment of a refugee reception center in Helsinki faced resistance beyond party lines.

Indeed, both Keskinen (2019) and Horsti (2015) argue that in public discussion in Finland especially refugees and irregular immigrants have for the most part been portrayed either as threats or as problems. This has been visible already since immigration became politicized, as noted above. Some discourses were also visible in 2015, when the number of asylum applicant rose in Finland. In 2016, narrow representation of asylum applicants and irregular immigrants was combined with more restrictive asylum policies as Finland decided to remove humanitarian reasons as a basis for granting residence permits (Finnish Immigration Service 216). Indeed, Ahonen and Kallius (ibid. 98-99) note that ways of speech are used not only to construct images of (irregular)immigrants but also to justify restrictive policies. These restrictive policies, such as the change in 2016, not only influence juridical possibilities of refugees but are also part of the "production of irregular immigration", which refers to those restrictive processes and structures that force immigrants in an irregular position (Ahonen & Kallius 2019).

Horsti (2009) has made the similar observation as Ahonen and Kallius (2019) in noting that in Finnish public discussion, a distinction between immigrants as "threats" and immigrants as "victims" is made.

She notes that typically refugees, especially those not admitted through quotas, as well as irregular immigrants (framed as illegal immigrants) are depicted as threats and as people who exploit the asylum system. These immigrant groups are separated from those deemed as “victims”, people who are deserving of protection. In the context of Finland, the victim status is often given to refugees who have been admitted through quotas. Horsti (ibid. 76) continues with noting that by categorizing immigrants/refugees either as threats or victims they are separated into those who are “accepted” and to those who are not. Moreover, the “acceptability” of an immigrant is increased if they are viewed as being able to adapt to “Finnish culture” and society. Narrow, one-sided representation of immigrants in public discussion is not only limited to Finland, as for instance Blinder and Allen (2016) have noted that in Britain’s media immigrants tend to be depicted through their “illegality” which, as they suggest, influence how the public in general view immigrants.

The construction of immigrants through negative frames as well as its implications are further explored in the next section, where the focus is on anti-immigrant framings that are commonly deployed both in populist speech as well as more broadly in anti-immigrant discourses. Nevertheless, it should be noted that development of anti-immigrant politics and sentiments is not limited to Finland or to far-right parties. Both Akkerman (2012) and Bale (2008) note that stricter immigration policies have been on the agenda of center-right political parties throughout Europe. Indeed, far-right parties, as is the case with Finns Party in Finland, have not been the only political parties aiming for stricter immigration policies, as the development of restrictive immigrant policies as well as negative attitudes and suspicion towards immigrants can be seen at a wider European level as well. Moreover, Lyytinen (2019, 19) notes that Finland has been part of the Union’s attempts to create unified immigrant policies ever since 1999. EU-level immigrant policies, solidarity (or lack thereof) between member countries and EU border policies all have also shaped Finland’s immigrant policies (ibid.). Moreover, immigration attitudes in Finland resemble those of other EU countries, as is evident for example, in the rise of anti-immigrant, populist political parties across Europe (Elgenius & Rydgen 2019; Mjelde 2020).

2.2. Public discourses on immigration – concern for the welfare state, safety and “our culture”

Examining observations made by Elgenius and Rydgen (2019) on the anti-immigrant rhetoric of populist parties offers a starting point for highlighting some relevant, commonly used arguments in justifying anti-immigrant stances as the observations made by Elgenius and Rydgen (ibid.) also reflect the characteristic of anti-immigrant discourses more widely. Understanding public and political

discourses, in turn, help in contextualizing the environment in which the initiatives are produced. Elgenius and Rydgen (ibid.) argue that populist, right-wing parties often deploy five distinct anti-immigrant frames in attracting voters and justifying their views. First, populist parties often posit immigrants as competing against native citizens over scarce resources such as jobs. Second, these parties argue that immigrants use welfare state benefits that are then lost to native citizens. Additionally, immigration is often framed as a threat to the culture and identity of one's country, and immigrants are claimed to bring about increased criminality and social insecurities. Moreover, in some cases these parties claim that especially Muslim immigrants are a threat to liberal values that need to be defended (ibid. 584). These frames are somewhat universal, as noted by Mjelde (2020) who found similar frames being used across Scandinavia in the rhetoric of their right-wing parties. Furthermore, in the context of Finland Wahlbeck (2016, 580) notes that the Finns Party (then True Finns) election programme of 2011 deploys similar rhetoric in displaying "a concern for the future of Finnish culture, Finnish identity and Finland as an independent country." Globalization and "multicultural society" are claimed to be one source of this threat.

As mentioned previously, the presence of an anti-immigrant party in mainstream politics in Finland has meant that immigration related issues have stayed high on the political agenda, as for instance media has given notable coverage to issues linked to the party during election cycles (Perna 2012). However, anti-immigrant sentiments are not limited only to politics. For instance, online forums and websites have been a prominent platform in creating and spreading anti-immigrant discourses, as they offer an easy way for people and groups with similar ideas to connect. Several studies have focused on online spaces in mapping characteristics of anti-immigrant discourses (Nortio et al. 2020; Ylä-Anttila 2020; Hatakka 2017; Mäkinen 2017; Pettersson & Sakki 2017). Exploring the findings of these studies allows for a better conception of the main characteristics of anti-immigrant discourses, their implications and ultimately, their similarities with the citizens' initiatives on immigration.

Nortio, Niska, Renvik and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2020) note that hate speech is normalized and legitimized through social media forums, which they consider as sites that allow people "to make sense of and participate in societal debates" (ibid. 442). In their study the authors focused on negotiations on "multiculturalism" on a popular Finnish online forum after a Finnish politician had made widely publicized anti-immigrant remarks. Nortio et al. (ibid.) found that the discussions on the online forum focused on criticizing "multiculturalism" and highlighting the threat it is argued to pose to Finland. In these online discussions Muslims were constructed as "others" against a "Finnish nation". Therefore, the discussions on the forum overlap with common media discourses described by Ahonen and Kallius (2019) and Horsti (2009) in that both the media and the forum tend to depict immigrants

as threats. However, the forum served as a site of debate as well, as these anti-immigrant frames were contested, and the politician's remarks considered hate speech by some participants.

Hatakka (2017, 2027), in turn, notes how online forums have offered legitimacy and "new rhetoric and discursive assets" to Finnish anti-immigrant political movements. In her study, Hatakka (ibid.) focuses on Hommaforum, a Finnish online forum that she describes as a site of online civic far-right activism, during 2008-2015. She notes that the forum functions as a site for "mobilization of resources" for Finnish anti-immigrant political movements (namely the Finns Party) through offering a base of voters and supporters, and as noted above, through offering legitimacy and expanded anti-immigrant rhetoric. Mäkinen (2017), in turn, has made similar observations to Hatakka (2017) and Nortio et al. (2020) in noting that discussions held on online forums tend to spread outside as well, to places such as mainstream media and politics.

In her study, Mäkinen (2017) focuses on online anti-immigration activism in Finland. Similar to Hatakka (2017), she has focused on the online forum Hommaforum, a platform for anti-immigrant, racist discussion that gained increased popularity after the municipal elections of 2008. In her observation of the rhetoric used on the forum, she found that the worthiness and value of immigrants coming to Finland was linked to their perceived economic productiveness and to how economically independent they were seen to be. Non-economically productive immigrants were seen as taking economic resources (such as social benefits) away from Finnish citizens. Mäkinen (2017) notes that this is related to processes of rise of neoliberal values in which the value of a person is linked to how productive they are in economic terms (neoliberalism has also been seen to challenge "nation-state-based belonging", as noted by Korteweg (2017, 435).

Avonius and Kestilä-Kekkonen (2018, 85) expand on Mäkinen's (2017) findings by noting that politicization of immigration has been partly linked to welfare chauvinism, meaning that social benefits granted by welfare state are seen to belong only to native citizens (see also Korteweg 2019). The same has also been noted by van Oorschot (2008), who found in his study that solidarity towards immigrants in European welfare states is generally low, meaning that immigrants are not seen as deserving recipients of social benefits as other groups. Burgoon and Rooduijn (2021) elaborate on this further by noting that the attitudes towards immigration and redistribution of welfare-benefits depend on a country's socioeconomic context, the number of immigrants residing in the country and the extent that immigrants receive social benefits compared to the country's native citizens. In their study conducted on the results of the European Social Surveys between 2002-2014 of 23 countries (one of them being Finland), Burgoon and Rooduijn (ibid.) found that anti-immigration attitudes seem

to be connected to opposition of welfare redistribution in countries that have high numbers of immigrants, high social-welfare spending and high number of immigrants dependent on social benefits compared to native citizens. Based on these previous studies that have suggested that immigrants are not seen as equally deserving of social benefits as native citizens, it will be interesting to examine whether similar ideas are visible in the initiatives as well. However, it is noteworthy that by that placing responsibility for employment and “economic productivity” on immigrants themselves attention is diverted away from those structural obstacles in labor markets that prevent immigrants from attaining jobs in their host countries. Valtonen (2001), for instance, has explored these structural processes of immigrant exclusion in the Finnish labor market.

Another interesting discovery Mäkinen (2017) made is that that while the people on the forum defined economically non-productive immigrants as “surplus outsiders”, they also defined themselves as being “inside” as an effort to include themselves while simultaneously excluding others: “insecurity and anxiety that are dealt with in the forum discussions are therefore related to processes of belonging and recognition, to the question of who is recognized and accepted as an adequate citizen” (ibid. 227). This production of “us”, or of “people on the inside”, has also been studied by Keskinen (2013), who in her study focuses on how “white Finnish nation” is reproduced in texts written by radical right-wing populists. Keskinen (ibid.) found that in the texts, Finland is constructed as a white, Christian, Western nation that is threatened by outside cultures and “failed multiculturalism”. Finland, and West, are posited against non-Western immigrants and particularly Muslims, who are depicted as a danger to the Western society and its values. Similar observations have been made by Aharoni and Féron (2020, 97), who in their study on Soldiers of Odin, a Finnish right-wing street patrolling organization, have noted that the members of the organization often depicted immigrants and their religion (which is assumed to be Islam) as a threat to “Finland’s peaceful existence”. (Reproducing images of “Finland” and “Finnishness” is not limited only to online-anti immigrant discourses, as Pappi (2019) has noted that “Finnishness” is constructed in immigration-related discussions in traditional media too).

Virkki and Venäläinen (2020), in turn, have focused on the role of emotions in anti-immigrant online discussions where immigrants are depicted as a danger to the Finnish society and its citizens. These online discussions centered in particular on violence crimes suspected to be committed by immigrants in Finland and were prompted by the extensive media coverage on the topic during years 2015-2017 (ibid. 406-407). In their analysis of the discussions, Virkki and Venäläinen (2020) found that the emotions of fear, hate, and love were often used in legitimating anti-immigrant attitudes. The authors note that “the fear-laden orientation to migrants -particularly Muslims- evoked in the narrative relies

on images of injury that migrants may inflict upon ‘us’ in the event that they are allowed to enter the nation unrestrictedly” (ibid. 409). The online discussions often depicted all immigrants as a potential danger that “us” have to be protected from. This fear towards immigrants often merged with hate and calls for preventing immigration, as well as love and caring towards those who were seen as needing protection from immigrants (in this context “our women”).

What seems to be evident from the findings of the studies examined above is that anti-immigrant discourses and sentiments, whether they be online or not, often tend to share similar characteristics of portraying immigrants through their perceived threat to “our” values, “culture”, economics, and safety. Immigrants are posited as less deserving than native citizens, and diverse ways of presenting immigrants has been challenging even for traditional media. What is implied in these discourses and in the studies examined above is that, as immigrants are separated from “us”, they are also kept outside of “our nation” or a collective identity as “us”. This idea of homogenous nation states with distinctive characteristics and cultures was already examined by Anderson (1983) who argued that the idea of a “nation” is based on peoples’ collective identity as being members of what constitutes “us”.

In this context, this thesis examines how these processes of othering are visible and constructed in the citizens’ initiatives on immigration. Whereas previous studies have focused on negative depictions of immigrants in the context, for example, of politics (Elgenius & Rydgen 2019), online spaces (Nortio, Niska, Renvik & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2020; Keskinen 2013; Virkki & Venäläinen 2020) and in mainstream media (Horsti 2009; Ahonen & Kallius 2019), studies have not previously focused on how boundaries are constructed in citizens’ initiatives.

Moreover, findings of the studies examined point to the notion of cultural essentialism as part of nationalist ideas. Grillo (2003, 158) defines cultural essentialism as an understanding that people are “cultural subjects” which refers to them being “bearers of a culture, located within a bounded world, which defines them and differentiates them from others.” Notions of a “Finnish nation” with its distinct culture are implied in the results of the studies presented above as well (Nortio et al. 2020; Mäkinen 2017; Keskinen 2013; Aharoni & Féron 2020; Virkki & Venäläinen). Additionally, in these anti-immigrant discourses cultural essentialism and nationalism is accompanied by what Grillo (2003) refers to as “cultural anxiety”, a concern for the future of one’s culture (mainly Western culture). What should be noted is that this concern for “our culture” and its majority status is not only restricted to anti-immigrant discourses, as also mentioned by Grillo (2003) The same has been highlighted by Nortio, Renvik, and Jasinskaja-Lahti’s (2020), who in their interview study examined

people's attitudes towards "multiculturalism" in Finland. They found that native Finnish people were somewhat accepting of "multiculturalism", but only when cultural diversity in Finland existed on their terms without threatening native Finns' position as the (power) majority: "majority was constructed, again, as the group that has the power to allow minorities a certain degree of cultural maintenance without having to change itself." (ibid., 28). Simultaneously, even though Finnish people were seen as being able to somewhat "benefit" from a culturally diverse society, for instance, through learning from other cultures, non-homogenous society was seen as instable versus a culturally homogenous society that was perceived as "being stable and 'without any conflicts'" (ibid. 27). Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, the interview participants referred to similar ideas of cultural essentialism and nationalism as some of the above-examined anti-immigrant online discourses do. The interviewees referred to ideas of cultural essentialism in arguing that there are distinct different cultures between native Finnish people and immigrants, and that these cultures largely define one's identity. Moreover, they referred to nationalist notions of a state with one majority culture in arguing that native Finnish people should remain in the cultural majority of Finland. (ibid., 29.)

This chapter has highlighted the origins of how immigration became to be a contested theme in Finland, in addition to examining some of the main characteristics of anti-immigration discussion using online spaces as an example. Finally, it highlighted how cultural essentialism and cultural anxiety (Grillo 2003) are visible behind these discourses. These notions are important as they offer a "background" against which the initiatives on immigration can be examined; are similar arguments and justifications visible in the initiatives as well, or are the characteristic of anti-immigrant rhetoric presented in this chapter different than that of the initiatives?

