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# Immigration discourses and their impact on multiculturalism: A discursive and experimental study

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The present research examines discourses about immigration and their consequences for the evaluation of multiculturalism. It discusses two studies that were conducted among native Dutch people. The first study uses interviews and examines the discursive construction of categories of immigrants, and the rhetorical consequences of these constructions for the way people evaluate cultural diversity and the assimilation of immigrants. Immigration was found to be defined in relation to the repertoires of 'personal choice' or 'lack of choice', and the distinction between these repertoires provided the ideological arguments about rights and responsibilities. Furthermore, and for the participants themselves, an interpretative framework in terms of 'personal choice' involved a plea in the direction of assimilation, whereas 'lack of choice' involved arguments for cultural diversity. These consequences were examined further in a second experimental study. In this study, the endorsement of multiculturalism was found to depend on whether the notion of 'personal choice' or that of 'lack of choice' was elicited. The endorsement of multiculturalism was greater in the latter condition than in the former. By using different methods, the research tries to combine different theoretical approaches to social psychology.

There is a global trend of increasing population movements across national borders; immigration flows towards western countries are part of the emergence of ethnically and culturally diverse societies. The issues of immigration and multiculturalism are hotly debated in many countries. Immigrants challenge the existing political, social, and cultural order of the nation, and host countries face the question of how to deal with these newcomers. In many spheres of life, questions of immigration and multiculturalism give rise to lively and important debates. For example, in The Netherlands, where the present study was conducted, immigration and multiculturalism were among the main issues in the political campaigns of the most recent local and general elections of 2002 and 2003. Similar debates dominate politics in other countries, as well as at the level of the European Union. This study examines some of the ideological discourses

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about immigration, and their various consequences for questions of multiculturalism. The focus is on the interpretative repertoires used by majority ethnic group members to define categories of immigrants, and the implications of these definitions for the evaluation of cultural diversity.

Both interview and experimental data were collected and analysed. The choice of these two methodologies followed from the research question and the theoretical position taken. The interest was in the discursive construction of categories of immigrants, and the consequences of these for the expressed evaluation of multiculturalism. Hence, the focus was on the effects of particular social constructions rather than, for example, on underlying cognitive processes or inner dispositions. The interviews were used to identify some of the repertoires deployed in talking about immigration, and to examine how these were used rhetorically to manage questions of multiculturalism. Subsequently, the experimental technique was adopted as an additional powerful device for investigating whether repertoires that frame immigration in different ways influenced the level of endorsement of multiculturalism. The discursive and experimental approaches are typically regarded as irreconcilable and antithetical, but I hope to demonstrate the usefulness and utility of combining these approaches.

### Interpretative accounts and consequences

Assessments and interpretations of immigration and multiculturalism are not self-evident, but rather involve arguments and explanations. A discourse analytical approach can provide an explanation of how immigration is interpreted and explained. In doing so, categories of immigrants are not studied as cognitive representations based on perceptual salient and identifiable features of groups of people. Rather, the focus is on the construction and use of categories in relation to situated discursive practices and ideological consequences (e.g. Billig, 1987; Edwards, 1991; LeCouteur, Rapley, & Augoustinos, 2001; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Rapley, 1998). The way that people talk about immigration and define categories of immigrants can perform a variety of social functions with different ideological and political consequences. The very nature of a group of people is constructed in category definitions, which has implications for rights and entitlements. Invoking categories and their associated membership entitlements is a powerful rhetorical device. Hence, discursive studies can contribute distinctively and productively to the understanding of the social and political dynamics of immigration and multiculturalism by analysing the ways that immigration is defined and explained, and the consequences of these definitions for the evaluation of cultural diversity.

There are now a variety of approaches in the discursive tradition, ranging from the detailed analysis of the sequential organization of talk as in conversation analysis (e.g. Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Edwards, 1997; Potter, 1996), to identifying broad patterns of culturally available patterns of meaning, as in critical discursive work (e.g. Billig, 1987; Edley, 2001; Wetherell, 1998). The current research is informed by the latter approach, and aims to identify the 'argumentative threads' or interpretative accounts (Augoustinos, LeCouteur, & Soyland, 2002; Bekerman, 2002; Wetherell, 1998) that speakers deploy in everyday talk and debate on issues pertaining to immigration.

A focus on the consequences or implications is central in discursive studies. These studies typically examine the diversity of subject positions constructed in talk, and the interpersonal and wider social functions that particular accounts serve. However, the consequences and implications of particular constructions and interpretations are

studied in various ways. For example, in conversation-analytical inspired approaches, the analytical focus is on the sequential organization of interactions, and consequences are examined in terms of the responses of the other participants in a conversation. However, it can be argued that consequences are not only restricted to sequences in social interactions or sets of occasioned conversational practices. There are many situations in which people have to state personal opinions and are asked personally to support or reject a particular proposal or decision. Obvious examples are policy decisions, practical recommendations, elections, and referenda, where supporting one or another construction of reality has important social and political implications. The actual lives people live not only involve situated conversations and debates, but also moments of relatively simple evaluations of certain constructions of a complex reality. Using different ideological notions or category labels to frame a particular issue may lead to different evaluative reactions and actions (e.g. Judd, Park, Ryan, Brauer, & Kraus, 1995; Katz & Hass, 1988; Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000). Augoustinos and Quinn (2003), for example, show that a group referred to as 'illegal immigrants' is evaluated more negatively compared to being labelled as 'asylum seekers'.

