Positions of opposition

Using the subject of immigration as a tool for identity construction for self and other

Jussi Pekka Altonen

Helsingin yliopisto
Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta
Viestintä
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The public debate in Finland around the subject of immigration ever since the start of the “immigrant crisis” in 2015 has often been polarized in nature, seemingly unable to create any increase in mutual understanding between those who are more opposed and those who are for it. According to some our whole society has been divided in relation to this issue, leading to many refusing to take part in the discussion at all. The hypothesis of this study is that part of the reason for the failure of the debate is a result of modernity and its individualizing effects as outlined by Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman.

This thesis is an attempt to analyze the debate about immigration in order to find instances of identity construction. The material consists of two separate TV-shows produced by the public broadcasting company YLE, titled “A2: Insecurity-night” and “A2: Immigration night”. The analysis is done by utilizing the analytical tools provided by positioning theory, an analytical tool not yet used in this context. It’s strength lies in its provision of discursive tools that allow for the analysis of dialogue in which identities for self and other are created within social situations. In addition positioning theory offers a particular tool, ‘the positioning triad’, which allows for the analysis of the effects that individual moral systems have on discursive conflict. It’s main implication being that the difference in morality systems explains many of those conflicts.

The analysis shows that identities are often evoked for self and other in the televised discussion around immigration. Those more opposed to immigration often created “surrogate identities” of women, children and elders as a means to argue against its development, while those who saw the provision of asylum for immigrants as a positive development, evoked highly moral or amoral characterizations for self and other as a means to argue for it. In accordance with earlier research of discursive conflicts, the difference in understanding of morality seems to explain the difficult nature of the debate about immigration.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
Discourse, identity, positioning theory, immigration.
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1 Introduction

The abundance of information available today to all those with an access to the internet brings forth a variety of issues. Now free to pick and choose our individual media landscapes, we run the risk of surrounding ourselves with ourselves; similarly thinking, likeminded people, for whom the same things matter and don’t. Some of the blessings this offers is peer groups for any and all ailments of physical or mental nature, the ability to find "pin-point" information about niche phenomena previously impossible to locate, and the world actually becoming the kind of "global village" Marshall McLuhan wrote about. We no longer need to be satisfied with our immediate surroundings and are free to celebrate ourselves and our identities with others located anywhere in the world. The threat of this development of "grouping up" and forming tailored communities is that it can have a negative effect on communication between those groups. We no longer need to get along with everybody, as long as we get along with somebody, and there’s always another group.

Part of the negative side of this community building has been written extensively about by Zygmunt Bauman, a critic of modernity and especially the way it “liquefies” societal constructs that used to be solid (Bauman 2000). According to him the disappearance of steady work – or anything steady or "solid" in our lives – creates an increase in a kind of ambient fear felt by people, resulting in a feverish and never fully complete effort of locating security in an insecure world. One of the symptoms of this insecurity is a kind of inward turn in which, faced with the impossible task of locating a guaranteed "safe haven" previously possible to acquire through steady work and family life, we instead become preoccupied with ourselves, embarking on a never-ending project of identity-building. What was previously a resource given at birth, remaining somewhat similar throughout a lifetime is now a project or a task to be completed over and over again according to whatever becomes attractive in our ever changing world.

This task of "becoming a self" is a difficult and arduous one to be embarked upon alone, leading to a feverish effort of locating and building communities in order to find safety, if only for a moment. What is different and, according to Bauman, inherently worse about these communities as compared to the ones that came before them is that they’re made as much out of "sound and fury" against other groups as they are about
celebrating those who belong. They’re not actual communities, not even meant to last and serve mainly as a temporary getaway from the unpredictable and dangerous world outside them, until left for another one. What they give is a possibility to feel that one has made the right decisions in life, one is in the right and others wrong. One of the main negative implications this development can have is a disappearance of a working public sphere. When finding safety and identity-construction are our main motivations for social interaction, we no longer need to get along with everybody, in fact its better if we don’t, as conflict offers a door to self-expression. We seem to look for it and relish when it’s found. We love to come up with derogatory names for our opposition ("toleration whores", "racists", "deplorables" etc...), convinced that whatever the issue, we have the undeniably correct information about it and those who think differently are simply wrong, perhaps because of stupidity or a lack of morals.

In the year 2017 there are actual global communities convinced that vaccinations cause more trouble than they’re worth and that the earth is flat. Clearly something has gone wrong perhaps partly explained by the increased preoccupation with self and self-identity outlined by Bauman, together with the primacy of emotion when it comes to processes of human decision-making.