2.2.1. Immigrants and civil society contesting and challenging restrictive discourses and policies

Finally, it should be noted that anti-immigrant sentiments explored in this background chapter do not reflect the entirety of Finnish society, nor that of the European Union. In the context of Finland, studies have suggested, for instance, that the election success of the anti-immigrant Finns Party has in fact had a positive effect on the increase of pro-immigrant attitudes among the general public in Finland (Lönnqvist et al. 2019). Similarly, Lonsky (2020) has focused on municipalities during 2006-2015 and demonstrated that in municipalities with high number of immigrants, The Finns Party's electoral success in national elections has been lower, while pro-immigrant parties have gained increased support. Lonsky (ibid.) suggests this result is due to two factors in particular: first, anti-immigrant public discourses drive those with pro-immigrant stances to vote, and second, in

municipalities with high number of immigrants, positive intergroup encounters may be more frequent and thus decrease anti-immigrant sentiments

Whereas both Lönnqvist et al. (2019) and Lonsky (2020) focus on elections in demonstrating that anti-immigrant movements are countered through more explicit support towards immigrants, Merikoski (2021) focuses on the grassroots level in exploring how Finnish citizens have shown solidarity towards asylum seekers through offering them private home accommodations ever since 2015, when the number of asylum seekers arriving in Finland rose. She refers to the offering of home accommodation as “contentious hospitality”, as people offering their homes to refugees simultaneously consider their actions as an act of solidarity and as challenges against more restrictive asylum policies and negative attitudes towards immigrants. Morell (2018), in turn, focuses on social media civil rights movement in Sweden in supporting immigrants from Romania. She notes that simultaneously as the movement demanded better treatment of Romani immigrants, it also offered them a voice as well as demanded a more diverse representation of them.

Additionally, immigrants themselves have and have shown agency despite being targets of policies and discourses that largely disregard this. For instance, Tyler and Marciniak (2013, 152) note that in various countries in Europe and outside of it, different immigrant groups (such as irregular immigrants) have expressed their agency in protesting for representation and visibility. They note that by protesting, immigrants challenge the exclusionary processes of citizenship that create injustices and exclusion and without which immigrants do not have the same rights and recognition as citizens. Moreover, in her study, Näre (2021) focuses on the refugees’ protest called ‘The Right to Live’ held in Helsinki in 2017, during a time in which Finland was tightening its asylum laws after the 2015 “refugee crisis”. The protest, which lasted around five months, demanded enhanced rights for refugees seeking asylum in Finland. Näre (ibid.) notes that this protest, along with other protests organized by non-citizens around Europe, focused on the universalism of human rights and in the Finnish case, how these rights are violated by states practicing structural violence (or what Näre 2021 refers to as bureaucratic violence) with their restrictive policies. Similarly, Fontanari and Ambrosini (2018) focus on refugee protests in Italy and Germany in examining migrant agency and civil society support within restrictive policies, structures, and practical management of immigration. They refer to this intersection of restrictive practices and policies with immigrant everyday agency as a “migration battleground” where complex power relations on the national and as well as on the EU-level are created and challenged. Furthermore, they note that migrants themselves, along with civil society, participate in “managing” migration by, for instance, “building bridges between migrants and receiving societies” (ibid. 599).

2.3. Citizens' initiatives and immigrants' societal participation

In 2012, citizens' initiatives were added to the Finnish constitution. Citizens' initiatives are a form of direct participatory democracy through which Finnish citizens can either propose a new bill to the Finnish parliament or suggest that the Parliament begin a drafting process of a new bill. Alternatively, through citizens' initiatives, people can also suggest changes in or abolishing of current laws. Citizens' initiatives are a fairly accessible channel to participate in democracy, as any Finnish citizen who is over 18 years old and eligible to vote can compose a citizens' initiative. Citizens' initiatives can be composed directly on a website maintained by the Ministry of Justice. After its publication on kansalaisaloite.fi (the website for citizens' initiatives maintained by the Ministry of Justice) an initiative must reach 50 000 signatures in the time period of six months in order to be considered by the Finnish Parliament. As with proposing an initiative, the signatures in support of an initiative must be by Finnish citizens who are over 18 years old and eligible to vote. Finnish citizens can sign initiatives on the website kansalaisaloite.fi or by signing a paper form. (Finnish Parliament, n.d.; Finnish Ministry of Justice, n.d.) Christensen, Jäske, Setälä and Laitinen (2017, 428) note that about a third of those eligible to vote in Finland have signed either one or more citizens' initiatives.

Even though the Parliament is obliged to consider an initiative if it reaches the 50 000 signatures during the six-month signature-collecting period, it does not have to approve it (eduskunta.fi). The success of citizens' initiatives has been fairly low, as as of the beginning of March 2022, a total of 1 352 initiatives have been proposed (kansalaisaloite.fi) out of which 61 have been addressed by the Parliament (Finnish Parliament n.d.). Out of these 61 initiatives, only 4 have been approved by the Parliament and applied as a law.

Christensen et al. (2017, 419) suggest that citizens' initiatives are "used for promoting a variety of topics that would not otherwise enter the public sphere since they are only backed by small minorities." Indeed, despite of the low success rates of the proposed initiatives, they still serve as a means to diversify the topics that are brought to political consideration. In terms of the initiatives concerning immigration, even though the initiatives on immigration have not been considered or approved by the parliament, people and groups have regardless been able to bring immigration-related demands and suggestions into the sphere of direct democracy. Regardless of their success, citizens' initiatives (both related to immigration and not) make the topics they propose more visible, as anyone can examine them on the destined website.

As briefly mentioned above, citizens initiatives allow Finnish citizens to directly participate in processes of democracy. As noted by Christensen et al. (2017) two of the driving factors behind the

development of citizens' initiatives have been to better allow citizens to set the political agenda and to activate those citizens who otherwise would be marginalized or passive. The authors (*ibid.*, 428) found in their study focusing on to what extent citizens' initiatives have increased political participation and inclusiveness in Finland that the initiatives have increased inclusion especially among "otherwise marginalized groups", especially young people. This is partly due to the initiatives' accessibility (initiatives can be signed via internet). Paradoxically, however, citizens' initiatives do not enhance immigrants' societal participation as they are accessible only to citizens (unless, of course, a person with an immigrant background has a Finnish citizenship). Immigrants, especially the most marginalized ones such as irregular immigrants, are in a particularly vulnerable position, and their opportunities to influence their host countries' politics remain limited.

The exclusionary nature of the citizenship amplifies the already unequal power relations between (native) Finnish citizens and immigrants by only activating citizens. This appears as particularly problematic considering that the majority of the initiatives concerning immigration aim at more restrictive policies while simultaneously depicting immigrants in harmful, narrow ways. Indeed, citizens' initiatives do not allow immigrants a similar formal channel where they could bring important topics to the sphere of direct democracy and possibly challenge these harmful narratives and assumptions made of them. Of course, as noted in the previous chapter, immigrant groups have been active in informal societal participation.

Moreover, societal participation of immigrants, whether formal or informal, is important as it diversifies the representation of different social groups within a society, in addition to broadening immigrants' own agency. Lelkes and Zólyomi (2011) suggest that especially non-EU immigrants are at an increased risk of poverty (this risk is particularly high in Finland) and that those in the highest risk of poverty simultaneously are at a high risk of social exclusion. Further, societal participation has a direct connection to individuals' health, as suggested by Niemi et al. (2019), who on their review on empirical studies on refugee social participation note that different forms of social participation are connected to refugees' better subjective and psychosocial wellbeing as well as decreased psychological stress. Thus, immigrants' right to wellbeing (both economic and physical) can be influenced by including them in their host societies. However, as noted in a research report from OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) (2017, 6), many OSCE countries (57 states in Europe, North America and Central Asia) consider facilitating migrant societal participation as challenging, even though these countries have made commitments to enhance it. As also noted in the ODIHR report (2017, 26-31), (formal) societal participation of different immigrant groups is not even, as the extent that specific immigrant groups participate in society either directly

or indirectly is dependent, for instance, on social context, education level, age, material and social resources and social connections.

Therefore, in the context of the thesis, citizens' initiatives are considered as a platform that enables Finnish citizens with anti-immigrant sentiments to bring visibility to their claims while simultaneously, due to their restrictive nature, disregarding immigrants' own agency by restricting their participation in similar processes. This further enhances the already unequal power dynamics within societies between native citizens and immigrant populations, which is also precisely why it is important to examine these initiatives.

3. Theoretical framework: symbolic boundaries and intergroup threat

As this study is concerned with how boundaries are created and maintained in the citizens' initiatives on immigration, the approach chosen here is that of symbolic boundaries. The notion on symbolic boundaries steers attention to those distinctions that actors make in order to categorize and construct definitions of our social reality (Lamont & Molnár 2002, 168). To properly understand how symbolic boundaries are maintained, it is important to examine how they are justified. Therefore, theory on symbolic boundaries is complemented by theory on intergroup threat which is concerned with how out-groups are perceived as a threat to an in-group's safety and resources.

3.1. Symbolic boundaries

The concept of boundaries, or symbolic boundaries, is a fairly old one in social sciences. As noted by Lamont et al. (2015, 850-851), symbolic boundaries were present already in writings of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. Lamont et al. (ibid.) note that whereas Durkheim made the distinction between "the realms of sacred and the profane" and argued that a common understanding of these two realms is a part of what defines the borders of a society, Weber noted how symbolic boundaries are used in creation of social inequalities in processes where people compete over scarce resources.

More recently, Lamont and Molnar (2002, 168) have defined symbolic boundaries as "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality." By categorizing people and groups through perceived symbolic boundaries, they are separating people to those who are included and to those who are excluded, and thus contribute to maintaining inequalities (Lamont et al. 2015). Indeed, as also noted by Alba (2005, 27) majority groups often maintain boundaries between them and minority groups in order to maintain social distance and preserve their own privileges.

Symbolic boundaries are not necessarily easy to detect, as they are not always explicit. McAreavey (2019, 334) demonstrates this by using workplace culture as an example: he notes that a workplace can function as a site of symbolic boundaries when long-term employees maintain an immutable workplace culture, resisting any change and distinguishing between those who are "loyal" to the established ways of working versus those who wish to introduce change. Another example he offers is how private education is in some contexts considered more valuable than public education, thus making individuals with a public education less appealing (ibid). In both these examples, symbolic

boundaries are not something “concrete”, but instead ways of understanding and categorizing one’s social reality. Symbolic boundaries, then, are distinctions that we make in order distinguish what is valuable, as well as to define who “we” are and, simultaneously, who others are.

Literature and subsequent theories have examined different ways symbolic boundaries can be established, shifted and how their nature can vary. In his study on second-generation immigrants in France, Germany and the US, Alba (2005) has suggested that the nature of boundaries between majority and minority can vary, as they can be either “bright” or “blurred”. This nature is dependent on how boundaries have been institutionalized. Boundary between social groups is “bright” when it is clear to all actors at all times which “side” an individual is on. Consequently, a boundary is considered “blurred” when the position of an individual in regard to group boundaries is somewhat unclear, or when an individual is able to be flexible in their group identification. Distinguishing between these two different types of boundaries is beneficial, as the nature of a symbolic boundary effects the extent that a minority group (or an out-group) is able to attain an equal status with the majority group. As Alba (*ibid.*, 22) notes: “the nature of the boundary affects fundamentally the processes by which individuals gain access to the opportunities afforded the majority”. Moreover, whereas Alba (2005) focuses on the nature of borders more on a social level, Zolberg and Long (1999, 9) note that the nature of boundaries can vary on a structural level as well. They use institutional boundaries as an example in noting that they can be blurred when they recognize multiple or diverse memberships within state institutions (for instance dual nationality, or institutionalization of multiple faiths) and thus allow for more diverse identities or positions. Conversely, boundaries, whether in institutions or in social relationships, can also prevent people from accessing resources when their recognition of identities or statuses is limited.

Prior research has suggested that symbolic boundaries are flexible and dynamic. This has been noted, for instance, by Zolberg and Long (1999) in theorizing that (symbolic) boundaries can move or transform. They note that between majority and minority groups, there can occur boundary crossing, boundary blurring, or boundary shifting. Crossing happens when society’s structures as well as distinctions between majority and minority remain the same, but a minority member (in their example an immigrant) changes themselves to better resemble the majority (for example by adopting their language or religion). Boundary blurring, in turn, changes the structures of a society by allowing multiple “memberships” and diverse identities. For instance, Alba’s (2005) notion of dual nationalities is an example of blurred boundaries. Finally, boundary shifting happens when boundaries between groups are relocated to be more inclusive or exclusive. Zolberg and Long (1999, 9) note: “rhetoric of pro-immigrant activists and of immigrants themselves can be read as arguments

on behalf of the expansion of boundaries - - while that of the anti-immigrant groups can be read as an attempt to redefine them restrictively in order to exclude them”.

Wimmer (2008), in turn, has developed a “multilevel process theory” which focuses on different boundary-making practices on the level of a nation-state, as well as on exploring different ways that society’s structures obstruct these processes of boundary-making. In his theory, Wimmer (ibid. 973) focuses on the making of ethnic boundaries, and ethnicity, according to him, is a “subjective felt sense of belonging based on the belief in shared culture and common ancestry”. By partly following Zolberg and Long (1999) and Alba (2005), Wimmer (2008, 986-990) suggests that within the context of a nation-state, boundaries are made by varying actors through five strategies: by establishing new boundaries, by constricting already existing boundaries, by changing the meanings of a boundary, by crossing boundaries, and by blurring boundaries by overcoming them. These different strategies focus either on expanding or constricting boundaries, changing “the hierarchical ordering of ethnic groups”, changing one’s position within a boundary system, or overcoming existing boundaries by contesting “ethnicity” as an argument of categorization. These notions made by Zolberg and Long (1999), Alba (2005), and Wimmer (2008) are beneficial in analyzing the initiatives, as they lead to examine whether similar processes of boundary transformation are visible in the initiatives as well.

Another interesting suggestion Wimmer (2008) has presented is that structural factors influence and constrain actors’ boundary making. First, Wimmer (ibid. 990-993) suggests that institutions shape boundary-making. In fact, he suggests that whereas different institutions inside of a nation-state shape boundary-making, the nation-state itself has an “ethnic logic” of facilitating boundary-making that is based on ethnicity, race or nationhood. This logic is based on the idea of a nation-state an entity where “like should rule over like” within defined boundaries. Moreover, Wimmer (ibid.) suggests that power shapes boundary-making in two different ways: first, he suggests that actors prefer ethnic differentiation to the extent that they will facilitate access to economic, political, and symbolic resources. Second, individual’s access to power resources determines the consequences that boundary making has for others. Boundaries made by those who have the power to set laws or use violence can have more severe consequences than of boundaries made by actors with less (institutionalized) power. Lastly, Wimmer (ibid.) notes that political networks shape in determining where a boundary between “us” and “them” exists. This, according to him is visible, for instance, in nation building where “majority” is created and defined.

The approaches to boundary making presented above mostly concern processes where boundaries are negotiated on a group, institutional, or national level. They focus on different developments or

changes of boundary making in general, by offering a framework in examining these shifts. Nonetheless, they offer useful approaches to examining the citizens' initiatives on immigration, even though the focus is more on *how* symbolic boundaries are created and made visible in a specific context. Some notions of the frameworks presented above remain particularly useful, including Alba's (2005) notion of bright and blurred boundaries, Zolberg and Long (1999, 9) notion on how pro-immigrant rhetoric often deploys ideas of boundary expansion whereas that of anti-immigrant rhetoric is centered on boundary restriction. Lastly, Wimmer's (2008) notion of how the logic of nation-state enforces boundaries based on ethnicity, race, and nationhood will be used in making sense of the initiatives.

Finally, the frameworks above suggest that symbolic boundaries, categorizations we make of individuals and social groups, can transform into institutionalized boundaries. Lamont and Molnár (2002, 168) elaborate on this by noting that symbolic boundaries can transform into social boundaries, which they define as "objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities". Social boundaries, then, are symbolic boundaries that have "concretized" into boundaries or obstacles that prevent individuals from accessing resources. This is also noted Korteweg (2017, 433), who states that categorization of people and groups facilitates social, political, and economic exclusion.