In critical discursive work, consequences are typically examined by analysing textual constructions in terms of the diversity of social positions and relationships that are being defined and provided, or denied and ignored. For example, it is examined how discursive devices and specific constructions are used to reify, legitimate, and dissimulate patterns of social power and racial dominance. However, these investigations also tend to have certain limitations. For example, Wetherell and Potter (1992) studied racism in terms of 'discourse which has the effect of categorizing, allocating and discriminating between certain groups' (p. 70). They studied these effects predominantly by applying a 'practical scepticism to the discourse of white New Zealanders in order, as the title has it, to provide a map of racist language' (Hammersley, 2003, p. 803). Hence, the focus was on textual deconstruction and not on the reactions and understandings of their interviewees as such. Furthermore, Lynn and Lea (2003) analysed readers' letters to national newspapers in trying to deconstruct the rhetoric surrounding asylum seekers in Britain. These analyses are important in themselves but also restricted; they do not tell us whether specific rhetorical constructions actually have specific effects on people. In textual deconstructions, the emphasis tends to be on 'unmasking' ideological consequences, and the extent to which devices and constructions visibly affect people's evaluations and actions is often left largely unexamined. Furthermore, in this line of work, it is often difficult to determine which particular aspects of discourses affect people's reactions.

### Immigration discourses

According to Muus (1997), contemporary refugee and asylum policy in most western countries is influenced by two, often contradictory, approaches. On the one hand, it is characterized by a humanitarian approach, based on the respect for human rights, and a country's desire to maintain its self-image as a place of refuge for those who are in need of protection. On the other hand, the second approach aims to reduce migration flows and control immigration by means of restrictive admission policies. These contradictory approaches are reflected in the official characterization of the Dutch asylum policy: 'fair but strict, sober yet humane'. In the government brochure, 'Dutch Hospitality is not Unlimited' (*Het Vreemdelingenbeleid kent z'n grenzen*; Ministry of Justice, 1996), the necessity of an asylum policy that restricts access is explained as follows:

> Real refugees (i.e. those who are threatened by their governments with imprisonment or death because of their political convictions) must be given refuge in The Netherlands. However, in order to make such refuge possible, it is essential to make a strict selection of who can, and who cannot, be admitted.

Public advertisements in the tradition of this brochure gave the following explanations (see Grifhorst, 2000): 'Fair, because we give each individual a fair chance. And strict, because we do not, for example, admit *fortune seekers and criminals,'* and 'Because we have to make sure that we do not confuse *fortune seekers* with those who really are entitled to a residence permit' (their italics).

In this construction, those whose profiles do not match that of the 'real refugee' are labelled as 'fortune seekers' and presented as a threat to Dutch hospitality. This distinction between categories of refugees has been around for some time, but it has become more pronounced in recent years in the media, political debates, and in everyday conversations. It is claimed that only a minority are 'real refugees' and that 'fortune seekers', 'economic refugees', or 'ethnic profiteers' constitute the majority. These terms are used in different ways and in different contexts, but a main distinction seems to be the one between refugees who have no option but to leave their home country, and refugees who do have a clear choice and simply 'give it a try' (Lynn & Lea, 2003). This distinction is not only used to define categories of refugees, but has also been found in talk about labour migrants who have been coming to western European countries since the 1960s. An example is offered by a study conducted in The Netherlands that used focus group material (Verkuyten, 1997). This study showed that the idea of 'personal choice' was used to make Turkish and Moroccan immigrants assume responsibility for their situation, and to argue for assimilation. In contrast, an emphasis on Dutch society and industry recruiting these people as 'guest workers' was shown to be related to favouring multiculturalism.

The distinction in terms of choice resonates with important ideological notions. Individualism has been called the predominant ideology of Western liberal societies (Hall, 1986). Individualism encompasses ideas about the 'sovereign individual' and his or her personal freedom. Personal freedom is an important principle rooted in the liberal tradition. It implies self-determination, and the idea that each individual or group is entitled to an area of non-interference (Berlin, 1969). The notion of freedom is closely linked to human rights, and these rights can be seen as formalised freedom demands and requirements. Self-determination implies a personal responsibility for one's situation and position. When people make a decision, they themselves are responsible for the consequences. Responsibilities are defined differently when people have little choice and their actions are predominantly determined by others or unforeseen circumstances. Hence, there is much at stake in defining or challenging a particular action as self-determined.

In the present research, the focus is on the ways that immigrant categories are defined, and the implications of these definitions for the evaluation of multiculturalism. We can expect the everyday thinking of ordinary people about immigration to reflect both the individualistic, and the humanistic, notions present in the current political approaches and distinctions described above. Billig *et al.* (1988) have highlighted the contrary nature of ideological themes and the inherent dilemmatic quality of everyday thinking. When making claims about immigration, speakers can be expected to try to manage these dilemmas and other possible versions of their interpretations.

The way immigrant categories are defined can have various consequences, for example, for admission policies. It may also result in limiting access to asylum review or

refugee status for those already present in the country. In addition, in parliamentary and public debates, immigrants have been presented as a threat to social cohesion and national identity of countries, which leads to exclusionary or assimilationist practices. On the other hand, they have also been presented as worthy, potential or actual members of the nation, which is related to multiculturalism as the proposed model of integration (see Parekh, 2000; Pratto & Lemieux, 2001; Triandafyllidou, 2000). Hence, in contrast to multicultural notions, there are socially shared beliefs that argue for assimilation whereby immigrants and ethnic minority group members abandon their heritage culture and adopt mainstream society's way of life. There is an ongoing public debate in The Netherlands about these two conflicting ideological positions, which affects people's everyday thinking. For example, native Dutch people have been found to define multiculturalism as either interesting and positive, or as threatening and causing social problems (Verkuyten, 2004). These two interpretations were used in contrast with each other. They formed the basis of arguments about the nature of cultural diversity and were used to argue for either cultural rights or assimilation.