To study the manifestations of self by members of two separate groups I’ve chose positioning theory as the tool and the current immigration debate in Finland as the material. More precisely, two programs of the TV-show "A2-iltA" produced by YLE, the Finnish public broadcasting company. The reasons for these decisions are that the debate has undeniable worth as a current and globally significant topic, it is very moral in its nature (morality, as shall be discussed later, forms the core of human identity) and that it offers two definable groups arguing for or against, often in very heated manner. Positioning theory offers a wide variety of discourse analytic tools with which to analyse identity manifestations and constructions, along with a particular tool, the "positioning triad", which ties together three important aspects; the story line, positions therein and the speech-acts available for use to promote the other two. Positioning theory has also been used previously to study conflicts of different nature, which should prove useful while studying this particular conflict.
In my bachelor’s thesis I analysed online news-comments of Helsingin Sanomat in order to find out how well they followed some of the ideals of Habermas and his "ideal speech situation". In a way this is a natural follow-up to the previous work and in a similar manner my interest lies again in the argumentation and the instances where it fails. I feel it important to mention at this early point that while I believe the topic of immigration to be a useful one for the uses of this study, it does propose significant personal difficulty at times, as I’m deeply at odds with the subject myself. I have no political ties, wouldn’t dream of being able to provide any answers to the questions it proposes and while profoundly interested in the topic and the discussion it gives birth to, try to always position myself "outside" the conflict as much as possible. This is however a rather lengthy piece of work and as such I'm aware that the reader will find traces of my political beliefs scattered here and there. When these instances arise I hope they don’t distract too much from the subject at hand, which is identity construction through discourse.

Another important note to make at this point is that in this thesis I often equate the terms position and identity with each other, which might prove confusing at times. The reason for this is that, as will be explained more thoroughly later, a "position" means a cluster of rights and duties within a certain story line, in other words, an understanding of an individual’s moral location in relation to something (story line). So while a position never represents the whole of a persons' identity, it does describe it at some length, as an understanding of morality is indeed at the centre of identity. A more useful term instead of identity might be aspect of identity or identity constructs, but trusting this explanation is enough for the reader to understand this issue simply identity is used.

The thesis begins with an introduction into the difficulties of modernity to our sense of self as outlined by Zygmunt Bauman. The main argument of these chapters is that the time we live in has a significant effect on the way we practise public debate, and while some developments are undoubtedly positive in nature, some others, perhaps an “inward turn” and preoccupation with self and communities based on ideological similarity stand to do our public sphere great harm.

The chapter on positioning theory offers an introduction to the history of the method and on its developments in scale and application. Important topics in this chapter
include the way in which the different facets of the ‘positioning triad’ (story line, positions and speech-acts) are mutually determining and how social interactions can be studied using this and many other discourse analytic methods, in order to try and find instances of identity construction for self and other.

In the chapter on methodology I offer a history of the immigration debate in Finland reaching to the early 1990’s in order to give an overview of its characteristics, many of which seem very similar to this day. After that I argue for the uses of the chosen material, explain the things considered in the analysis, ethical considerations and, finally, I present the analytical framework of positioning theory, answering the question what exactly am I looking for in the material?

The analysis consists of the debate around the main subjects in the material. Main topics included a sense of fear expressed by natives about immigration, successful or unsuccessful integration, racism and discriminatory societal constructs. While analysing the debate around these topics I try to make visible the instances of identity construction for self and other by utilizing the chosen method of positioning theory. The underlying hypothesis is that the way in which the aspects of the identities proposed for self and other might partly explain the difficult nature of the debate.

The most important concepts for this study are discourse, identity, positioning theory and immigration.

The research questions are as follows:

1. How do participants taking part in YLE’s “A-talk” TV-show on the subject of immigration construct their individual identities?
2. How do participants construct identities for others in the show?
1 On identity

In this chapter I will first present some of the writings of Bauman about identity, how it has changed during modernity, what are the main issues and some of the possible implications of this development on our collective psyche and ways of acting in the world. Then I explain the moral foundations of identity and in the last chapter argue for the possible application for identity constructions by waging emotional discourse about ethical issues.

1.1. The modern identity and its issues according to Zygmunt Bauman

In his book "The Individualized Society" (2001) Zygmunt Bauman offers a kind of origin story for the late modern condition. He argues, citing Ernest Becker’s work, that we as human beings are a unique animal in the way that we are aware of our mortality, which results in a kind of ultimate fear that has to be reconciled one way or another:

“Everything a man does in his symbolic world is an attempt to deny and overcome his grotesque fate. He literally drives himself into blind obliviousness with social games, psychological tricks, personal preoccupations so far removed from the reality of his situation that they are a form of madness – agreed madness, shared madness, disguised and dignified madness, but madness all the same.” (Ernest Becker 1997, 26–27).