Indeed, boundaries can be institutionalized as is the case with boundary maintaining between "Europeans" and Muslim immigrants in Europe. Goldberg (2006), in his article on the erasure of racism (and its past) in Europe, notes that even as racist processes (such as colonialism) are closely tied to Europe's history and the present, it still is something that is easily denied. Racism is seen as something happening somewhere else, and race is not something to talk about: "race has been rendered invisible, untouchable, as unnoticeably polluting as the toxic air we breathe" (ibid. 339). Despite of this denial, racist processes of othering still persist. Goldberg (ibid. 344-348) notes that one target of this othering are Muslim immigrants, who are in the European mainstream imaginary depicted in terms of outsidership, extremism and danger to European values of "freedom and democracy". Muslim immigrants are viewed as "non-European", as not really belonging here. "- - any person of colour or non-Christian (at least genealogically) in Europe presumptively is not of Europe, not European, doesn't (properly or fully) ever belong" (ibid. 352). Alba (2005, 32) continues by noting that Christian religion has largely been institutionalized in Europe as being a part of "us" through customs and ways of thinking. The same has been noted by Zolberg and Long (1999) who in their article argue that despite of apparent secularism, European states and "European identity" are both strongly connected to Christian tradition. They suggest that religion is a factor in struggles over

identities and processes of inclusion and exclusion, as diverse Muslim immigrant groups are perceived through “essentialized negative identity”. Thus, the tendency, visible in some discourses, of perceiving namely Muslim immigrants as not “fully European” not only presents a diverse group of individuals in narrow, one-sided terms, but also creates a boundary between “us” Europeans and Muslim immigrants, who are the targets of othering. Goldberg’s (2006) and Zolberg and Long’s (1999) notions on depictions of Muslim immigrants in Europe is visible in the citizens’ initiatives as well, as demonstrated later.

3.1.1. Symbolic boundaries and migration in previous research

Symbolic boundaries and migration have been empirically studied, for instance, in the context of economic integration (McAreavey & Krivokapic-Skoko 2019) and through the results of European Social Survey (Bail 2008; Neumann & Moy 2018). Whereas Neumann and Moy (2018) focus on factors that drive immigration attitudes on an individual level, Bail (2008) creates a typology of symbolic boundary configurations on the European level.

In his article, Bail (2008) examines and compares the configuration of symbolic boundaries of majority groups against immigrants in 21 European countries using the results of 2003 European Social Survey (ESS). Bail (*ibid.* 47-48) does this by analyzing ESS answers to a set of questions where respondents were asked to evaluate a hypothetical immigrant. His focus is specifically on six measured symbolic boundaries: language, culture, race, religion, education, and occupation (the last two are also defined as symbolic boundaries based on human capital). Using these six categories, Bail (*ibid.*) studied the extent which references to a specific category were used to maintain distinctions between “us” Europeans and “others”, immigrants. His results indicate that throughout the data, language and culture are the most central symbolic boundaries dividing “us” and “them”, whereas race and religion are on average the least important, with human capital based symbolic boundaries being in between these two (*ibid.* 48).

The results Bail derived offer some indication of symbolic boundary configurations in Finland as well. Bail notes that Finland most closely resembles “set A” countries that are characterized by “(1) stronger than average racial and religious symbolic boundaries, (2) weaker than average cultural and linguistic symbolic boundaries, (3) slightly weaker than average educational symbolic boundaries, and (4) slightly stronger than average occupational symbolic boundaries.” (*ibid.* 50-51). Interestingly, Bail notes that all countries resembling set A are all located on the periphery of Europe. Additionally, he notes that all set A countries have, historically, been countries of emigration that only recently

have started to experience larger-scale immigration (ibid. 52-53). This indicates that the specific history of each country may affect how in these countries, symbolic boundaries between “us” and “them” are constructed.

Moreover, when examined separately, Finland seems to have stronger than average symbolic boundaries based on race, religion, culture, education, and occupation, whereas symbolic boundaries based on language are less important than the EU average. When examining Finland on its own without drawing comparisons to EU averages, the most important symbolic boundaries in Finland are culture (score of 8.18 on a scale of 0 = extremely unimportant -10 = extremely important), occupation (score 6.91), and education (score 6.41) (Bail 2008, 49 see table 6).

More recently, Neumann and Moy (2018) have examined the results of the 2014-2015 ESS in examining how individual attitudes towards immigration are connected to ideas of symbolic boundaries, intergroup contact, and individuals’ own experiences with discrimination. Through these three variables, the authors’ aim was to investigate how native individuals draw boundaries in deciding which immigrants are “viable” for their societies (ibid. 459).

Neumann and Moy (2018) highlight several relevant findings of symbolic boundary work in their results. First, Neumann & Moy (2018, 471) note that their findings confirm with Bail’s (2008) suggestion that symbolic boundaries are used by Europeans to make constructions of “us” and “them”. The authors also found that more favorable attitudes toward immigrants as well as stronger support for permissive refugee policies were more frequent among those who do not consider immigrants’ proficiency in host country’s language particularly important and those who do not attach particular importance in the perceived “nation’s way of live” e.g., nation’s own “cultural factors”. Conversely, Neumann and Moy (2018, 472) found that there is a correlation between emphasizing symbolic boundaries, or perceived differences between native and immigrant populations, and decreased acceptance of immigrant groups that are defined through these differences in race, ethnicity, and religion. Finally, the results support Goldberg’s (2006) and Zolberg and Long’s (1999) notions on “Christian European identity”, as the results indicated that highlighting immigrants’ Christian background increases support for permissive immigration policies.

Whereas Neumann and Moy (2018) and Bail (2008) focus on ESS in examining symbolic boundaries, McAreavey and Krivokapic-Skoko (2019) focus on (restrictive) societal structures as well as everyday interactions in exploring migrant integration to labor markets outside of metropolitan areas in Australia and in Ireland. In their research, McAreavey and Krivokapic-Skoko refer to boundaries as “complex interconnections and relational processes across time between

individuals, social structures, and institutions” (ibid., 331.) Their findings suggest that local-level symbolic boundaries were evident both in Australia’s and in Ireland’s job markets through, for instance, everyday microaggressions. These microaggressions, based on perceptions of immigrant workers as less deserving than native workers, were founded on ideas of immigrants’ cultural differentness, as well as perceptions of their different work ethic, values and even assumed physical dangerousness (ibid. 340). Additionally, McAreavey and Krivokapic-Skoko (2019, 341) observed that weakened national economical situations facilitated the establishment of new immigrant-excluding boundaries in labour markets. In practice these new-founded symbolic boundaries in job markets were based on the demand for migrant workers to have English proficiency (something that was not required before) and the viewing of overseas qualifications as less valuable than those of the host countries (ibid. 341). These boundaries and demands were not necessarily visible in national policies (where immigrants were deemed to be included in labor markets), but they were instead formulated in local settings, in everyday interactions between job-seeking migrants and local employers.

The above three studies on symbolic boundaries in Europe against immigrants focus on different features of immigrant boundary formation. Both Bail’s (2008) and Neumann and Moy’s (2018) studies are based on the ESS results, but whereas Bail (2008) focuses on symbolic boundary formation on a national level, Neumann and Moy (2018) focus on what the ESS results imply about symbolic boundary formation on an individual level. Both studies are qualitative and thus focus on what types of boundaries can be distinguished instead of focusing *how* these boundaries are visible in speech or text. McAreavey and Krivokapic-Skoko’s (2019) study utilizes both qualitative data (a national survey) and interviews, making their study a slightly more descriptive. However, while the studies mentioned above are concerned with the creation of symbolic boundaries on a national, local and individual levels, they do not focus on how symbolic boundaries are created in language. McAreavey and Krivokapic-Skoko’s (2019) study does do this, but only in the local contexts of Australia and Ireland. However, research has not so far focused on how these attitudes, discourses and frames on immigration take shape or are transferred in citizens initiatives. Moreover, studies on symbolic boundary making have not focused solely on Finland. This study adds new insights to both in its focus on Finland as well as in the concern with how symbolic boundaries are constructed from a collective civil society point of view. It as such gives insight into how attitudes towards immigration can function at the national, civil society level which is interesting for comparative purposes as well, in light of the studies mentioned by Bail (2008) and Neumann and

Moy (2018). Moreover, complementing the concept of symbolic boundaries with intergroup threat theory allows for a more extensive examination of the initiatives as well as their possible implications to immigrants and the fulfilment of their rights. Therefore, the next section will examine intergroup threat theory as well as previous research on it.

3.2. Intergroup threat theory

Justifications for boundaries have to be accepted by others in order to become more salient and socially meaningful. As Wimmer (2009, 997) notes: “(actors) have to convince others of their view of society”. Therefore, suggested here is that in the citizens’ initiatives, symbolic boundaries are enforced and further justified by depicting immigrants as a possible threat to native Finnish citizens. Thus, symbolic boundaries is complemented by intergroup threat theory. Intergroup threat theory offers a way to examine in-group – out-group divisions and boundaries through the concept of threat. According to intergroup threat theory, groups develop distrust and negative attitudes towards out-groups when they perceive that an “out-group” threatens the in-groups symbolic or physical safety or access to resources. In the context of immigration, the perception of intergroup threat generates majority’s concerns over the future of the country immigrants arrive in. As Stephan, Ybarra and Morrison (2010, 43) note: “an intergroup threat is experienced when members of one group perceive that another group is in a position to cause them harm”. It is important to note that the threat posed by an out-group does not have to be an actual threat, as the focus here is on if and how groups *perceive* they are threatened. Moreover, the purpose of the chapter is to not argue that different groups always perceive each other as a threat, or that there always even are easily distinguishable groups. Perceptions of differences do not always lead to ideas or perceptions of threats. Instead, the aim of the chapter is to examine how the feeling of intergroup threat can and sometimes does exist, as this can be discerned from the initiatives as well.

As noted by Rios, Sosa and Osborn (2018, 217), the focus in intergroup threat theory is the nature of the perceived threat, whereas motives behind maintaining this perceived threat is less important. Stephan et al. (2010) divide perceived out-group threats into realistic threats and symbolic threats. According to them, a realistic threat occurs when an out-group is seen to threaten either in-group’s physical safety or its access to resources. Symbolic threat, in turn, occurs when an out-group is seen to threaten in-group’s “systems of meaning” (ibid. 54), such as their values, religion, ideology, worldview or belief systems. However, Stephan et al. (2010) note that symbolic threats and realistic threats are not fully tangible, as they can co-exist and influence each other. Moreover, the perceived threat, whether symbolic or realistic, can be individual or group threats: a member of the in-group

can perceive that an out-group threatens their group as a whole or them individually (Stephan et al. 2010; Rios, Sosa & Osborn 2018, 215-216). In Stephan's et al. (2010) divisions of the nature of perceived threats, safety, economic and cultural threats can be discerned (see also Linden & Jacobs 2017). These three distinguishable forms of perceived threat are particularly interesting in the context of the citizens' initiatives on immigration, as the same perceived threats can be observed in the initiatives as well, as examined later.

Stephan et al. (2010, 44) continue by noting that the perceived threat that an out-group is seen to pose on the in-group can originate, for instance, from stereotypes, intergroup anxiety (the idea that interaction between two groups will have negative impacts on the in-group), concerns of exploitation, or from a fear that an out-group will challenge the in-group's values. The significance of the similarities between an out-group and an in-group in creating a perceived threat against the in-group has been noted by, for instance, Zárate et al. (2004), who have suggested that an out-group's threat is perceived to be higher when their cultural values and characteristics are thought to be different than that of the in-group's. Moreover, the results of Caricati's (2018) study suggest that, on the individual level, strong national identification correlates with higher perceived threat towards out-groups (which in his study was irregular migrants).

Even though it is highlighted here that "intergroup threat" does not necessarily have to be a "real" threat but instead a perceived one, it should also be noted that these perceived threats can nonetheless have consequences to group relations and through this to individual people. Stephan et al. (2010, 50-54) explain these possible concrete consequences of a perceived threat by dividing the responses of an "out-group threat" into cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses. The authors argue based on a literature review they conducted that depicting out-group as a threat can increase intolerance, hatred, and dehumanization of an out-group. It can also have emotional impacts by enforcing feelings of fear, hate and anger. Out-group threat can also lead to behavioral responses, such as discrimination, harassment, or other types of aggression against an out-group.

3.2.1. Intergroup threat theory and migration in previous research

Theory on intergroup threat has been previously applied to the empirical research on immigration through, for instance, exploring the effect of the quality of the perceived threat of immigrants (Zárate et al. 2004), and through exploring how media narratives influence the extent that majority groups find minority groups as a threat (Linden & Jacobs 2017; Atwell Seate, Ma & Chien 2018). Additionally, Bouman, Zomerén and Otten (2014) have examined whether perceived distant

intergroup threats predict intolerance toward out-group members in local settings, whereas Hermanni and Neumann (2019) have examined intergroup threat theory in the context of refugee admittance in Germany. Finally, Schlueter & Scheepers (2010) have examined whether the size of an out-group affects their perceived threat towards in-group.

In their study on television news of North African immigrants in northern Belgian television between 2003-2013, Linden and Jacobs (2017) examined how prevalent perceived cultural, economic, and safety threats were, to what extent these threats were perceived to be caused by immigrants, and how these three types of perceived threat as well as their combinations impacted perceptions of intergroup threat. The authors (*ibid.*) chose to focus on news coverage as according to them, earlier studies have suggested that news can direct public opinion and as in northern Belgium, information on societal issues comes mainly from news. The results of the study revealed that out of all studied news pieces on the chosen immigrant group, even 58.4% contained references to intergroup threat. Most common type of perceived threat was that of safety at 49.8%, followed by perceptions of cultural threat at 39.1% and economic threats at 7.5%. Additionally, in one in three news pieces a combination of the three types of threat appeared, with the most common combination being the overlapping of safety and cultural threats (*ibid.* 2830-2831). Linden and Jacobs (2017, 2834-2836) complementary study on a test group focusing on to what extent negative news coverage affected the perceptions of intergroup threat revealed that negative news stories had a direct impact on the feelings of intergroup threat posed by the chosen immigrant group. Moreover, out of the three threat types, perceptions of safety threat were the strongest.

Whereas the study of Linden and Jacobs (2017) focuses on the social context of Belgium and its results suggest that news coverage impacts perceptions of intergroup threat and different types of perceived threats often coexist, the study conducted by Atwell Seate, Ma and Chien (2018) focuses on the role of emotions and affections in perceiving minority groups as a threat through negative media coverage in the context of the United States. Their study focused on media representations of people of color, as studies have indicated that media tends to portray these groups in a negative light (as physical, economic, and symbolic threats) (*ibid.* 181-182). The results of the study expand findings made by Linden and Jacobs (2017) by suggesting that media consumption is connected to negative feelings, such as anger and anxiety, towards out-groups. Moreover, the results indicate that negative feelings that media generates are preceded by perceptions of intergroup threat (*ibid.* 191-192) which suggests that it is namely the idea of intergroup threat that can result in negative feelings towards out-groups, as was noted also by Stephan et al. (2010).