The present research attempts to elucidate views on multiculturalism by examining if/how different constructions of immigration affect the evaluation of multiculturalism. In general, multicultural notions promote the value of diversity as a core principle, and insist that all ethnic groups have a right to their own culture (Barry, 2001; Parekh, 2000). The present focus is on multicultural attitudes or the endorsement of multiculturalism. In studying attitudes, however, the emphasis in discursive psychology is not on inner dispositions but on the expression of appraisals in actual talk. Attitudes are seen as evaluative practices, and discursive studies have shown that people's evaluations of an object or social category can be very different depending on how the object or category is constructed (Potter, 1998; Verkuyten, 1998; Wiggins & Potter, 2003). Hence, it is expected that the evaluation of multiculturalism will differ depending on the way that immigration is defined.

## STUDY I

### Participants and material

The corpus of material used for this study is derived from a relatively large-scale project on racism and the construction of national and ethnic identities. Part of this project involved ethnographic fieldwork and focus group discussions. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with native Dutch participants. The present analysis is based on these interviews. Some of the interviews were conducted with a single participant; in other interviews, there were up to three participants. In the latter case, the participants were family members, friends, or neighbours, and thus knew each other well. We used this type of interview to find out how the participants would react towards each other and, possibly, argue among themselves.

In total, there were 71 native Dutch participants; 36 women and 25 men. Most of them were from a middle-class background, and were aged between 22 and 71 years. They came predominantly from the cities of Utrecht and Rotterdam, but some of them were from the east of the country.

The participants were asked to participate in a study on 'contemporary issues in Dutch society'. The interviews were designed to explore a range of related issues, including national identity, European unification, immigration, and multiculturalism. The topics of immigration and multiculturalism were introduced in the second part of

the interview. This was done by using variants of a standard question of what the participants think about past and present migrations to The Netherlands. Subsequently, there were questions on the consequences of immigration for Dutch multicultural society. These questions set the discursive environment and task for the participants. They were included in the interview to examine the way that the participants discussed immigration and multiculturalism in Dutch society. We wanted the participants to engage in both descriptive and interpretative work, and we were interested in some of the interpretative repertoires that were used to make sense of immigration.

The interviews were conducted by six native Dutch interviewers, including myself. The interviewers did not elaborate their own views on immigration or any other topic. However, the context in which responses were produced included interviewees' interpretations of what was considered appropriate language with which to discuss immigration with a native Dutch researcher. Similar to other studies (e.g. Condor, 2000; McVittie, McKinlay, & Widdicombe, 2003; Speer & Potter, 2000; Van den Berg, Wetherell, & Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2003), the interviews were treated as conversations or interactions, rather than as elicitations. Thus, a more interaction-based analytic stance towards the interviews was adopted, in which the interviewee(s) and the interviewer were both considered responsible for any interaction, albeit from a different position.

### Analytical procedure

All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Working on the premise that the type of analysis to be carried out should inform the choice of transcription notation (Wetherell & Potter, 1992), we chose to transcribe for basic content rather than taking the considerably more detailed approach common in, for example, conversational analysis. Our reasoning was that the present analysis focuses on the interpretative accounts used by the participants rather than on the fine-grained sequential organization of the material. Thus, details such as timing and intonation have not been included.

The analysis began by first building up a data file of all the discourses related to immigration that were generated in response to the interviewer's questions. As noted, I am particularly concerned in this article with the discourses dealing with immigration. In examining the role of interpretative resources, the definitions and reactions of the interviewees themselves are used as the main source from which to derive meaning. The focus is on the way the speakers constructed definitions of immigration, and the conclusions they drew for the evaluation of multiculturalism.

### Analysis

The interviews provided a rich and diverse corpus of data, in which many different themes and topics were addressed and various arguments and interpretations presented. Here, the focus is on the presence of two competing interpretative repertoires that were deployed in most of the interviews, which affected views on multiculturalism: 'personal choice' and 'lack of choice'. The two repertoires used by the participants are culturally available discourses that were drawn upon to construct different versions of immigration and, thereby, different categories of immigrants. These repertoires were deployed in ways that produced different evaluative accounts of multiculturalism. The nature and evaluative consequences of the two interpretative repertoires evident in this corpus can be seen in the excerpts below.

These first two excerpts are taken from a context where the participants discussed multiculturalism in terms of the acceptability and necessity of specific measures and provisions for different cultural groups.

> *Excerpt 1*
> Jan: 'Look it's really simple. You choose to, er, live in, live in a certain country and then, well, you shouldn't moan about stuff like your own culture and what not, you should simply adapt and, er, and at home you can do as you please. 'Cos you know, 'cos see, if we were to decide to live in another country then, then we'd have to adapt too, so–so, well, it shouldn't be an issue.'

> *Excerpt 2*
> Trudy: 'Well I personally, I draw the line for instance at like, er, Turkish schools, er, all kinds of special arrangements for Muslims and asylum seekers, stuff like that, then, er, you've got your priorities wrong, why should we adapt to them? After all, it's them that've come to Holland, out of their own free will. Nobody made them come to Holland, they came to Holland out of their own free will, then I reckon, like, if we went to a country out of our free will then we'd have to adapt, same as they should do here. They want to keep their own culture, fine, but in the privacy of their own homes.'