Bauman then goes on to explain how society, as something bigger than any one individual, on the surface offers ways to deal with this ultimate fear and if only for a moment, gain happiness and security by sharing our predicament through different kinds of ‘transcendence strategies’ (Bauman 2001, 2). These strategies offered by society however are never enough, never fully able to satisfy the underlying need for preoccupation, leaving us in a never-ending state of dissatisfaction (Bauman 2001, 3–4). The result is a ‘second bottom’, the abandonment of the individual into a “lonely struggle”, resulting in among other symptoms political apathy, passionate search for communities and sedation through pleasure and entertainment (Bauman 2001, 6). For many the primary way of finding community, meaningful preoccupation and the means to gain other transcendence strategies has always been work.
According to Bauman back in the days of Henry Ford and the ‘solid modern’, people could depend upon having the same job (or at least a job in the same company) from the beginning of their working career until the end, resulting in mutual security for both the employer and the employee. Ford once famously doubled his employee’s salaries, publicly stating that he ‘wanted them to buy his cars’, but in reality the reason for this was to fight the high labour mobility (Bauman 2001, 21). Profit in those days was achieved through effective production and by not having to spend time and money on training new employees over and over again the profits remained high. Arriving closer to our time there has however been a change in thinking from the ‘long term’ to the ‘short’ kind (Bauman 2001, 23). Profit is now created mainly by ideas, not material manufacturing, and so companies are not as concerned with the relationship with their workers, but significantly more so with consumers, and so the labour force that once held great power of negotiation and could rest easy believing the company actually needed them, have now become easily replaceable and weak (Bauman 2001, 27). In addition the fundamentally unpredictable nature of modern working life and its blows result in an individualizing force. Anyone can be fired at a moment’s notice, no one is no longer safe no matter their level of skill and the issues and problems no longer form a threat possibly fought by the working force coming together (Bauman 2001, 24).

This individualization bleeds on to other spheres of life. In the private we seem to favour loose social bonds over the more lasting kind, and even our very identities have become ‘liquid’ and “snapshot like”, changing quickly and focusing on forgetting rather than remembering (Bauman 2001, 23, 86, 87). Our political questions have seized to be about ‘the common concern’, but revolve around the private and the “sharing of intimacies” in order to build communities. And these communities are not meant to be of a lasting kind. They’ve become the so-called ‘peg- communities’, onto which “solitary individuals hang their solitary fears” (Bauman 2001, 49–50).

Citing Ulrich Beck, Bauman points out that “how one lives becomes a biographical solution to systemic contradictions”, even though such solutions can never be found as long as its left up to the individual (Bauman 2001, 47, 150). This does not mean we are about to stop trying however, and the results of this seemingly desperate endeavour are vividly described when Bauman gives voice to Christopher Lasch:
“Having no hope of improving their lives in any of the ways that matter, people have convinced themselves that what matters is psychic self-improvement; getting in touch with their feelings, eating health food, taking lessons in ballet or belly-dancing, immersing themselves in the wisdom of the East, jogging, learning how to ‘relate’, overcoming ‘the fear of pleasure’. Harmless in themselves, these pursuits, elevated to a programme and wrapped in the rhetoric of authenticity and awareness, signify a retreat from politics…” (Bauman 2001, 150)

Bauman then goes on to argue that the building and rebuilding of identity is another of these kinds of “substitute pastimes” always performed under a great amount of uncertainty and fear, which in part leads to the seeking of communities in order to deal with said fear. But like stated above, these communities are of the “peg”-kind, not meant to last, which does not mean that they lack passion. They are made of tensions, confrontation, conflict and boundaries, which seem to be erected in “every declining neighbourhood of our world” (Bauman 2001, 152).

I would argue that the developments described above are often visible in some of the more heated debates over difficult issues of local and global scale, which are often (at least when seen through the media) very polarized in nature. There is definitely an undercurrent of fear for the state of things and a vitriolic nature to many debates, full of the kind of “us versus them” terminology, which can only hope to strengthen the divide between pro and anti-sentiments, which might actually be the intended outcome. While it doesn’t offer a way to actually change things, it does perhaps offer a platform for the expression of identity and finding of (peg) community of likeminded identities. A temporary feeling of safety in an increasingly chaotic world.

1.2. Identity as a moral construction

In their original article on positioning Davies and Harré offer the following processes as key in understanding the “acquisition or development of our sense of how the world is to be” (Davies & Harré 1990, 47):

1. Learning the categories which partition the universe of human beings into male/female, father/daughter; grandparent/parent/child; player/referee/spectator
and so on, that is, relate to dichotomous, trichotomous and other patterns of subgroups.

2. Participating in the various discursive practises through which meanings are allocated to those categories. These include the story lines through which different subject positions are elaborated.