The results by Atwell Seate, Ma and Chien (2018) suggest that perceived intergroup threat mixed with exposure to anti-immigrant narratives can lead to feelings of anger and anxiety. Study conducted by Bouman, Zomeren and Otten (2014) adds to this notion by arguing that physically distant intergroup threats can carry over to local settings by increasing intolerance locally. The authors found indicators that particularly distant symbolic threats can transform intolerance on the local level against members of the “threatening” group. However, distant realistic threats did not seem to have the same effect. According to Bouman et al. (2014, 418) the reason for this might be is that symbolic threats, unlike realistic threats, do not have the local aspect in them, as the perceived threat of, for instance, religion does not necessarily have to be physically present in order to feel threatening. Schlueter and Scheepers (2010) add to this by suggesting that the size of an out-group locally (in their study immigrants in Netherlands’ municipalities) was associated with a greater threat they were perceived to pose to local in-group. However, the authors simultaneously note that larger number of out-group members locally facilitated intergroup contact, which was associated with reduced perceptions of threat. Additionally, Hermanni & Neumann (2019) found in their study on the acceptance of refugees in Germany that potential perceived cultural threats did not negatively influence the acceptance of refugees, whereas perceived threats to individual physical safety did.

The studies presented above all argue that exposure to anti-immigrant narratives in news or more widely in media can increase the feeling of intergroup threat, which in turn can transform into negative emotions and intolerance. This can happen even if the perceived threat is geographically distant, as symbolic threats, according to the results by Bouman et al. (2014) do not necessarily have to be localized. Feeling of intergroup threat can thus have similar implications as boundaries between groups, as both can lead to exclusion, whether institutional or social, and prevent out-groups from accessing resources or receiving recognition. The next section, therefore, focuses on how boundaries, whether symbolic, social, or institutional, can as a form of exclusion be expressions of both cultural violence and structural violence.

3.3. Boundaries and exclusion as forms of cultural and structural violence

Here, it is suggested that symbolic boundaries along with social and institutional ones can be a form of violence. Drawing boundaries and distinctions between groups do not necessarily imply that there is violence involved. Instead, what is argued here is that these categorizations become a form of violence when they prevent out-groups, the targets of othering, from being recognized and from accessing material or non-material resources, such as respect, education, housing, or protection. This

understanding of violence as a wider phenomena than just physical violence is derived from Galtung's essay (1969, 168) where it was argued that violence is present when "human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations - - violence is defined as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is". This type of indirect violence, derived from unequal distribution of power, prevents individuals or groups from realizing their potential through, for instance, preventing them from accessing resources and/or meeting their basic needs (see also Lee 2019). Moreover, structural violence differs from personal violence in that structural violence does not necessarily "show", nor do the objects of structural violence necessarily know that structural violence is affecting their lives (ibid., 173). Similarly, existence of structural violence does not necessarily need a specific "actor" that commits the violence (Galtung 1969; Weigert 2005; Lee 2019). Moreover, the definition of structural violence contains the notion that violence within structures is preventable (Weigert 2005; Lee 2019, 124), but those with power do not, for whatever reason, do so.

Structural violence exists within structures that distribute resources (such as income or education) unevenly, thus creating social injustices. The limitations in structures can vary in nature: they can be religious, economic, political, cultural, or legal (Lee 2019, 123). These same structures maintain uneven power relations and can lead to a situation where an individual or a group deprived of one recourse is simultaneously, due to lack of power, deprived of other resources as well (Galtung 1969).

The argument here is that structural violence can be considered simultaneously with boundary formation: as majority/in-groups create categorizations and boundaries between "included" and "excluded" they can create categories of exclusion where an "out-group" cannot access recourses. These boundaries can be created rhetorically (as in the initiatives) but also exist within structures. Perhaps an adequate example in the context of Finland is how undocumented immigrants in Finland are not entitled to non-urgent healthcare or how they are entitled to urgent healthcare but are required to pay for it (Keskimäki, Nykänen & Kuusio 2014), which might prevent individuals from seeking help. Here, categorizations, or boundaries, created on a policy level of those who are entitled to healthcare and those who are not has led to structural violence, because the excluded (irregular immigrants) are deprived of their rights for healthcare (deprivation of health and social resources as a form of structural violence is noted also by McLean and Panter-Brick (2018). Simultaneously, as noted in the background and literature review section, undocumented, or irregular, immigrants are depicted narrowly in public discourse, and more widely immigrants as threats in the initiatives.

The policies and laws suggested in the citizens initiatives differ from already existing policies in that they do not “exist” yet, as they are only peoples’ suggestions for new laws. Indeed, the initiatives represent boundary making on a rhetoric level. However, arguably many of the initiatives, if approved, would prevent immigrants from “realizing their potential” and from accessing resources. Galtung (1969, 172) describes this type of violence as latent violence, referring to violence that is not there yet, but “might easily come about”. Thus, the initiatives have direct implications to structural violence.

Finally, another useful concept is that of cultural violence, which has been defined by, for instance, Galtung (1990) and Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004). Galtung (1990, 291) notes that cultural violence refers to “those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of existence - - that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or cultural violence”. Thus, this definition implies that cultural violence differs from structural violence in that it serves as a means to legitimize structural violence, or as Galtung (ibid.) notes, it makes “structural violence look right”, as more acceptable. Therefore, what Lamont and Molnár (2002) refer to as the concretization of symbolic boundaries, is in fact an example of structural violence, justified through cultural violence.

Indeed, the argument presented more broadly later is that cultural violence can be detected in the initiatives, as they use symbolic boundaries (categorizing immigrants as underserving out-groups) and perceived intergroup threat in legitimating their claims for more restrictive immigrant policies, which if approved, would have direct implications to structural violence as many of them would restrict immigrants’ access to material and non-material resources.

4. Data and methodology

4.1. Description of data and data collection

The data of this thesis are all citizens initiatives with over 1 000 signatures that either directly or indirectly mention immigration or themes closely linked to immigration. All citizens initiatives proposed since 2012 are freely accessible on kansalaisaloite.fi, a website maintained by the Ministry of Justice. The state of the initiatives comprising the data is diverse: with most initiatives, the six-month signature collection period has already expired, and they could not reach the required 50 000 signatures, whereas some of them are still collecting signatures, and couple of them have made their way to the parliament (but have not been accepted). The number of signatures in the examined initiatives varies greatly between 1 000 and 118 000 signatures. Even though only initiatives with over 1 000 signatures were considered in the analysis (this allowed to filter out initiatives with only a few signatures and only include those that have had at least some support), the focus of the analysis is not on the number of initiatives but instead on the content of the initiatives.

The initiatives comprising the data were collected from the website kansalaisaloite.fi on 1st of August 2021. Only initiatives with over 1 000 signatures were taken into consideration. However, the website was revised a second time in January 2022 in order to examine whether there was new initiatives that can be included in the data. As a result, one new initiative was added in the data making the total number of examined initiatives 28.

All proposed initiatives are listed on the website kansalaisaloite.fi and can be sorted according to how many signatures they have achieved. Thus, the data collection was done by going through the list of all initiatives ever proposed and choosing those that either directly or indirectly mention immigration on the title. Direct mentions of immigration included words such as “immigrant”, “refugee”, “foreigner” in the title. Most examined initiatives mentioned immigration directly. Additionally, all initiatives that did not directly mention immigration but referred to “multiculturalism” or themes connected to immigration were included in the data, as they still fell under the category of being immigration related initiatives. Although the titles of these initiatives did not directly mention immigration, the description of the initiatives confirmed that the initiatives did closely concern the topic. Examples of such initiatives were those that mentioned, for example, “border control”, “veil ban” or “ethnicity” in the title.

Thus, the data consists of all immigration-related initiatives that have been proposed since 2012 and have over 1 000 signatures, making the data consists in total of 28 initiatives. The weblinks as well

as the original Finnish titles as well as the author's translations of the titles are included in appendix 1.

4.2. Discourse analysis

As noted by Jokinen, Juhila and Suoninen (2016, 26-50), we use language to build and understand our social reality. That is, we give situational meanings to things and people and construct our reality, or perhaps realities, in different and competing ways. Gee (2010) notes that language is a way to create, perform, and recognize our, as well as other peoples', socially situated identities. We use language and discourses, ways of speech, to position ourselves and others in social groups and networks. This positioning, in turn, involves processes of valuing, acting, interacting, and thinking (Gee 2010, 34). Gee (*ibid.*, 35) argues that in performing these identities, recognition is central: "If you put language, action, interaction, values, beliefs, symbols, objects, tools, and places together in a way that others recognize you as a particular type of who (identity) engaged in a particular type of what (activity), here and now, then you have pulled off a discourse". In other words, creating meanings and understandings of ourselves, others, and of our social reality is not enough in itself, as the process of discourse-making requires at least some form of recognition. This recognition work, process of making visible what we are doing and who we are, creates discourses (*ibid.* 37).

In addition to aspirations for recognition, Jokinen and Juhila (2016) note that discourses, ways of constructing reality, involve power relations. Power here is seen as embedded in social practices rather than only something individuals possess. Therefore, Jokinen and Juhila (*ibid.*, 76-77) note that in doing discourse analysis, one can focus on examining what the dominant ways of constructing social reality are. If this approach is chosen, the focus is on the heterogeneity of the data: that is, looking at how certain depictions of reality are given the status of being self-evident, and how these hegemonic discourses take space from other discourses. This notion is indeed useful in examining the citizens' initiatives on immigration, as many of the initiatives aim at naturalizing the categorization of immigrants as separate from "us", as is shown later.

Jokinen and Juhila continue by noting that phrasing your research question affects if the focus is on the diversity of the discourses found in the data, or if the focus is on the homogeneity of discourses. As before analyzing the data there is a reason to assume that the discourses in the initiatives are for the most part homogenous, meaning that they aim at producing certain depiction of reality, it is justified to pay particular attention to the homogeneity of the discourses. The assumption that many of the initiatives resemble each other is based on the titles of the initiatives: majority of them indicate

that they have a negative stance on immigration. Thus, even before analyzing the data it is reasonable to assume that the initiatives not only aim at depicting reality in a particular way, but also include symbolic boundaries as a means to categorize people and groups. For that reason, the research question is *What discourses maintaining symbolic boundaries do the initiatives contain?* This research question is accompanied by a second research question *How is the perception of intergroup threat visible in these boundary-maintaining discourses?* in order to better explain the processes of boundary formation and categorization. However, what should be noted that even though the majority of the initiatives have a negative stance on immigration, the data also consists of initiatives (four to be exact) that aim at enhancing immigrants' rights and combatting racism. These initiatives will be focused on too, in order to examine how they challenge the hegemonic discourses.

Moreover, Gee (2010, 17-20) has noted that language is used to build seven areas of "reality" that a person doing discourse analysis can focus on when analyzing pieces of language. These seven areas are significance, practices, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems of knowledge (ibid.). In the analysis, particular attention is paid to three of these "building tasks of language". These specific three tasks, identities, politics and connections, were chosen as the features of text they encourage to focus on are most adequate in answering the research questions. First, Gee (2010, 18) notes that language is used to build a certain identity to ourselves and to others. He notes that as we build an identity to ourselves, we simultaneously build them to others as well as a way to contrast ourselves to them: "we build identities for others as a way to build ones for ourselves". Therefore, Gee (ibid.) asks: "what identity or identities is this piece of language being used to enact? What identity or identities is this piece of language attributing to others and how does this help the speaker or writer enact his or her own identity?" These questions are helpful in the analysis as the focus is on how symbolic boundaries are created and maintained in the initiatives through depicting "immigrants" and "us" in certain ways, thus giving different identities to "us" and "them". The question asked when analyzing the data is: what identity or identities are given to the writers of the initiatives as well as the social groups they identify being part of? What identity is given to others?

The second point (Gee ibid., 19) advises to focus on is on politics, or the distribution of social goods. According to Gee, social goods are societies or smaller groups' shared understanding of something as being wanted or valued. Language is used to deny people of social goods, whether material or non-material (for instance money, respect, or status), by phrasing language in particular ways. There can be differences, for example, in who is blamed when social goods are denied from a particular group or individuals. The question Gee (ibid.) advises to focus on is "What perspective on social goods is this piece of language communicating? i.e., what is being communicated as to what is taken to be

“normal”, “right”, - - “valuable”, “the ways things are”, “the way things ought to be?”” Focusing on social goods is useful as it directs more close attention to how the initiatives enforce their perceptions by expressing something as normal or valuable, for instance. The question asked in analyzing the initiatives is: what is constructed as “normal”? How should things, or the society, be?

The third and last particular focus will be paid on connections. Gee (ibid.) notes that language is used to connect (or disconnect) certain things in order to make them relevant in specific contexts. These connections are made despite the fact they may not be actually connected in reality, or the connection is disputed. Here, the question posed by Gee (ibid.) is “How does this piece of language connect or disconnect things; how does it make one thing relevant or irrelevant to another?”. Whereas the previous two “building blocks” advised to focus on identities and social goods (or attributes) the notion of connections as understood here encourages to focus more on “concrete” phenomena or themes that are argued to be connected to immigrants or to native Finnish people as a justification for the categorizations made in the initiatives. Following this, the third question asked when analyzing the data is “what is connected or disconnected to the writers and the groups they identify with? What is connected or disconnected to immigrants?”.

Thus, in order to more closely examine the discourses created in the initiatives, these discourses are examined through Gee’s (2010, 17-20) concepts of identities, politics (distribution of social goods), and connections in answering the main research question of *What discourses maintaining symbolic boundaries do the initiatives contain?* as well as the second research question *How is the perception of intergroup threat visible in these boundary-maintaining discourses?*

As discourses do not have clear boundaries but instead are cross-connected and relational and can split and meld and change (Gee 2010, 36–39), it is not expected that the data contains discourses that can be clearly separated from one another. Instead, the assumption is that these discourses are connected, inter-influenced and perhaps partly overlapping.

Finally, this study adopts a qualitative approach and looks at a rather limited number of citizens’ initiatives. The goal is not to gain a generalizable overview of symbolic boundary making in the context of immigrants in Finland, but to examine how critical citizens initiatives create and justify boundaries in the chosen data. While not generalizable, the data gives insights into how larger discourses on immigration can take shape and mobilize in civil society. The number of signatures in the citizens’ initiatives is limited, and thus they are not representative of attitudes towards immigration in Finland on the whole society’s level. However, the initiatives offer insight into the attitudes that exist within the Finnish society.

4.3. Ethical considerations and limitations of the study

There are certain ethical considerations as well as limitations to this study that are important to note. First, as previously noted only Finnish citizens are able to propose and sign citizens' initiatives, making them restrictive in nature. Consequently, those without Finnish citizenship are not able to actively participate in this process but instead are made passive targets of these initiatives. Therefore, the initiatives are not generalizable to Finnish society as a whole, nor to every Finnish citizen, but instead only represent views and opinions of smaller groups that aim to make their sentiments more visible. Additionally, because the initiatives examined are only those pertaining to or mentioning immigrants, and some of these initiatives have limited number of signatures (none below 1000 however), the sample size is indeed quite small, and the initiatives are therefore in no way representative of the general population. However, the study draws parallels to dominating discourses in a Finnish and European context, and as such touches upon how prevailing discourses and boundaries can be reproduced in citizens initiatives. Indeed, as noted by Dunn & Neumann (2016, 54), discourses are forms of knowledge production, and they have the power to make something seem "natural".

Additionally, the initiatives for the most part treat "immigrants" as a fairly homogenous group. This, obviously, does not reflect the reality and the manifold statuses, backgrounds and resources immigrant individuals have. This thesis has the same deficiency as the initiatives in that "immigrants" and immigration are addressed on the group level while immigrants as individuals are not examined. Because of the critical approach used in the study, however, the aim is to draw attention to precisely those mechanisms that construct and maintain exclusionary boundaries, and as such challenge (or deconstruct) these homogenous depictions.