In both excerpts, the 'personal choice' made by asylum seekers and immigrants in coming to The Netherlands is stressed, and in Excerpt 2, this interpretation is explicitly contrasted with being forced to come to The Netherlands. This construction implies that the immigrants themselves are responsible for having come to The Netherlands. If people act upon their own decisions, then they have to live with the consequences. The view that immigrants should adapt is mainly based upon the notion of free will or personal responsibility. Immigrants have opted for a life in The Netherlands, and as a self-evident corollary ('Look it's really simple'; Excerpt 1), they should accept the responsibilities and consequences of this choice; that is, adaptation.

In the above excerpts, immigrants are not denied their right to a cultural identity but this right is restricted to their private lives. As found in previous studies (e.g. Verkuyten, 2001), the distinction between private and public that was made on several occasions in the interviews helps to solve the dilemma between, on the one hand, the view that immigrants should adapt and behave like the Dutch, and, on the other hand, there is the view that they have a right to their own ways. In the interviews, this right was acknowledged by all participants and was not questioned as such. However, this right should not spill over into the public sphere or prevent the integration of immigrants into Dutch society. A solution to this dilemma is to make a clear distinction between the private and the public domain.

Something else is noteworthy in these two excerpts. In both, the situation of immigrants is compared to what 'we' – the Dutch – must do when choosing to go and live in another country. This construction privileges a view of immigrants as free agents. By doing so, adaptation is defined as a general and normative practice, making the argument of immigrants' adaptation not exceptional. The behaviour that is expected of 'us' when we choose to emigrate is made out to be self-evident or 'scripted' (Edwards, 1997), and, thereby, extended to all other migrants. As such, 'their' pattern of behaviour is made problematic, and unacceptable and 'our' argument of adaptation logical and acceptable.

As opposed to this, it is possible to emphasize the lack of choice or the essentially forced nature of migration. For the speakers themselves, this interpretation has other implications for rights and responsibilities. The next two excerpts are examples.

*Excerpt 3*
Piet: 'To my mind, you can't just say, like, well there's too many foreigners here that are unemployed and all of these cultures are bound to clash. I mean, er, when it comes down to it, we brought them over here ourselves in the first place, shanghai-ing them really, and, er, that wasn't a clever move I reckon, but hey. A lot of Dutch people were not willing to do any dirty or hard work themselves so that's why they brought loads of Moroccan and Turkish people over here and of course later on, once they'd been here for a couple of years, they had their family move here. So we've got ourselves to blame.'

*Excerpt 4*
Marie: 'But I think it's really disgraceful if we start saying things like Holland is full up, and it's the downfall of Dutch culture and things. We have so much in The Netherlands and I think sharing a bit of that with foreigners won't do us any harm, with refugees and suchlike. There's got to be room for people like that. It's bad enough being a refugee and *no way* did those lads choose to come here. But they did end up here and it wasn't out of their own free will. They have no choice, it's that or die. See, in cases like that you've got a moral obligation to, well, when people are having a rough time or are being persecuted in their own country, to offer them shelter and a space where they can be themselves.'

In Excerpt 3, Piet emphasizes the fact that the Dutch society recruited migrant workers in the 1970s, and that the Dutch are, therefore, responsible for the presence of ethnic minority groups in their country. In contrast to Excerpts 1 and 2, this construction puts the 'blame' for the presence of Turks and Moroccans in The Netherlands on the Dutch themselves, and glosses over the fact that some migrant workers decided to come to The Netherlands, whereas others did not. Interestingly, this interpretation functions as an argument against the idea that there are too many 'foreigners' or that different cultures are incompatible. The fact that 'we' have recruited 'them' makes 'us' responsible, and gives 'them' cultural rights.

In Excerpt 4, Marie emphasizes that refugees had to flee from their countries or die; 'no way' did they choose to come to The Netherlands voluntarily. In stressing their lack of choice, she argues explicitly against an interpretation in terms of, for example, 'fortune seekers' or 'economic refugees'. Hence, she resists the interpretation that holds refugees responsible for their own situation, arguing instead that the Dutch have a moral responsibility to take care of these people and to provide room for cultural diversity.

Excerpt 4 shows that claims and interpretations were made within a rhetorical context (Billig, 1987). Marie was criticizing those who saw refugees as having a choice about leaving their country. In contrast, in Excerpt 2, Trudy was doing the exact opposite. There are also instances in the interviews where the one interpretative repertoire was used explicitly to undermine the other. The importance of this is that specific interpretations provide particular kinds of arguments, as well as courses of action. In the next excerpt, three participants are discussing the issue of multiculturalism and the question of Islamic primary schools in particular. The extract starts with Karel claiming that he does not object to such schools.

*Excerpt 5*
Karel: 'I have no objections to that you know.'
Els: 'Me neither, no.'
Ad: 'I do.'
Karel: 'Why?'
Ad: 'I think, er, see you opt to live in a particular country and you do that for something as a whole, and then you should just adapt and that's it. That culture of theirs, they can keep it

alive at home, can't they, the Dutch government can't be made responsible for it.'

Karel: 'But, er, do you object to, and it's simply Dutch schools I'm referring to, do you object to catholic or protestant primary schools?'

Ad: 'No.'

Karel: 'So why should you object to Islam because that's a religion, isn't it.'

Ad: 'Because those people chose to come here and in our history there's never been a Muslim culture.'