Moreover, Dunn and Neumann (2016, 100) ask the question of when does one have enough material to conduct discourse analysis. As already mentioned, the sample size in this study is quite small, but as noted by Dunn and Neumann (*ibid.*) "almost regardless of the extent of the discourse, relatively few texts will constitute the main points of reference". Even though the size of the data compared to all initiatives ever proposed is small, the data is representative of citizens' initiatives on immigration, as all citizens' initiatives on immigration with over 1 000 signatures are considered.

5. Analysis of the data

Significant majority of the immigration-related initiatives have a negative stance on immigration, which is visible already from their titles. Out of the 28 examined initiatives, 24 depict immigration and immigrants as a group through negative ideas. These initiatives for instance aim for more restrictive immigration policies, reducing social benefits admitted to immigrants, and limiting immigrants' non-Christian cultural and religious expression. However, the data additionally consists of four initiatives that are not “restrictive” but instead aim for enhancing immigrants', in particular asylum seekers', rights.

Through examining the data and highlighting recurring arguments and justifications for why immigrants are, or should be, “separated” from native Finns, it was possible to discern four discourses that create and justify symbolic boundaries between immigrants and native Finns. The four discourses examined in the following sections use categorizations of: immigrants as economic, undeserving burdens against deserving native Finns (discourse 1), immigrants as members of a strange, even dangerous culture(s) and religion(s) against Western “Finnish culture” that needs to be protected and cannot co-exist with immigrant culture(s) (discourse 2), non-native citizens as unpredictable against safe and familiar native citizens (discourse 3), and immigrants as a danger threatening Finn's everyday safety (discourse 4). Additionally, the final examined discourse (discourse 5) challenges these assumptions presented in the previous discourse by positing immigrants mainly through their vulnerable status (in particular undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers) and their “right to have rights”.

The discourses presented below are illustrated by direct citations from the initiatives. As all the initiatives are written in Finnish, these citations have been translated into English by the author. In some citations words have been added by the author to improve readability. These additions are always marked by brackets []. Additionally, some citations are shortened by removing parts that are not necessary for the reader to understand the content of the citation, and these are always marked with - -.

5.1. Discourse 1: Economic productivity as a measure of value

“The situation in Finland is economically unbearable. - - we pay large amounts of our tax money to foreign citizens in the form of different social benefits and support - - the current situation feeds harmful immigration - - this reckless distribution of money worsens our own citizens' position. We cannot even take care of our own citizens - - let's end the system that attracts people, whose only

goal is to exploit our system, into our country.”

Initiative 6

The initiatives concerning migration often categorize and depict immigrants as economic burdens to the Finnish welfare state. Following Gee’s (2010, 19) notion on identities (what identity is given to people and groups and how do they differ from another group) the initiatives depict immigrants as being unproductive and thus unvaluable and against this, Finns being productive and thus valuable.

Out of the 28 examined initiatives, the economic burden immigrants are perceived to inflict on Finland and its citizens is mentioned in nine. The citation above (initiative 6), from an initiative titled “Removal of social benefits from people who do not have a Finnish citizenship” is an example of how immigrants are depicted first, as an economical burden and second, as an economic threat.

The quote starts by claiming that Finland is in an economically unbearable situation because Finnish citizens have to pay for the social benefits and support of immigrants (“foreign citizens”). Here, immigrants are directly accused of burdening the Finnish welfare state while Finnish citizens are depicted as the targets, or victims, of this threat (“our citizens are worse off”). The assumption that immigrants significantly burden the Finnish welfare state indicates that immigrants are seen as somewhat passive or even lazy: they come here only to receive social benefits and not to work. Against this, Finnish citizens are the victims of this exploitation because “we pay large amounts of our tax money”, that is, because “we” e.g., Finns, work and thus are active and economically valuable.

Moreover, the citation paints a picture of a calculative immigrant: it claims that immigrants only arrive to Finland to “exploit the system”. This depiction of immigrants as calculative is also visible in an initiative titled “A referendum to change the social security of foreigners who live in Finland to be work based”, where it is mentioned that “It is to be assumed that a significant number of people who have moved to Finland in recent years came here because of generous social security”. This citation, along with the quote from initiative 6 above, posit immigrants as an outside, undeserving people that arrive to Finland to take away social benefits from Finnish people. It places blame on immigrants themselves by depicting them as purposefully coming to Finland in order to get access to social benefits. This depiction of immigrants as actively seeking to exploit the Finnish welfare system is used to justify the argument of leaving immigrants outside of social benefits. This is evident, for instance, in the citation below.

“We suggest that all monetary benefits paid from public funds - - are changed to be work-based for immigrants residing in Finland and that living-based social security is only given to Finnish

citizens”

Initiative 7

In the citation from initiative number 7, it is suggested that only immigrants who work should be allowed to receive social benefits. Moreover, immigrants should be entirely left out from living-based social security. Again, this reproduces the idea of immigrants as being undeserving: they only deserve social benefits if they are economically useful (if they work) and they do not deserve living-based social security in any case. Here, the symbolic boundary placed between deserving, active and economically beneficial Finnish people versus passive, burdensome, undeserving immigrants is suggested to be concretized as a social boundary, as suggested by Alba (2005), who noted that symbolic boundaries can be transformed into social boundaries, for instance, through social policies that resources are only accessed by those in the majority, so in this case Finnish citizens.

The discourse of immigrants as passive economic threat used to justify other policy suggestions as well. First, it is used to argue why Finland should have had to invalidate the Global Compact for Migration signed in 2018 (initiative 1) as after signing it “we have to admit masses of immigrants who make the normal functioning of Finnish society more difficult and who lower the wage level in Finland by working as under paid”. Second, it is used to argue why the Dublin agreement should be more strictly enforced (initiative 13) as “some immigrants openly admit to having carefully planned which country they should go to - - these people are not the ones who need the most help, because it’s all about trying to pursue a better standard of living”. Third, this depiction of immigrants as underserving burdens is used to argue why the number of immigrants arriving in Finland should be significantly limited annually (initiative 10): “if immigration numbers are maintained on the current level or even increased it would inevitably bring cheap labor to Finland which would lower wages, in addition unemployment would significantly rise”. And finally, it is used to argue why the reception allowance admitted to refugees should be removed (initiative 18) and why “most refugees” residing in Finland should be “returned” to their countries of origin instead of attempting to integrate them to the Finnish society (initiative 26).

The five examples above demonstrate how depicting immigrants as economic threats to Finland is used to justify restrictive social and immigration policies. Additionally, the examples indicate how symbolic boundaries, ways of categorizing people and groups, can have a direct impact on peoples’ everyday lives and rights if they are institutionalized into restrictive social boundaries. In terms of intergroup threat theory, the presence of immigrants in Finland is connected to perceived realistic

threat (Stephen et al. 2010) because immigrants are seen as threatening resources, in this case social benefits.

Indeed, immigration is presented as an economical problem and the blame for this problem is placed on immigrants themselves. Following Gee's (2010, 19) notion on connections (how does this piece of language connect or disconnect things) the presence of immigrants in Finland is connected to economic troubles that is causing an economic threat to "us". Immigrants are a burden, people that take away resources from deserving Finnish citizens. They are depicted as passive, as unable or unwilling to provide for themselves and instead exploiting the Finnish welfare system and Finnish working citizens.

"The need to reduce immigration is our country's long-standing recession and worsened unemployment - - that would get significantly worse if work-based immigration is not restricted soon. - - If immigration numbers are maintained on the current level - - or even increased, it would inevitably bring cheap labor into our country which then would lower wages, in addition unemployment would significantly rise which would bring more problems to the unemployed"

Initiative 10

Interestingly, while the initiatives criticize immigrants for not being economically productive, they also argue that immigrants are a burden to Finland even if they manage to find work. This is demonstrated with claims that immigrants bring about cheap labor, lower wages and increase unemployment as is mentioned in the citation of initiative 10 above. The claim that immigrants cannot be "useful" to Finnish society even if they work leads to ask the question of how are immigrants able to cross the boundary from being "unproductive burdens" to being "productive and useful"? By claiming that working immigrants lower wages and increase unemployment of native Finns, it is implied that immigrants cannot *not* be a burden to the Finnish society.

"The so-called humanitarian immigration - - seems to have become a way to immigrate [to Finland] - - this is unfair to the normal immigrants, who arrive to the country after a complicated and expensive application process and prove their reason to come to the country - a reason that is beneficial to the Finns as well (marriage, work, studying) [and who are] obliged to pay for their own living."

Initiative 26

Although the discourse is used to separate the beneficial and deserving Finn from the undeserving and harmful immigrant, it is to a lesser extent also used to separate immigrants from one another, as is shown in the citation above. In the citation "humanitarian immigrants" are blamed for causing an

unfair situation to “normal immigrants” who have a “beneficial reason” to come to Finland. Here, burdensome “humanitarian immigrants” are separated from immigrants who can support themselves financially and who have a “legitimate” reason to come to Finland. The same initiative continues by arguing that the current situation of “useful” immigrants versus humanitarian-based immigrants is not only causing “significant economic burden” to the Finnish citizens but also racism: “the current situation causes racism and tensions between the Finns and certain immigrant groups because of obvious injustices - - it also hinders positive immigration because - - normal immigrants have to also pay a price for the mistakes made by the so-called humanitarian refugees - - because it is difficult for the Finnish people to separate an immigrant from an immigrant”. Here, the blame for racism is placed on humanitarian immigrant (or refugees), on those immigrants who arrive to Finland without means to provide for themselves. Not only do Finnish citizens have to pay for the economic burden caused by these immigrants, but they also are a burden to other, useful working immigrants (or “normal immigrants”) because “it is difficult for the Finnish people to separate an immigrant from an immigrant”.

This leads, first, back to the question of boundary crossing: have these “normal immigrants” crossed the boundary from being unproductive and unvaluable to being valuable? If so, are they considered as being “us” (productive Finns) or are they still part of an out-group? Second, the above citation highlights what is evident throughout the whole discourse: the value of a person is based on their economic productivity. Finnish people are valuable because they are economically productive, immigrants are not valuable because they are economically unproductive.

Following Gee’s question of “what is considered normal and valuable” it is evident that in the discourse, “normal and valuable” are economically productive people, namely Finnish citizens. Against this are immigrants, who are first identified as passive, unbeneficial, but later also separated into “beneficial immigrants” and “harmful immigrants”. Nevertheless, the discourse creates and maintains a symbolic boundary between “us” and “them” through ideas of economic productiveness, and this “productiveness” is more strongly connected to Finnish citizens than to immigrants. Additionally, immigrants are argued to pose a realistic threat (Stephen et al. 2010) to the Finnish welfare system by having to rely on social benefits, and to Finnish economy by worsening recession. This perception of threat is used to further justify more restrictive social-, and immigration policies in the initiatives.

5.2. Discourse 2: Incompatible religion and culture(s)

It is argued in the initiatives that immigrants are members of culture(s) and religion(s) that are first, inferior to “Finnish culture” and second, incompatible with it. The initiatives discursively create a strict boundary between “immigrant culture” and “Finnish culture” and through this a symbolic boundary between Finnish citizens and immigrants as members of these cultures. Simultaneously immigrants are depicted both as symbolic threats and realistic threats (Stephan et al. 2010) that compromise Finnish “systems of meaning” including its religion, and worldview. Religion and culture are mentioned in a total of seven initiatives, making it a slightly less prevailing than constructing immigrants as an economic burden.

“It [wearing a veil] is not a part of Finland’s culture. We should treasure our own culture and not be amenable to every immigrant custom, instead they should try to adapt to [our] country’s customs and practices when coming here.”

Initiative 24

The above citation calls for a veil ban in Finland. This is justified by claiming that wearing a veil is not part of “Finnish culture”. Here, the citation creates a boundary around Finnish culture by excluding wearing a veil from it, that is, excluding Islam from it through disputing a form of its expression. In the citation, wearing a veil is also connected to immigrants by stating that it is a part of “immigrant custom” we should not try to adapt to. Following Gee’s (2010, 19) question of what is considered normal or valuable, the citation above suggests that “Finnish culture” is the norm (existence of “Finland’s culture” is stated as if it was a fact) whilst wearing a veil is a foreign custom that does not belong to Finland (“we should treasure our own culture and not be amenable to every immigrant custom”). This also suggests that Islam is foreign and not belonging to Finland. Moreover, in the citation it is suggested that we need to “treasure our culture”, which implies that “Finnish culture” is something valuable, something that cannot be lost, but something that might be in danger if we try to incorporate “immigrant customs” into it.

The citation concludes that immigrants should adapt to Finnish customs and practices when coming to Finland. This again leads to ponder the possibility of crossing boundaries. If an immigrant were to adapt to “Finnish customs and practices”, would they still be considered an outsider? To what extent does one need to “be like us” in order to be considered as a part of the in-group instead of an outsider?

The initiative calling for a veil ban in Finland (initiative 24) continues by arguing that Finland should disallow wearing veils because “it is starting to be a safety threat in Finland these days”. Here the symbolic threat (based on religion) immigrants are perceived to pose is connected to perceptions of

realistic threat (it is implied that wearing a veil poses a physical threat). Ideas of immigrants as symbolic threats and through that also as physical threats are additionally visible in initiative titled “Curfew to immigrants from 8pm to 6am” (Initiative 15), which states that “Finnish citizens have the right to move outside without fear. Those cultures that do not understand our culture, and are not willing to adapt to it, are not entitled to come into our country to act based on their own beliefs”. Both initiative 24 and 15 suggest that “immigrant culture” is, in a way, dangerous. In addition to arguing that a veil is not a part of “Finnish culture” the initiative on banning wearing a veil in Finland also further justifies its argument by stating that wearing a veil is a “safety threat”. The initiative demanding a curfew to immigrants, in turn, argues that immigrants should not be allowed to move outside during night so that Finnish citizens can feel safe and so that immigrants are unable to “act based on their own beliefs”. This implies that “immigrant culture” is a possible threat to “Finnish citizens” physical safety. Although it is not clarified what “acting based on one’s own beliefs” entails, it is suggested that immigrants’ rights for freedom of movement should be restricted in the name of public safety. Interestingly, phrases of “culture” and “beliefs” are used to justify this restriction in movement. Therefore, it is suggested that immigrants are dangerous because of their culture. The same argumentation is used to justify why veils should be banned: because they are “a safety threat”.

Safety and culture are also connected in an initiative 20 titled “Denying Finnish citizenship of foreign mercenaries” where it is stated that “We don’t accept receiving people who then travel (to another country) to fight for their values that contradict with Finnish values”. Here, the assumed participation in violence abroad is not criticized based on the participation in violence in itself, but instead on the fact that people might use violence for values that contradict with Finnish values. Moreover, the initiative once again connects “dangerous, violent foreign beliefs” to immigrants.

The above demonstrates how concerns for safety are used as arguments of why “immigrant culture(s) and beliefs” should not exist alongside “Finnish culture”. Based on this and incorporating Gee’s (2010, 19) notion of how things are connected in a text, by depicting “immigrant culture” as dangerous, the initiatives simultaneously imply that “Finnish culture” differs from it and therefore is safe and familiar (“we should treasure our own culture”). Concerns over “multiculturalism” are further expressed in the citation below.

“At the moment our country is forcibly tried to turn into a so-called multicultural country. - - We are not ready for it economically, in terms of safety and certainly not so suddenly. - - besides, I have never heard any other reasonings for the goodness of multiculturalism other than “it’s a good

thing".

Initiative 14

In the above initiative demanding that refugees should be admitted only through quotas, it is argued that Finland is not ready to be a "multicultural country" in terms of economics or safety. This implies that Finland is not "multicultural" by nature, because it is argued that Finland is "forcibly tried to turn into a so-called multicultural country". While the initiative does not name any particular actor(s) behind this "forced change", it implies that "multiculturalism" is not legitimate, because this change into a "multicultural country" is happening forcibly. Additionally, the initiative argues against "multiculturalism" by stating that they (the authors) have not heard any reasons for why "multiculturalism" would be "a good thing". This further suggests that homogenous culture is the norm, and anything else needs to be, first, "properly" argued for, and second, somehow "beneficial" to native Finns.

"The majority religion in Finland is Christianity and its different forms. In addition, there are other religions and atheists, [but] no other religion provably has as much radicalization, hate towards other religions, killing, terrorism and acts disturbing general societal peace than Islam. - -"

Initiative 23

The initiative above opposes plans to construct a grand mosque in Finland. This is, again, argued by suggesting that Islam is a violent religion. This claim is further emphasized by claiming that Islam is not only violent, but "more violent" than any other religion. Interestingly, in the citation the only religion left outside of the boundaries of what should exist in Finland is Islam, as the initiative recognizes that "there are other religions" than Christianity in Finland. This connects to Goldberg's (2006) notion on how throughout Europe (in this case Finland), boundaries are drawn to exclude Muslim immigrants from being "European" or from belonging within it. Instead, namely Muslims as depicted through extremisms and danger ("no other religion provably has as much radicalization"). The initiative continues by arguing that a grand mosque would "offend members of other religions with its loud noise pollution and by forcing people to listen to Islam". Here, Islam is opposed against other religions by suggesting that the presence of a mosque as well as practices within the religion would offend "all other religions".

Moreover, the initiative specifically mentions that Finland's majority religion is Christianity, making its majority status seem "natural". Similarly, as Finland is depicted as having a homogenous "Finnish culture", Christianity here is connected to Finland and Finnish society as naturally belonging in it. Thus, following Gee's (2010, 19) notions on what is considered "normal and valuable" in a text as

well as and what connections does the text make, the citation above connects Christianity to “Finnish culture”, both of which are the “norm” and part of the understanding of who and what “Finland”, and within it “Finnish people”, are.

Indeed, the examples presented above imply that Finland has one “culture” with its clear boundaries. These boundaries are not specifically named, but instead constructed through arguing what cannot be allowed inside of these boundaries: “immigrant religion and culture”, namely Islam. This idea of a country with its own culture stems from the classical view of a nation state with its citizens as representatives of a culture distinct from other cultures (see for example Anderson 1983). However, while the initiatives assume that Finland has one clear-cut culture, they simultaneously assume that immigrants arriving to Finland are all part of the same, distinct, culture too. Therefore, “immigrants” are constructed through an idea of a homogenous “mass” that potentially brings “immigrant culture” to Finland.

Through identifying immigrants as outsiders, and constructing them as members of foreign, unpredictable and dangerous cultures the initiatives simultaneously construct an identity for “us” as members of Finnish culture that is simultaneously superior to other cultures but also needs protection from them. As demonstrated here, the initiatives use constructions of culture and religion to justify the divisions between “us” as the ingroup as members (Christian) “Finnish culture” and immigrants as “them”, foreigners with religion and culture that is, one, potentially dangerous and, two, cannot coexist with Finnish culture. Perceptions of intergroup threat are visible throughout the discourse, as boundaries between Finns and immigrants are further justified through depicting immigrants as symbolic threats and as realistic threats. As noted by Stephan et al. (2010), perceptions of symbolic threat and realistic threat can co-exist and interinfluence each other. This is visible in the discourse as well: immigrants are constructed as realistic dangers (physical dangers) *through* depicting them as members of foreign culture(s) and religion(s), so through depicting them first as symbolic threats. Nevertheless, “immigrants” as a group are argued to be inherently different from “Finnish people”, as these symbolic boundaries between immigrants and native Finnish people are not at any point contested.

5.3. Discourse 3: Immigrants as sources of physical danger

As shown in the previous sections, in the initiatives immigrants are simultaneously depicted as economic burdens and therefore “unvaluable”, and as members of religion and culture that are incompatible with a closed, homogenous “Finnish culture”. Through these conceptions immigrants

are discursively depicted both as symbolic threats and as realistic threats. Immigrants are further depicted as realistic threats through arguing that immigrants pose a physical danger to native Finnish citizens. Out of the 28 examined initiatives, the physical danger immigrants are argued to pose is either implicitly or explicitly mentioned in 10 initiatives.

“Violence- and property crimes have notably increased because of our current immigration policies. People seriously are soon too afraid to go outside during night. - - This sounds like madness in the light of the rape- and violence crimes.”

Initiative 14

“So called “bush rapes” and acts of violence have clearly increased, and we have also seen murders committed by “immigrants”

Initiative 22

The citations above are from initiatives that demand that refugees should only be admitted through quotas (initiative 14) and that the border security on the Finnish-Swedish border should be enhanced because of the security risk immigrants arriving in Finland are argued to cause (initiative 22). Following Gee's (2010, 19) notion on what connections does a text make, both citations connect the presence of immigrants to increased crime rates and acts of violence. In the first citation it is suggested that “current immigration policies” need to be changed because “violence- and property crimes have notably increased” so much that people are “soon too afraid to go outside during night”. In the second citation, “immigrants” are directly connected to “murders” and other “acts of violence”. Therefore, in both initiatives “immigrants” are depicted through perceiving them solely as realistic, physical threats to people. This perception of threat is used as a justification for more restrictive immigration policies that would make it more difficult for “immigrants” to arrive in Finland.

Both citations strengthen their claim of “dangerous immigrants” by specifically suggesting that immigrants commit a notable amount of sexual offences. What is interesting here is that neither of the initiatives argue for these claims outside of stating that “people are soon too afraid to go outside during night” and that “so called “bush rapes” and acts of violence have clearly increased”. Instead, the focus is on asserting that one, immigrants are dangerous and that two, as we cannot be sure which immigrants are “the dangerous ones” we must treat all immigrants as a possible physical danger. The idea of immigrants being dangerous specifically because of the sexual offences they are argued to commit is also visible in an initiative titled “Cancellation of resident permit and deportation of a person convicted of a sexual offence” (initiative 3), that, as indicated by its title, argues that those immigrants who have committed a sexual offence should be deported because “sexual offences in

particular violate human dignity”. Thus, the realistic threats immigrants are argued to pose is rhetorically strengthened by connecting immigrants to sexual offences, in particular.

The initiative demanding for the cancellation of resident permits and deportation of immigrants convicted of sexual offences (initiative 3) continues by noting that “at the moment we are painting our country to the world as having very loose punishments for immigrants who have committed sexual offences. On top of that the prison system in our country is too good. For an immigrant, getting sentenced to prison can be like winning in a lottery.” Here, it is implied that Finland is a particularly appealing country for immigrants to commit crimes in because our “prison system is too good”. Indeed, it is suggested that “immigrants” not only commit crimes, but that they might be calculative about it: “immigrants” might benefit from the crimes they have committed because getting sentenced to prison can be like “winning in a lottery”. By comparing prison sentences to “winning in a lottery” it is suggested that immigrants might be even encouraged to commit crimes (sexual offences are mentioned in particular), which further enhances the idea of a “dangerous immigrant”.

“National terrorist threat is higher than ever. The situation is not made better by tens of thousands of undocumented MEN [sic.], whose backgrounds we know nothing about, arriving in the country. - multiple men who have arrived in our country have been a part of some militant organization operating in Middle-East”

Initiative 14

As mentioned, initiative 14 demands that refugees be only admitted through quotas. The initiative continues with the citation above. Here, undocumented immigrant men in particular are framed through the danger they are argued pose. This argument is enhanced by claiming that “multiple men” have been a part of “some militant organization operating in Middle-East”. Indeed, in the citation particularly Middle Eastern immigrant men are depicted as dangerous. This notion connects to the Europe-wide boundary maintaining between “us Europeans” and (Muslim) immigrants who are framed through their extremism and dangerousness (Golberg 2006).

The citation above connects immigrants to violence also through mentioning “militant organizations”. Connecting immigrants to violent organizations or terrorism is visible also in initiatives titled “A citizens’ initiative to prevent the arrival and residence of those who have been or are part of a terrorist organizations as well as their family members” (initiative 8), “The loss of Finnish citizenship due to terrorist activities” (initiative 12), “Removal of citizenship from those who participate in armed conflicts in Syria or other crisis regions” (initiative 19) and “Denying Finnish citizenship of foreign mercenaries” (initiative 20). These initiatives use phrases such as “ISIS-fighters” and “national safety

threat” to frame immigration solely through security concerns while simultaneously making alternative, contrasting framings seem insignificant. Additionally, these initiatives reference to “citizenship”, which will be further examined in discourse 4.

The discourse on immigrants as sources of physical danger uses perceptions of intergroup threat by depicting immigrants solely through the realistic threat they are argued to pose. This perceived realistic threat is discursively and emotionally amplified by referencing to sexual offences in particular. Throughout the discourse, “immigrants” as a group is framed as being homogenous, and different complexities or alternative ways of framing are disregarded. The discourse moves from depicting “immigrants” as a monolithic group only when it highlights Middle Eastern, undocumented immigrant men as particular sources of danger.

Indeed, the discourse uses this “physical threat” as an argument to maintain symbolic (and social) boundaries between immigrants and native Finns. However, following Gee’s (2010, 19) notion on what is considered as “normal”, the discourse not only normalizes the danger of immigrants, but also argues that it is justified and rational to maintain strict border policies and social distance to combat this threat. Indeed, the existence of borders (both physical ones and between “us” and “them”) is not contested but instead suggested to be justified in order to maintain Finland “safe”. Additionally, while the discourse gives immigrants an identity (Gee 2010, 19) of an “outside threat”, it simultaneously constructs Finland as safe and Finnish people as possible victims of crimes committed by immigrants. The danger posed by immigrants is naturalized and extended to all immigrants, and the mere presence of immigrants in Finnish society is seen as dangerous and unpredictable.

5.4. Discourse 4: “Citizenship” in maintaining boundaries

In the three discourses above, economic, cultural, religious, and security reasons are used to create perceptions of intergroup threat and to argue why there are boundaries separating “immigrants” from “Finnish people”. In the fourth discourse, the concept of citizenship itself is used to maintain boundaries between native Finns and immigrants. Here, “citizenship” is enacted in three different ways in categorizing and separating groups: first, citizens are separated from non-citizens in limiting welfare state benefits only to citizens. For instance, it is argued in the initiatives that only people with Finnish citizenship should be eligible for social benefits in Finland (initiative 6). Second, the discourse separates between native citizens and non-native citizens by placing a higher value on citizens that are native, as demonstrated below. Third, citizenship status is used to create feelings of

familiarity, whereas non-citizens are connected feelings of suspicion. This is visible in the citation from an initiative 15 below.

“Immigrants do not have a Finnish citizenship and we cannot be sure of everyone’s identity. Finnish law should contain a clause that would restrict the movement (between 8pm and 6am) of those who came to the country for other reasons than leisure”

Initiative 15

The citation above is from an initiative number 15, which argues that immigrants should not be allowed to freely move outside during nighttime. The initiative was previously briefly examined in relation to the discourse on religion and culture, as it uses “immigrant culture” as a part justification for its claims. However, the discourse on culture overlaps here with the discourse on citizenship. In the citation it is stated that “immigrants do not have a Finnish citizenship and we cannot be sure of everyone’s identity”, which makes immigrants potentially dangerous. It is precisely the lack of citizenship that is used as a reasoning for immigrants’ danger here. “Citizenship” is connected to familiarity and safety, whereas “non-citizens” are connected to potential danger. Here, following Gee’s (2010, 19) notion on connections, different attributes are connected to the concept of “citizenship” (namely familiarity and un-familiarity), making it a type of a “characteristic” by which to judge and value people. Additionally, these attributions are used to amplify perceptions of intergroup threat by suggesting that not having a citizenship means that a person is somehow “foreign” and potentially a danger.

The same manner of dividing between “us” and “them” through citizenship is also visible in initiative 5 titled “A demand to change border control laws and closing the borders due to an overwhelming migration crisis” where it is stated that “we see that those immigrants arriving to our country, especially without an identity, represent notable, even overpowering 1. economic burden, 2. clear health risk and 3. clear security risk to current, native Finnish citizens.” Again, the discourse on citizenship overlaps with the previous discourses, but it also adds to them by depicting immigrants “without an identity” as a possible threat against “us”, familiar and safe Finnish citizens. Additionally, the citation interestingly mentions “native Finnish citizens” instead of “Finnish citizens” as being possible targets of this danger, which emphasizes the division between native and non-native citizens.

The previous discourses indicate that “immigrants” are framed as a monolithic, solid group. However, through using the concept of “citizenship”, the initiatives posit native Finnish citizens as a homogenous group as well. The initiatives largely construct native Finnish citizens as one, as us. The initiatives contain phrases such as “I suggest on behalf of Finnish citizens”, “Finnish citizens

experience insecurity”, “safety of Finns”, “Finnish citizens have the right to move in their country without fear” and use the word “we” (“we pay tax money”, “can we afford to be the payers of global social security”) in portraying an idea that the initiatives have been written on behalf of all Finnish citizens, which implies that either all Finnish citizens agree on the matters presented or would benefit if whatever is proposed would be changed into a policy. Indeed, following Gee’s (2010, 18) notion on what identities the text aims at enacting, the examples above demonstrate how the concept of “citizenship” is used alongside with “we”, making it (citizenship) as something that unites “us” and separates “us citizens” from outsiders.

What is notable on the discourse of citizenship is that the initiatives value the citizen status of a non-native and a native Finn differently, making the discourse maintain a border not only between citizens and non-citizens, but also between native and non-native citizens. In an initiative calling for the “removal of citizenship from those who participate in armed conflicts in Syria or other crisis regions” (initiative 19) it is first stated that “those Finnish citizens or those who permanently reside in Finland, and who have gone to fight in Syria or in other crisis areas can cause a national safety threat when returning to Finland.” The initiative then continues by noting that “foreign-descendant persons who have been granted a Finnish citizenship or permanent residence permit and who have participated in armed conflicts abroad have to be sentenced to lose their citizenship or residence permit permanently”. Following Gee’s (2010, 19) idea of what social goods, that is shared understandings of something as wanted or valued, does the text enact, the citation above demonstrates how the value of a citizenship is different depending on if the person in question is a native Finn, or if they have an immigrant background by specifically mentioning that one should lose their citizenship if they are “foreign-descendant”. The removal of a Finnish citizenship of a native Finnish citizen is not considered. By doing this, the initiative enforces an idea that the loss of citizenship of non-native citizens should be made easier if a person has committed crimes.

The above-mentioned is also visible in an initiative titled “Denying Finnish citizenship of non-native mercenaries” (initiative 20) which, similarly to the previous initiative, states that “Finnish citizens who have gone to Syria or in other crisis areas can cause a national safety threat when returning to Finland - - we don’t approve receiving people who then travel to fight for their values that are in conflict with Finnish values”. The title of the initiative specifically mentions “non-native mercenaries”, and the citation references to those Finnish citizens who are not native. Here, it is particularly non-native Finnish citizens who are constructed as a possible safety threat. Native Finnish citizens who have participated in an armed conflict abroad are completely disregarded in this sense.