Karel: 'That's not true, we brought them here in the first place so we will have to live with the consequences and make sure there's room for their culture, too, like. I mean if you, er, invite Muslims in and in large numbers, too, well, those people have a right to their own culture and schools and stuff.'

This excerpt shows that the interpretative repertoires, 'personal choice' and 'lack of choice', can both be used to explain the presence of ethnic minority groups. Each seems to call the other into play. Each may be used to counter the other, and it is the difference between the two that fuels the arguments about rights and responsibilities. Furthermore, the two repertoires clearly have different implications for the evaluation of multicultural policies. Ad claims several times that it was 'their' own choice to come to The Netherlands and, therefore, that 'they' should simply adapt. Using the distinction between the public and private sphere, the implication is that Dutch society has no multicultural responsibilities. In contrast, in his last contribution, Karel stresses the responsibility of the Dutch for bringing Muslims to The Netherlands. He draws the conclusion of this recruitment interpretation that minority groups' cultural rights should be acknowledged. Hence, the different interpretations used in discussing the presence of ethnic minority groups in The Netherlands affect the speakers' own evaluations of multicultural policies differently.

The next excerpt provides another example in which the two interpretations are used, also to distinguish between different categories of refugees. The excerpt derives from a discussion about the difficulties stemming from the presence of different ethnic groups in society. The extract starts with the interviewer asking why this is.

*Excerpt 6*

Int: 'What things about it causes problems?'

Theo: 'It's mainly their culture. They do as they please all of the time. They come with twenty of them in all, or all night, or a racket in the house all day long, or they go sit in front of the house of a Sunday fixing the car and what have you. Well we don't do things like that, do we? I think, they want to come and live here, well, they will have to adapt in a whole lot of ways. 'Cos if we decided to go to Saudi Arabia well you bet we'd have to adapt.'

Annie: 'Yeah, I think, they want to come and live here, that's fine, but they'd better adapt so it doesn't bother us too much.'

Theo: 'Exactly.'

Annie: 'Of course you should help out people that are being persecuted. Those that are really persecuted if they went back to their own countries, well that's terrible, they have no choice and you've got to help them.'

Theo: 'Yes, yes, that does make a difference, people that really are persecuted, persecuted because of their beliefs or their religion, that you give them shelter is quite another matter than them economic refugees that come here to get rich quick and think why not have a go. We're under no obligation to take them in. Not at all, we aren't. But people who are in need, who can't go anywhere else for whatever reason, yeah, you're simply obliged you are, to help them out.'

In response to the interviewer's question Theo refers to 'their culture'. In making his claim factual, he gives concrete and detailed examples of 'their' habits that are defined as problematic (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Further, 'their' pattern of behaviour is made problematic by contrasting it to 'our' behaviour, which is presented as scripted and normal. However, habits are known to vary between cultures, enabling people to challenge any definitions of abnormality applied to those who are defined as culturally different (Verkuyten, 2001). It is possible to justify patterns of behaviour in a multicultural discourse with the recognized right to cultural identity. Several strategies can be used to deal with this possible justification, such as stressing the need for adaptation and restricting the right to cultural identity in the private sphere. In addition, Theo argues that newcomers should adapt because they chose to emigrate. Adaptation is defined as accepting the responsibilities and consequences of one's own choice, as, he claims, Dutch migrants do. Again, we see how adaptation is constructed as the norm. The behaviour that is expected of 'us' is presented as self-evident, as something that is reasonable and common. By extension, 'their' typical pattern of behaviour is made problematic, indicating an unacceptable lack of adaptation.

Annie's reaction shows that she agrees with Theo's interpretation of 'personal choice' and its 'logical' call for adaptation. Subsequently, she draws on the alternative repertoire of 'lack of choice' in order to distinguish between categories of immigrants and to define responsibilities. Her generalized use of 'you', which is also employed by Theo in the last line of Excerpt 6, indicates the moral human responsibility of having to help people who are persecuted in their country of origin. The distinction between 'real' and 'economic' refugees is elaborated on by Theo who argues that some people face actual persecution, whereas others are mere fortune seekers. He implies a moral responsibility to help only the former. Drawing contrasting categorical distinctions is a useful means of accomplishing discursive goals (Dickerson, 2000; Edwards, 1997). Here, the distinction between categories of refugees provides the speaker with an opportunity to reject certain groups of immigrants without having questioned his or her country's moral status. A general willingness is expressed to accept political refugees. Rejecting these kinds of immigrants would mean a threat to one's status as a moral and responsible human being.

The previous two excerpts show the rhetorical deployment of the two interpretations of migration with their definitions of responsibilities and consequences for multicultural policies. Perspectives on immigration seem varied and often contradictory, indicating an ambiguous ideological quality (Billig *et al.*, 1988). The same speaker can also be seen to struggle with the ideological dilemmas involved and the rhetorical organization of the two interpretations. In the next excerpt in which he presents his views, Ruud oscillates between the two.

*Excerpt 7*
Int: 'What's your opinion on the increasing multicultural aspect of Dutch society?'
Ruud: 'Er, um, that, that, er, is, er, a tricky one. Up to a point I think it's good, a good thing, certainly, er, certainly because of course there, that, er, that it's also out of sheer necessity that people come here, people who have no, er, option or brought over here like with those migrant workers. So I, er, think it's a good thing that Holland provides, er, shelter for them, but, er, you were asking my personal opinion?'
Int: 'Yes, what exactly do you mean by a good thing?'
Ruud: 'Er, well that, in any case, there, er, a kind of from a humanitarian point of view that you can't simply let people rot but can provide shelter for them. But, er, well there's so

many different aspects to it, I mean this, er, to the fact that, yes, there are various different cultures. Because well, er, I do think like, this is The Netherlands and it should stay that way. So there's that too, apart from the multicultural thing, so to my mind, er, people from other cultures that decide to come and live in our culture, that's why, er, that's why I do think that, er, as far as that goes, there'd be nothing wrong with those people adapting to The Netherlands for a change.'