5.5. Discourse 5: Contesting boundaries as natural

Even though majority of the initiatives portray “immigrants” as a group through negative perceptions while simultaneously maintaining “immigrants” as an “outside” group separate from “Finnish people”, four out of the 28 initiatives disregard similar categorizations by arguing that instead of restricting immigrants’ rights, they should be enhanced. Thus, the fifth discourse contests the hegemonic depictions of immigrants as a threatening group prevalent in other discourses, and instead focuses on highlighting the universalism of human rights.

“Legal aid within the asylum process, as defined in Finland’s alien act, must be revised in a way that asylum seekers, including minors, are ensured to receive competent legal aid during the asylum process.” Initiative 11

“I don’t believe people should be returned to countries where their lives might be at risk and for this reason Finnish law should always allow discretion in situations where the requirements for receiving an asylum are not otherwise fully met” Initiative 17

One distinct way that the initiatives expand boundaries is through the notion of social goods (Gee 2010, 19). This is done by categorizing immigrant groups as valuable and deserving of protection as well as social and economic aid. Thus, immigrants are not categorized as “undeserving” against “deserving Finns”, but instead included in this category by making the category itself wider. This is visible, for instance, in the two citations above. In the citation from initiative 11, which demands that the legal protection of asylum seekers must be secured, asylum seekers are argued to be deserving of legal aid regardless of their status. In the citation from initiative 17, which calls for the inclusion of humanitarian reasons as a basis for protection of refugees, refugees are categorized as a group that not only deserve protection but also should be protected. Thus, in terms of social goods, referring to the perceptions of, for instance, “normal” and “valuable”, both citations disregard symbolic boundaries visible in previous discourses not distinguishing immigrants as outside of those who are deserving of aid.

Initiative 11 continues by referencing international institutions, conventions, and principles in further arguing for legal protection of refugees. Phrases such as “- - both UN and Amnesty have pointed out about the failure of Finnish asylum policies” and “the legal aid defined in the Finnish foreign act does not reflect the spirit of the Finnish constitution or obligations set in European human rights conventions” place responsibility for the protection of refugees on Finnish structures and policies instead of on individuals themselves. Finnish asylum policies are considered a “failure” not because they are not restrictive enough but because they have failed to provide adequate support for

individuals. By referencing to international conventions and organizations, the support that states are required to provide for non-citizens is naturalized, and state institutions are connected (Gee 2010, 19) to possibilities of aid instead of their depicting them solely as entities that should make immigrants' arrival in Finland more difficult and deportation easier.

Thus, the boundary, visible in all other discourses, between Finnish citizens and immigrants (or refugees) is moved to include refugees as part of those who are deserving of state assistance. This is even further emphasized by referencing to "European human rights conventions" and international organizations (UN and Amnesty), through which universalism of rights (regardless of state boundaries) is highlighted.

"Undocumented immigrants are a group in a particularly vulnerable position, whose possibilities to societally participate remain highly limited" Initiative 28

"When people try to arrange their income without an official status, they are exposed to exploitation and forms of abuse, such as human trafficking" Initiative 28

The citations above are from an initiative that suggests that Finland admit a residence permit to those immigrants residing in Finland who have applied for an asylum in Finland before 2017 but who have not received a permanent residence permit, thus currently residing in Finland as undocumented immigrants. In the first citation, it is argued that undocumented immigrants are not able to societally participate due to their status as undocumented, and in the second citations it is suggested that undocumented immigrants are in a higher risk of being exploited and abused. Here, the idea of a "passive immigrant" as a naturalized assumption (visible in particular in discourse 1) is contested by noting that undocumented immigrants' agency and possibilities to societally participate are limited due to restrictive policies and institutions.

"Finnishness should not be based on the color of one's skin or external features - -" Initiative 27

"They [undocumented immigrants] have created diverse ties to Finland, for instance educated for new professions, worked, started families, gotten children, learned language, befriended Finnish people. Some of these ties, for instance adopting a Christian or secular lifestyle may place those who have sought an asylum in danger in their countries of origin." Initiative 28

Some understandings within the discourse on contesting boundaries as natural resemble those of the previous discourses. One similarity is the view of integration or assimilation as a natural or positive goal. Whereas discourse 2 highlighted how immigrants should adapt to "Finnish customs" when arriving in Finland, the two citations above, from initiative 27 and 28, justify their call for enhanced

rights by highlighting how immigrants have integrated into Finnish society (initiative 28) and positing ‘Finnishness’ as a perceived ‘good’ or ‘end-goal’ category in which immigrants should be included (initiative 27). Thus, while the discourse seeks to expand the category of ‘Finnishness’ to be more inclusive, it still treats the category as a type of positive ideal. Second similarity with other discourses is that economic reasons are used as arguments in justifying one’s claims. However, whereas in previous discourses economic reasons were used to argue for more restrictive policies, economic reasons here are used to argue that by enhancing refugees’ juridical assistance during asylum processes (initiative 11), “tax-payers” do not have to pay for extra costs.

5.6. Discussion

Four of the five discourses examined above rhetorically create ideas about “us”, native Finnish citizens, as a distinctly separate group from “others”, the outsiders, which in this context are immigrants in Finland or potentially seeking residence there. The discourses do this by creating symbolic boundaries between “Finnish people” and “immigrants”, and thus add to Bail’s (2008) and Neumann and Moy’s (2018) prior studies in confirming that symbolic boundaries indeed are used to separate people into “us” and “them”. Symbolic boundaries, as noted previously, are distinctions actors make in identifying who “we” are as well as who “others” are. These symbolic boundaries are further strengthened by perceptions of intergroup threat, that is by claims that immigrants present different forms of threat to Finnish people. As noted in chapter 3.2 on intergroup threat, the theory suggests that perceived threat an out-group is claimed to pose on the in-group stems from concerns that the out-group is threatening in-group’s physical safety or access to resources (these are referred to as realistic threats) or in-groups “symbols of meaning”, such as religion, ideology, worldview, or values (these are called symbolic threats) (Stephan et al. 2010). This threat does not have to be real in a sense that out-group would actually “threaten” the in-group, as the focus is instead on perceived threat and its nature. Indeed, it is argued here that positing immigrants as a “threat” is used as a further justification in their categorizations and in arguing for more restrictive policies. Perceived realistic threats (physical safety and access to resources)

5.6.1. Categorizations and perceptions of threat

As demonstrated above, the discourses distinguish between native Finnish citizens and immigrants through, first, depicting immigrants as economically unproductive burdens to Finnish society and even as economic threats to Finland (or what is in intergroup theory referred to as realistic threat). Against this, Finnish citizens are portrayed as having to support immigrants through taxes which

implies that Finnish citizens are productive as they pay taxes i.e., they work. Interestingly, while the discourse depicts immigrants as passive and unproductive, it also distinguishes between “humanitarian immigrants” and “normal immigrants”. “Normal immigrants” are those who have a justified reason to arrive in Finland (work, studying or marriage) and perhaps more importantly, who are able to support themselves. Against this, “humanitarian immigrants” are depicted as people who come to Finland to receive social benefits. Through the ideas of economic productiveness depictions of worthiness or unworthiness are connected to immigrants and native Finnish citizens. This neoliberal idea of evaluating individuals’ worthiness through their assumed economic productivity is visible both in politics (Elgenius & Rydgen 2019) and more widely in debates on the acceptance and solidarity towards immigrants (Mäkinen 2017; Avonius & Kestilä-Kekkonen 2018; Burgoon & Rooduijn 2021). For instance, Mäkinen (2017) found in her study on online forums that immigrants arriving to Finland were valued according to their assumed economic independence and productivity. Similar processes are visible in the initiatives as well, as noted above. While immigrants were depicted as economically unproductive in the initiatives, they were also criticized for being recipients of social benefits. This finding is similar to that of van Oorschot (2008) and Avonius and Kestilä-Kekkonen (2018) who have suggested that immigrants are not seen as deserving recipients of welfare state benefits as citizens are.

Second, the initiatives contain ideas of cultural essentialism (Grillo 2003) as they argue that immigrants are inherently different from “Finnish people” as they are claimed to represent culture(s) that are distinctly different from a “Finnish culture”. Finland and Finnish people are depicted to be members a culture that is threatened if/when foreign culture(s) are introduced to it. For this reason, it is argued in the initiatives that “we should treasure our own culture”, and immigrants should adapt to “Finnish customs” when coming here.

The findings are similar to those of Bail (2008) who suggested in his study that symbolic boundaries created based on culture are most salient in Finland. The initiatives argue that Finland is inherently a Christian state that needs to be kept closed off from harmful outside “cultures”. Particularly veils, mosques and Islam are mentioned as being dangerous to Finland. This “threat” is naturalized as the initiatives do not focus on arguing *why* they threat Finland but instead state this perceived threat as a fact. In intergroup threat theory this type of threat is referred to as a symbolic threat, as the “danger” is argued to be directed to groups’ distinct “symbols of meaning”. Similar symbolic threats are visible in anti-immigrant (online) discussion, where ideas of a “white Finnish nation” are reproduced in different contexts alongside with claims that “multiculturalism” and in particular Islam is something that threatens it (Keskinen 2013; Nortio et al. 2020; Aharoni & Féron 2020). This rhetoric of a

“Finnish culture” under threat is not limited only to online spaces, as for instance Elgenius and Rydgen (2019) and Wahlbeck (2016) have noted that in politics, including in Finland, populist right-wing parties often utilize the idea that immigrants, particularly Muslim immigrants, present a threat to “western” values. Indeed, a notable feature of anti-immigrant rhetoric both in general terms and in many of the initiatives are the divisions between “us” Europeans and “non-European” immigrants. By using similar rhetoric commonly found in online spaces as well as right-wing political rhetoric, citizens’ initiatives on immigration can be posited as a part of these processes where hate speech is normalized and legitimized. Citizens’ initiatives offer an alternative platform where people with these sentiments are able to voice their ideas in a form of law proposals and use them as justifications for more restrictive immigrant policies.

The “threat” immigrants are depicted through is not limited only to them being cultural threats but also physical ones. In the initiatives immigrants are separated from Finnish people by categorizing immigrants as physical threats to Finnish people. This is emphasized by claims that immigrants commit a notable number of sexual offences and that in particular undocumented immigrant men pose a danger to Finnish society. Again, these assumptions and depictions of “dangerous immigrant men” are naturalized and not contested. These constructions of a “violent immigrant” are visible in results of prior studies as well (Virkki & Venäläinen 2020), where it has been noted that emotions such as fear, and hate are utilized in constructing the idea of a dangerous immigrant and ultimately arguing for more restrictive policies. Moreover, Goldberg (2006), Zolberg and Long (1999) and Alba (2005) have argued that this process of othering, in particular, of Muslim immigrants is persistent Europe-wide (see also Neumann & Moy 2018). This is yet another indicator that the initiatives have not been created in a vacuum but instead within an environment where the ideas of a “Christian Europe”, and Finland, persist. Moreover, similar depictions are not limited to only the initiatives as research has suggested that intergroup threat is commonly based on physical safety, cultural threats and economic threats (Linden & Jacobs 2017), and that these perceptions can be significantly affected by, for instance, news coverage (ibid.; Atwell Seate, Ma & Chien 2018) which in Finland has traditionally depicted immigrant groups, in particular refugees and irregular immigrants through frames of threats or of victims while simultaneously disregarding immigrant groups’ own agency (Raittila 2009; Horsti 2009; Keskinen 2019; Ahonen & Kallius 2019).

Finally, citizenship status itself is used to separate immigrants from Finnish people. Immigrants without citizenship are perceived as “strangers”, people whose identity we cannot be sure of, which then is used to justify restricting immigrants’ freedom of movement. “Citizenship” as a concept is connected to ideas of familiarity, as something that strengthens one’s connection and belonging to

“us”. As noted by Alba (2005, 27) citizenship is a “fundamental aspect” in constructing boundaries between the native majority and immigrants as it not only grants legal rights but also influences the feeling of membership and “the willingness to make claims asserting rights”. Asserting and safeguarding rights of Finnish citizens is visible throughout the initiatives, for instance in how it is claimed that the initiatives are proposed “on behalf of Finnish citizens.” References to citizenship also further enforce the construction of a “Finnish nation,” visible throughout the initiatives.

As shown, symbolic boundaries between immigrants and native Finnish people are maintained throughout the initiatives. These boundaries are rhetorically created through giving Finnish people certain identities and by separating these identities from that of immigrants; they are enforced through establishing connections (because immigrants are x they bring about y which will then lead to z); and they are made to look natural by arguing or assuming that something is “normal” (for instance that there is “Finnish culture” or “Finnish nation”).

5.6.2. Shifting boundaries

Whereas the nature and shifting of boundaries has been studied more on a societal or group level and in relation to society’s structures and institutions (Alba 2005; Zolberg & Long 1999), the boundaries constructed in the initiatives lead to ask whether it is possible to consider these same processes in the context of the initiatives. Can it, for instance, be argued that the boundaries presented in the initiatives are either bright or blurred (using Alba’s (2005) distinctions), and can anything be said about the possibilities of boundary moving or transformation? As Alba (2005, 27) notes, boundaries between groups as “sociologically complex” and manifest in different ways in different domains. As the purpose of the initiatives is to offer Finnish citizens a direct channel for (possibly) influencing Finnish legal system, the ultimate reason for group categorizations in the context of the initiatives is (in most of the initiatives) to justify more restrictive immigration policies. “Immigrants” as a group are in most initiatives placed against, or outside, of those who are considered to be entitled to social benefits, cultural and religious expression, or even to full membership of society. This implies that on the rhetorical level, the boundaries constructed in the initiatives are bright in nature: the initiatives aim at increasing and maintaining social distance between what they consider “Finnish people” as the in-group, and immigrants as the out-group. It is true that when examining the initiatives themselves, boundaries created in them are not bright or blurred in the sense that Alba (2005) has considered, because they are not institutionalized. However, the initiatives call for the institutionalization of these boundaries. Argued here is that whereas it is important to examine how group boundaries exist in structures and institutions, it is equally important to consider the processes that lead to it and

justifications they are built on. For instance, arguing that an immigrant is not entitled to social benefits rhetorically constructs them as unworthy, but if applied to a law would have institutional consequences on immigrants' rights and access to resources.

Arguably the initiatives contain processes of boundary blurring as well. This is somewhat visible in the discourse on economic productivity, when immigrants are separated into those who are “normal immigrants”, referring to those who work, and to those who arrive in Finland due to humanitarian reasons. This leads to ask whether the boundary around the category of “productive” and “valuable” is what Alba (2005) refers to as a blurred boundary as it leaves the position of immigrants who are employed somewhat unclear. If an immigrant is employed, are they considered as “beneficial” to Finnish society the same as Finnish citizens are naturally assumed to be? Or do they still remain, in a way, between different categories? In his critical study on immigrant integration in Denmark, Rytter (2019) has noted that immigrants who are able to work are viewed as better being able to “integrate” into the host society, even though this integration does not remove what he refers to as “invisible fences” between immigrants and the majority. The distinctions between these two immigrant groups were made in the context of an initiative that suggests that “humanitarian immigrants” be returned to their countries of origin. As noted in the previous section, these categorizations, although made on a rhetoric level, would have concrete consequences on individuals if applied into a law. For instance, in regard to the initiative calling for returning of humanitarian immigrants, boundaries drawn between these two immigrant groups would be institutionalized into acceptance of employed immigrants but rejection of those immigrants (or refugees and asylum seekers) that arrive to Finland due to humanitarian reasons (although distinguishing between different “groups” of immigrants is not as straightforward as the initiative would lead to assume).