The first thing that can be noted in this extract are the hesitations, self-corrections, and false starts that are typical of talk about difficult and sensitive topics (Condor, 2000; Van Dijk, 1984). Further, Ruud starts by indicating that he finds the question difficult. He seems to struggle, on the one hand, with the need to show approval of multiculturalism, and, on the other hand, wanting to argue for the preservation of Dutch culture. The former view is related to the interpretation that immigrants were recruited or did not have a choice. This gives the Dutch a humanitarian responsibility to take care of them and to offer spaces for cultural identities. In contrast, the interpretation of 'personal choice' is used when arguing for the latter view in which the importance of Dutch culture, and the necessity of adaptation of immigrants, is emphasized. This extract clearly shows the ideological dilemma involved, and that arguments are constructed in relation to counter-arguments (Billig, 1987). In addition, the extract shows the discursive consequences of deploying one or the other construction of immigration.

## STUDY 2

In Study 1, the focus was on identifying the discursive repertoires of immigration that are negotiated in the context of an interview. The analysis showed a regular pattern. On the one hand, stressing the 'personal choice' of immigration was related to a rejection of multiculturalism and an emphasis on adaptation On the other hand, a focus on 'lack of choice' was related to a positive evaluation of multiculturalism and an emphasis on cultural rights. These two interpretations can be seen as socially available repertoires that can be used to construct different versions of immigration, which, subsequently, provide a framework for evaluating multiculturalism. However, these repertoires can also serve as accounts for the position taken on multiculturalism. In other words, the repertoires of 'personal choice' and 'lack of choice' can function as frameworks for the evaluation of multiculturalism, but also as arguments or explanations for expressed evaluations.

The analysis further shows that these repertoires were used regardless of the particular immigrant groups that were being talked about; they were applied to asylum seekers, refugees and to Turkish and Moroccan labour migrants (see also Verkuyten, 1997). Hence, in the context of discussing immigration and multiculturalism, the legal distinctions between asylum seekers and refugees and the differences between migrant labourers were not considered or acknowledged. This may be due to the interview context, but it may also reflect the fact that in The Netherlands, multiculturalism is predominantly discussed in terms of the categories of native Dutch ('autochtoneous') and non-Dutch ('allochtoneous') people (e.g. Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2002; Verkuyten, 1997).

The goal of the second study was to examine, in a more controlled and restricted way, the evaluative effects of the interpretative repertoires of 'personal choice' or 'lack of choice'. Study 2 examined whether an experimental manipulation of these two interpretative frameworks would affect the extent to which people endorse the

importance of multiculturalism. The aim was not to examine social cognitive processes or assumed internal dispositions and beliefs, but rather to show that particular frameworks influence people's level of support for multiculturalism. The study had a two by two deign; repertoire ('personal choice' or 'lack of choice') by target group (Turks/Moroccans or refugees/asylum seekers). First, one of the two repertoires was used as a framework for immigration; either an individualistic, 'personal choice' interpretation, or a more conditional, 'lack of choice' interpretation. Second, the two repertoires were used to explain the immigration of migrant labourers or of refugees and asylum seekers. No distinction between the latter two groups was made because both terms tend to be used interchangeably in public discourse and everyday conversations (Verkuyten, 1997).

As a dependent measure, all participants were asked to answer questions on the importance of multiculturalism. Elsewhere I have shown that Dutch people can define multiculturalism in various ways depending on the rhetorical context and the interactional task at hand (Verkuyten, 2001, 2004). For example, cultural identities can be questioned or made factual and multiculturalism can be defined as either interesting and positive, or as threatening and causing social problems. These constructions can be deployed in relation to the question of whether cultural diversity and cultural maintenance of immigrants and minorities should be accepted and actively supported. The present research examines this question in relation to the repertoires of choice.

Consistent with the findings of Study 1, it was hypothesized that using a 'personal choice' repertoire rather than a 'lack of choice' repertoire would result in a lowered endorsement of multiculturalism. Furthermore, it was expected that this effect would be found for both migrant labourers and refugees/asylum seekers as a target group. Hence, no significant interaction effect between interpretative repertoire and target group was expected.

### Participants

The study was conducted with 76 native Dutch first-year students at Utrecht University. The sample consisted of 59 female and 17 male. The median age was 20, and the ages ranged between 26 and 18 years. In the space of five different sessions, participants completed a short questionnaire. Debriefing took place in a following session.

### Procedure and measures

In order to evaluate the study, it is important to elaborate on the way in which the research was framed and how the two interpretations were presented. On the first page of the questionnaire, it was explained that the study dealt with the way that people interpret messages and evaluate social phenomena. Furthermore, it was indicated that the study would be explained in a subsequent session. Participants were asked to read the questions carefully, not to skip any questions, to answer them seriously and honestly, and not to write their name on the questionnaire because of the anonymity of the research. This introduction set the discursive environment and task for the participants.

The next three pages dealt with three cover stories that were given to induce the experimental manipulation. The stories were on obesity, poverty, and immigration, respectively. Half of the participants read stories that emphasized personal responsibilities and existing opportunities for personal improvement. The other half of the participants read the same stories but with an emphasis on lack of choice and

personal responsibility. For the cover story about immigration, a two by two design (level of choice by target group) was used. Hence, the story differed in the way that immigration was presented ('personal choice' or 'lack of choice'), but also in terms of target group; there was a story on labour migrants (Turks/Moroccans) and a story on refugees/asylum seekers. Hence, there were four versions of the questionnaire that were divided randomly among the participants in a between-subjects design. The two cover stories about labour migrants read,

> In the 2000 edition of the American National Encyclopedia, the following may be read about north-western Europe: 'In the mid seventies, large numbers of Turkish and Moroccan migrant workers left for western European countries such as Germany, Belgium, and The Netherlands. Then, the industry needed cheap labour that was recruited [looked for] in countries around the Mediterranean. The governments of these western European countries set up recruitment agencies in Turkey and Morocco. The aim was to find as many much-needed workers as possible [The aim was to provide people with the opportunity to come to north-western Europe]. Many people were indeed recruited and taken to the industrialised countries [Many chose to work abroad and voluntarily took the decision to come, but the majority did not want to].'

The cover stories on refugees and asylum seekers stated,

> In the 2000 edition of the American National Encyclopedia, the following may be read about north-western Europe: 'Since the mid-nineties, more and more asylum seekers have arrived in western Europe. As of this period, the number of asylum seekers has increased significantly, with people coming from many different countries. The majority of them are economic refugees that chose to leave their native country [The majority of them are political refugees that are being persecuted in their native countries]. They take the decision to leave their country to try their luck elsewhere [They are more or less forced to leave their country; flight offers the only prospect of a more humane existence].'

It is, of course, possible to make a detailed rhetorical analysis of these stories and the particular accounts that they provide. However, I would like to stress two points. First, different linguistic transformations were used in the stories to stress or deny the agency and responsibility of actors, such as the use of active and passive forms. Second, several devices were used to render the stories factual, such as providing a detailed and authoritative source for the story. Hence, an effort was made to present the stories as 'factual', rather than based on personal opinions.

In addition, to bolster each cover story, the participants were asked to summarize the message in one sentence, to rate how convincing they thought the message was using a scale ranging from 1 (*not convincing at all*) to 9 (*entirely convincing*), and to indicate how strongly they agreed with the message (on a 9-point scale).

After reading the cover stories, participants were asked to respond to 14 items that were used to assess the level of endorsement of multiculturalism. These items were taken from Berry and Kalin's (1995) Multicultural ideology scale. This scale assesses support for a culturally diverse society. A high score indicates a positive view on cultural maintenance of ethnic groups and cultural diversity in society. Arends-Tóth and Van de Vijver (2002) developed a Dutch version of this scale in their representative study of the Dutch population. This version was used, and included items such as, 'Immigrants should be supported in their attempts to preserve their own cultural heritage in The Netherlands', 'If immigrants desire to preserve their own culture, they should do so within their own circles', 'People who come and live in The Netherlands should adapt their behaviour to that of the Dutch', 'Dutch should accept that the Dutch society

consists of groups with different cultural backgrounds'. Items were measured on scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The 14-item scale was internally consistent (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$), with a higher score indicating a stronger endorsement of multiculturalism.

## Analysis

It was first examined whether participants found the three stories about 'personal choice' as equally convincing as the stories about the 'lack of choice'. Using a summed score for the three ratings, no significant difference was found in how convincing the two types of stories appeared, $t(71, 72) = 1.11$, $p > .10$, (Grand Mean = 3.86, $SD = 0.93$). Also, no significant difference was found for the level of agreement with the two types of stories $t(69, 54) = 1.39$, $p > .10$, (Grand Mean = 4.25, $SD = 0.96$). Furthermore, it was found that the stories on the migrant labourers appeared as convincing as the stories on the asylum seekers/refugees, $t(76) = 1.25$, $p > .10$, and there was also no difference in level of agreement with the stories between the two target groups, $t(76) = 0.77$, $p > .10$.

ANOVA was performed with interpretative repertoire ('personal choice', vs 'lack of choice') and target group (Turks/Moroccans vs. refugees/asylum seekers) as between-subjects factors, and the score on the level of agreement with multiculturalism as the dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The endorsement of multiculturalism by repertoire frame ('personal choice' vs. 'lack of choice') and target group (Turks/Moroccans vs. Refugees/asylum seekers). Mean scores and standard deviations

|  | Repertoire frame | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | Personal choice | Lack of choice | Total |
| Target group |  |  |  |
| Turks/Moroccans | 3.88 (.79) | 4.26 (.53) | 4.06 (.70) |
| Refugees/asylum seekers | 3.78 (.81) | 4.15 (.65) | 3.96 (.75) |
| Total | 3.83 (.79) | 4.21 (.59) |  |

As expected, there was a significant main effect for repertoire prime, $F(1, 76) = 5.34$, $p < .05$. Participants in the 'personal choice' condition were significantly less in favour of multiculturalism than were participants in the 'lack of choice' condition. There was no significant main effect for target group, $F(1, 76) = 0.41$, $p > .10$, and there was also no significant interaction effect between ideology prime and target group, $F(1, 76) = 0.03$, $p > .10$. Hence, the target group (Turks/Moroccans vs. refugees/asylum seekers) did not, either independently or in interaction with the repertoire prime, affect the endorsement of multiculturalism.