Just as research has criticized the concept of “immigrant integration” (see for instance Korteweg 2017 and Rytter 2019), and civil society and immigrants themselves have contested restrictive policies and rhetoric (Tyler & Marciniak 2013; Lonsky 2020; Merikoski 2021; Näre 2021; Fontanari & Ambrosini 2018) the initiatives contain discourses that contest strict divisions into groups who have different access to rights. Indeed, the last examined discourse separates immigrants from native Finns insofar as they depict undocumented immigrants as a particularly vulnerable group. This idea of immigrants (the initiatives examined mostly focused on asylum seekers and refugees) as vulnerable is used to argue why Finnish state should protect them and grant them more rights (such as legal assistance). The discourse does not focus on clearly separable “us” versus “them”, but instead expands or blurs boundaries by including immigrants within people who are deserving of rights regardless of their legal status.

5.6.3. Structural and cultural violence

Finally, it is argued here that constructing immigrants as a threat and rhetorically creating strict boundaries between “immigrants” as a group and native Finnish citizens are a form of cultural violence that is used to justify and legitimize more restrictive policies, which in turn if accepted, would contain features of structural violence.

As previously noted in section 3.3, cultural violence refers to any aspects of culture that is used to legitimize structural violence in order to make it look more “right” (Galtung 1990, 291). In the context of the initiatives, cultural violence presents itself as narrow, harmful, and negative presentations of immigrants. With a few exceptions “immigrants” as a group is presented as homogenous “mass” without considering the diversities, intersectionalities, and positions that exist within it. This “mass” of immigrant is largely presented through constructing them both as a symbolic and realistic threat to Finland and Finnish citizens. Indeed, throughout the initiatives immigrants are the targets of othering.

Constructing immigrants almost entirely through threat perceptions is a form of cultural violence through which the initiatives aim at further justifying their claims. Through ideas of cultural essentialism (claiming that people are “cultural subjects” that differentiates groups from one another (Grillo 2003)) immigrants as posited as members of “dangerous” culture(s). Through this membership it is suggested that immigrants themselves are dangerous too. This danger is further divided into economic, physical, and cultural danger, or if using terms of intergroup threat theory, into symbolic and realistic threats. Positing immigrants in terms of different types of threats is a powerful justification for more restrictive policies as they simultaneously depict native Finnish people as a group that needs to be “protected”.

As noted by Galtung (1969), both cultural and structural violence are ultimately derived from unequal distribution of power in society. The initiatives maintain these unequal power relations through constructions of in-groups and out-groups. Moreover, as previously noted they leave immigrants as the targets of othering not only through rhetorically constructing them as such, but also through the exclusionary nature of the initiatives. Those without citizenship do not have a similar channel through which they could attempt to influence policies.

Through these boundaries constructed on the rhetoric level, the initiatives aim at justifying more restrictive policies, which in turn can be considered as a form of structural violence as these policies would prevent or make it more difficult for immigrants to access resources (Galtung 1969), such as social benefits. Moreover, the initiatives propose restrictions for immigrants to their freedom of movement and religious expression, as well as refugees’ possibilities to seek an asylum in Finland.

Cultural and structural violence are useful concepts to examine alongside boundary creation, as they direct attention to how symbolic boundaries are not only categorizations we make of people and groups, but also how these categorizations directly influence the extent to which out-groups (in this case immigrants) are able to attain recognition, respect, and resources. Therefore, it is important to examine different ways that cultural and structural violence are reproduced, as well as how these forms of violence, whether ways of speech or concrete policies, prevent individuals from achieving equal memberships in societies.

6. Conclusions

This thesis has examined how symbolic boundaries are constructed and maintained in citizens' initiatives on immigration. Here, citizens' initiatives are considered as a "new", or additional, site where people and groups attempt to make their opinions more visible and justified. As noted, majority of the examined 28 initiatives on immigration contain categorizations and boundary-making between "us" and "them". In order to better understand how these boundaries are justified in the initiatives, intergroup threat theory was utilized in examining how immigrants are perceived both as a symbolic and realistic threat to Finland and to Finnish citizens. Through discourse analysis, the main research question *What discourses maintaining symbolic boundaries do the initiatives contain?* as well as the secondary research question *How is the perception of intergroup threat visible in these boundary-maintaining discourses?* were answered.

From the data, it is possible to discern four discourses that create boundaries between "immigrants" and "Finnish people". Out of these four discourses, three in particular contain ideas of intergroup threat, as they justify boundaries by depicting immigrants as economic threats (discourse 1), cultural or symbolic threats (discourse 2), and physical threats (discourse 3). Additionally, the fourth discourse solidifies these boundaries through the concept of "citizenship" itself. The fifth discourse, in turn, challenges the hegemonic views of the previous discourses by depicting immigrants not as threats, but through emphasizing the universalism of human rights.

As suggested, the initiatives have been created within an environment where immigration remains a contested, politicized topic. A topical comparison can be drawn between the rhetoric of the initiatives and the response to Ukrainian refugees during the first months of 2022. As noted in section 2.2 and chapter 5, one notable feature of anti-immigrant rhetoric both in the initiatives and more generally is the division between "us" Europeans, and non-European immigrants. The significance of this division is again visible in the way that European countries, including Finland, have responded to Ukrainian refugees who were forced to flee from Ukraine due to Russian's attack in February 2022. Whereas the arrival of non-European refugees in Europe in 2015 was widely titled as a "refugee crisis", the attitudes among European countries towards Ukrainian refugees are distinctly welcoming. For instance, simultaneously as around 5 000 of those individuals who arrived in Finland during 2015-2016 still do not have a residence permit (initiative 28), the Finnish Immigration Service noted already in the beginning of April 2022 that it would streamline Ukrainian refugees' access to residence and work permits, made easier by EU's decision to grant Ukrainian refugees' temporary protection (Yle 2022; European Commission 2022). Additionally, different approaches towards

Ukrainian and non-European refugees are visible on the level of rhetoric too. For instance, in an interview for Helsingin Sanomat, the leader of the Finns Party claimed that Ukrainian refugees are “completely different than refugees from the Middle East” because Ukrainians do not arrive in Finland to seek “better standard of living” but instead ultimately want to return home as they are “patriotic”. Additionally, the leader considers Ukrainians to be able to better integrate into Finnish society because “they are Christians, whose culture is closer to Finnish culture than that of Islamic countries”. (Helsingin Sanomat 2022.) The above-mentioned example demonstrates, first, how immigration continues to be a topical phenomenon both in Finland and in Europe. Second, it shows how categorizations of people and perceptions of their “cultures” or other perceived qualities continue to be the basis through which immigrant groups are valued. Same notions have been deployed previously as well, as the analysis of the initiatives demonstrate.

Indeed, the initiatives contain similar notions of immigration and immigrants as what has been noted in previous research on anti-immigration rhetoric, which in the context of Finland has largely focused on rhetoric used in online forums and discussions. Moreover, the rhetoric deployed in these online forums as well as in the initiatives resemble anti-immigrant rhetoric commonly deployed by right-wing, populist parties and partly also the rhetoric sometimes used by mainstream media. These similarities in rhetoric from different sites indicate that the initiatives have not been created in a vacuum but are instead part of larger processes and discourses where anti-immigrant sentiments are attempted to be made more visible. Thus, this research has added to existing research by examining citizens’ initiatives as a “new” site where anti-immigrant sentiments can not only be voiced, but also deployed in attempts to influence Finnish policies and laws. These same sentiments are continuously reproduced and justified on different channels and in different contexts.

Although many of the examined initiatives have a negative stance on immigration, some of the examined initiatives challenged these hegemonic ideas of deserving “us” versus undeserving “them”. Similarly, current policies and perceptions of deservingness are challenged, for instance, through the Permit to Live initiative (initiative 28), that has managed to mobilize Finnish citizens in a relatively short time. As noted in section 5.5, the Permit to Live (Lupa Elää) initiative calls for issuing residence permits to those people who have applied for an asylum in Finland before 1.1.2017, but who have not received one. The initiative has managed to create an online “movement” in the first months of 2022 in the sense that multiple public figures as well as non-governmental organizations have voiced their support for the initiative. Bringing visibility to the initiative has increased the number of signatures on it rapidly, as they have risen from around 18 000 signatures on 1st of March 2022 to the current 44 500 signatures on 21st of April 2022 (see the weblink for initiative 28 in appendix 1). The Permit

to Live initiative demonstrates how citizens' initiatives continue to be societally impactful by having power to bring more attention to topics they advocate for, regardless of if they are applied as laws or not. As such, it continues to be important for future research to focus on citizens' initiatives and the topics and themes they focus on. In terms of peace and conflict research, future research could focus, for instance, on examining whether cultural and/or structural violence can be detected in the initiatives more widely, outside of only the initiatives that concern immigration.

This thesis contributes to peace and conflict research by bringing attention to the fact that forms of violence can and do exist also within societies that are considered "peaceful" and "equal". Indeed, in addition to reproducing anti-immigrant rhetoric, the majority of the 28 examined initiatives contain forms of cultural and structural violence. These forms of violence are visible in the harmful rhetoric and in the policies that the initiatives strive for. For instance, many of the initiatives argue that immigrants should not be entitled to social benefits or that certain immigrant groups should be "returned" to their countries of origin. Additionally, immigrants' rights for cultural and religious expression are disregarded unless these expressions are considered to be compatible with "Finnish culture". Finally, "immigrants" as a group is depicted through threat perceptions throughout the initiatives. Thus, cultural and structural violence are visible in the initiatives in the way that they deny "immigrants" of respect, recognition and access to resources (such as welfare). Cultural violence, that is different aspect of culture, are used to further legitimize the initiatives' aspirations for more restrictive policies (for instance by arguing that immigrants are "dangerous" due to their "cultures"). Thus, violence is visible in the initiatives not only on the level of rhetoric, but also in how the initiatives aim at institutionalizing policies that would significantly restricts individuals' access to rights. Considering the cultural and structural violence detectable in the initiatives enables to make them more visible in our society as well. As noted, this thesis suggests that the initiatives on immigration have been created within an environment where harmful, racist depictions of immigrants prevail. By establishing a connection between the initiatives and Finnish society more generally, it is possible to attain a more extensive understanding of the different forums, or "sites", where this harmful rhetoric continues to be justified and reproduced.

Finally, the initiatives on immigration are largely rooted in and enforce unequal distributions of power by positioning immigrants as "others", as the targets of restrictive actions. Indeed, paradoxically as the initiatives make political participation easier for some groups, they are simultaneously used to maintain and reproduce exclusion and suspicion towards other groups. Understanding the mechanisms of these less visible forms of violence, in all the spaces they might exist, is an important step towards countering such societal inequalities.

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Appendix 1 – List of the citizens’ initiatives

The original title in Finnish and the author’s English translation, as well as weblinks to the initiatives (initiatives 1-27 were accessed on 1st of August 2021 and initiative 28 on 30th of January 2022)

1. Kansalaisaloite kansainvälisen GCM-sopimuksen hyväksynnän mitätöimiseksi Suomessa / *Citizens’ initiative to invalidate the Global Compact For Migration in Finland*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/3592>
2. Rikokseen syyllistyneen ulkomaalaisen karkottaminen / *Deportation of foreigners who have committed crime(s)*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/970>
3. Seksuaalirikoksesta suomessa tuomitun oleskeluluvan peruuttaminen ja karkoitus / *Cancellation of resident permit and deportation of persons convicted of a sexual offence in Finland*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/3605>
4. Turvapaikanhakijan, joka lomailee kotimaassaan, turvapaikkahakemus on mitätöitävä ja oleskelulupa kohdemaassa peruttava / *Annulment of asylum application and resident permit if a person is having a vacation in their home country while waiting for their asylum decision*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/3768>
5. Vaatimus rajavartiolaitain muuttamiseksi sekä Suomen rajojen sulkemisesta ylivoimaisen siirtolaiskriisin johdosta/ *A demand to change border control laws and closing the borders due to a overwhelming immigration crisis*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/1647>
6. Etuuksien poisto Suomessa, muilta kuin Suomen kansalaisilta. / *Removal of social benefits from people who do not have a Finnish citizenship*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/2600>
7. Kansanäänestys Suomessa asuvien ulkomaan kansalaisten sosiaaliturvan muuttamisesta työperusteiseksi / *A referendum to change the social security of foreigners who live in Finland to be work-based*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/1528>
8. Kansalaisaloite terroristiseen järjestöön kuuluneen, tai kuuluvan henkilön ja hänen lähiomaisen maahantulon ja maassa oleskelun estämiseksi. / *A citizens’ initiative to prevent the arrival and residence of those who have been or are a part of a terrorist organizations as well as their*

family members

<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/4747>

9. Turvapaikanhakijat, jotka ovat saaneet kielteisen päätöksen, on voimassa olevaa lakia muutettava / *Change of laws regarding those asylum seekers who have gotten a negative decision*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/3604>
10. Suomen on rajoitettava maahanmuuttajien määrää merkittävästi/vuosi. / *Finland must significantly limit the number of immigrants per year*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/1075>
11. Turvapaikanhakijoiden oikeusturva varmistettava. / *The right to legal protection of asylum seekers must be secured*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/3104>
12. Suomen kansalaisuuden menettäminen terroristisen toiminnan seurauksena. / *Loss of Finnish citizenship due to terrorist activities*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/4849>
13. Dublin sopimuksen käyttöönotto. / *Deploying the Dublin agreement*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/1521>
14. Pakolaisten vastaanotto AINOASTAAN kiintiöiden kautta. / *Admittance of refugees only through quotas*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/1718>
15. Maahanmuuttajille ulkonaliikkumiskielto klo 20-06 / *Curfew to immigrants from 8pm to 6am*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/1710>
16. Ulkomaalaiset tuomitut omiin maihinsa suorittamaan tuomionsa / *Foreigners convicted of crimes to their own countries to serve their sentence*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/256>
17. Aloite humanitäärisen syyn perusteella suojelun palauttamisesta ulkomaalaislakiin / *An initiative to return humanitarian reasons as a basis of protection in the aliens act*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/2472>
18. Lakiehdotus turvapaikanhakijoiden vastaanottorahan poistamisesta / *A law proposal to remove the reception allowance of asylum seekers*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/42>
19. Syyrian ym. kriisialueilla, aseelliseen konfliktiin osallistuvien kansalaisuuden / oleskeluluvan peruttaminen / *Removal of citizenship from those who participate in armed conflicts in Syria*

or other crisis regions

<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/889>

20. Ulkomaalaistaustaisten palkkasotureiden Suomen kansalaisuuden evääminen / *Denying Finnish citizenship of foreign mercenaries*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/701>
21. Pakolaissopimus avattava / *The refugee convention must be opened*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/6206>
22. Rajavalvonnan palauttaminen länsirajalle / *Returning border control on the Western border*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/2610>
23. Vastustamme suurmoskeija hanketta / *We oppose the plan to build a grant mosque*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/1303>
24. huntu kielto suomeen / *Veil ban to Finland*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/2641>
25. Epäiltyjen etnisyys julki poliisiin tiedotteissa / *The ethnicity of suspects should be clarified in police reports*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/1329>
26. Kotiutus kotoutuksen tilalle
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/1154>
27. Antirasistiset strategiat ja kriittinen näkökulma opintosuunnitelmiin / *The inclusion of antiracist strategies and critical outlooks to student curriculums*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/6764>
28. Lupa elää – Suomessa pitkään asuneille turvapaikanhakijoille myönnettävä oleskeluluvat / *Permit to live – residence permits must be admitted to asylum seekers who have lived in Finland for a long time*
<https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/9109>