## Discussion

The present research examined some of the discursive repertoires used by native Dutch people in discussions on immigration. The focus was on the construction of categories of immigrants and the consequences of these constructions for questions of

multiculturalism. Two studies were conducted. The first study was based on interviews, and identified the interpretative repertoires of 'personal choice' and 'lack of choice' that were used by the participants to construct particular factual versions of immigration. The repertoire that immigrants make a personal choice to come to The Netherlands was contrasted with the alternative repertoire that immigrants were recruited by the Dutch, or had to escape persecution in their home country. Each repertoire called the possibility of the other into play, and the one interpretation was used rhetorically to counter the opposing interpretation. It is the difference between the two that provided the ideological arguments about personal responsibilities and cultural rights. The repertoires helped to construct a particular version of reality that was made explicit, but was also implied and sustained through the use of discursive devises such as contrasting what 'we' (the Dutch) would typically do as migrants, and what immigrants in The Netherlands do. Furthermore, and for the participants themselves, the two repertoires were found to have clearly different implications or consequences for questions on multiculturalism and assimilation by immigrants.

The repertoires of 'personal choice' and 'lack of choice' provide familiar, socially available frameworks used to define and argue about positions, responsibilities, and questions of multiculturalism. They are commonly, and implicitly, used in western societies to argue about immigration and to distinguish between categories of immigrants, such as 'real refugees' and 'economic refugees' or 'fortune seekers' and also migrant labourers. Hence, these notions can be applied to immigrants with very different backgrounds (Lynn & Lea, 2003).

Furthermore, variants of these discourses are used in many different situations, for different purposes, including scientific ones (Ogbu, 1993), and also by different groups, including ethnic minorities. South Moluccans living in The Netherlands, for instance, have been found to use these explanatory frameworks in order to distinguish between Turks and Moroccans, who are said to have chosen to migrate and, as a result, should adapt to Dutch society, and Moluccans, for whom the question of adaptation would not be relevant as they did not choose to come to The Netherlands but were brought here by the Dutch government after the Indonesian War of Independence (Verkuyten, Van de Calseijde, & De Leur, 1999).

In addition, individualistic interpretations that stress people's own choice and responsibilities, or more situational interpretations that emphasize people's lack of choice, are two common discourses used to define categories of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' in welfare debates and to account for health and illness, unemployment and poverty (see Augoustinos & Walker, 1995). Variants of blaming the victim or blaming the system are common interpretations that have implications for both actions and interventions.

In the present research, both interview and experimental data were collected and analysed. The interviews were used to identify some of the repertoires deployed in talking about immigration and to examine how these were used rhetorically to manage questions of multiculturalism. This examination showed the complexities and dilemmas of interpretative processes. The participants were actively engaged in constructing realities and arguing about responsibilities and implications. The analysis attempted to recognize the diversity of interpretations and, as such, was intended to be close to people's discursive practices and actual lives. The results showed that when participants drew attention to the migrants' role in their decision to emigrate, they supported a view of adaptation in the direction of assimilation. In contrast, a focus on

the recruitment carried out by the Dutch or on the existence of political refugees, implied responsibilities for the Dutch in offering help and accepting cultural diversity.

In the second study, the two repertoires of 'choice' and 'lack of choice' were manipulated experimentally in order to examine whether framing immigration one way or the other influenced the level of endorsement of multiculturalism. In doing so, certain factual, simplified, and rhetorical constructions of reality were presented, which are common in official brochures, media reports, and political speeches. There are often moments in people's lives where a relatively simple, but very consequential, response is required to a certain construction of a complex reality, such as for elections and policy decisions. Hence, this experimental technique was used as an additional powerful device for investigating how different ideological notions would affect the (lack of) endorsement of multiculturalism.

The results extended the findings of the first study, as they showed that whether or not multiculturalism was endorsed depended on which notion was elicited: that of personal choice and responsibility, or that of lack of choice and no personal responsibility. The endorsement of multiculturalism was greater in the latter condition that in the former. Furthermore, the effect was found to be independent of the target groups, labour migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers. This is similar to Study 1 in which the notions of 'personal choice' or 'lack of choice' were used in talk about either categories of immigrants (see also Verkuyten, 1997).

The present research shows that evaluations of multiculturalism were influenced by the way categories of immigrants are defined. This suggests that distinctions made in the media, in policies, and by politicians, between, for example, 'real refugees' and 'fortune seekers', can have important implications for intergroup relations in culturally plural societies. Hence, it should not come as a surprise that politicians tend to manipulate these categories to gain public support in elections. However, category definitions and distinctions can always be countered and concomitant evaluative practices can be challenged. For example, an interpretation of 'personal choice' may be challenged by arguing about the meaning of personal or free choice itself, in addition to the question of whether this notion actually applies to certain groups of immigrants (Billig, 1987). The debate about these issues is never finished, although some interpretations may become more dominant, and form the basis for particular decisions.

To summarize, the present research has tried to show that social psychology can make an important contribution to the analysis of people's ways of thinking about immigration and the evaluation of cultural diversity. In general, studying the topic of migration from a social–psychological perspective can complement other disciplinary perspectives and can help to evaluate current debates and policies. In order to do so, it may prove useful (and even necessary) to combine different methods, techniques, and theoretical perspectives. The results of the present two studies suggest that it is possible to examine ideas about the constitutive nature of language by combining discursive and experimental methods (Augoustinos & Quinn, 2003). There are obvious differences between these methods, but I hope to have shown that they can be combined in a fruitful manner.

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