3. Positioning of oneself, as a person, in terms of these categories and story lines. This involves imaginatively positioning oneself as if one belongs in one category and not in the other (e.g., as a girl and not boy, or good girl and not bad girl).

4. Recognition of oneself as having the characteristics that locate oneself as a member of various subclasses of dichotomous, trichotomous and other category formations and not of others, i.e. the development of a sense of oneself as belonging in the world in certain ways and thus seeing the world from the perspective of one so positioned. This recognition may entail an emotional commitment to the category membership but will certainly involve the development of a moral system organized around the belonging.

5. All four processes arise in relation to a theory of the self-embodied in pronoun grammar in which a person understand themselves as historically continuous and unitary. The experiencing of contradictory positions as problematic, as something to be reconciled or remedied stems from this general feature of the way being a person is done in our society. Within feminist poststructuralist theory the focus has been on the experience of contradictions as important sites for gaining an understanding of what it means to be a gendered person. Such contradictions do not define different people – it is the fact that one person experiences themselves as contradictory that provides the dynamic for understanding. We wish to defend the adoption of ‘position’ as the appropriate expression with which to talk about the discursive production of a diversity of selves – the fleeting panorama of Meadian ‘me’s’ conjured up in the course of conversational interactions.
Perhaps the most noteworthy parts of the above explanation in relation to this thesis are the suggestions that we **become a certain kind strongly through relating to dichotomous or trichotomous categories**, from which we “choose” one over another, go on to **position ourselves and others through discourse in accordance with these categories**, develop an **emotional commitment** or at least a moral understanding of things and how they ought to be and finally, try to **avoid contradictions** in our persona. All this is done in order to maintain a unitary sense of self, because once a certain identity is formed, it behoves the “holder” of said identity to be able to have it remain somewhat, if not very similar throughout a lifetime. This is not of course to say that once we gain a certain collection of beliefs, values and character traits, we shouldn’t try to never change them and that they never would, but the core should and often does stay similar, in order for a person to feel as if they are the same person from one day to the next. Indeed the opposite would be very painful and disconcerting and a symptom of a medical condition perhaps called amnesia or multiple personality syndrome (Harré & van Langenhove 1999, 60).

Once a certain identity is formed, we endeavour to act in accordance with it and the moral standing therein. A recent study on different memory impairing illnesses such as Alzheimer’s disease concluded, that “injury to the moral faculty plays the primary role in identity discontinuity”, while “Other cognitive deficits, including amnesia, have no measurable impact on identity persistence” (Strohminger & Nichols 2015). So it is our morals that most define us, how we think of ourselves and how others perceive us. The predicament of a patient with Alzheimer’s and the possible negative or “malevolent” nature of positioning by others it might create is included in the interests of positioning theory (Sabat 2003).

A person who for example strongly identifies as a conscientious recycler and considers this an important moral stance to the issue of human waste production must act in accordance with their identification because if not, they either seize to be “that rigorous” and lose their right to the desired part of their identity, or through the pain of contradiction (are they not interested in recycling after all?), resume their practise of sorting trash accordingly. One can surely see how the practise of being a person of a certain kind is not simply just a recreational act of “posing” as something currently desirable. The breaking of ones morals can be an emotionally devastating experience,
especially when it comes to core type values. Consider what happens when a person who strongly identifies with their profession and place in society as a “hard worker” loses their job for one reason or another, faced now with the task of accepting their new position as part of the “unemployed” for an indeterminate amount of time. Even though they haven’t necessarily done anything wrong, the new position and its perceived – by the person – morals (lazy, useless, unworthy of work etc.) are painful to accept as part of oneself. When someone who identifies strongly as a “faithful spouse” ends up committing an act of infidelity, they are faced with the question of “who am I?” because based upon their actions they are not what they’ve previously – privately or publicly - claimed to be. Situations such as these are of course very complicated and the reasons for whatever actions we take too numerous to account, but what I hope to convey is that when it comes to the morals which we actually hold, they are not quickly dismissed or interchanged with whatever other morals seem to represent a more attractive choice at a certain time, because to break those morals is to a certain extent equivalent to “breaking” oneself. What brings us comfort and “certainty in an uncertain world” is the maintenance of our identities through acts in accordance with our core beliefs and those closest to us.

The factors which determine an individual’s stance towards a moral question such as immigration is in the core of this paper, even though it cannot hope to answer it in any definitive way. What seems clear, however, is that no matter where a person lands in relation to the subject, the stance taken is unlikely to be the result of purely rational thought, free of the burden of emotion. The next chapter outlines how strong emotions play a crucial part in how we position ourselves especially in relation to others and how discursive conflict helps us define ourselves.

1.3. On the uses of emotional discursive conflict

“Once having taken up a particular position as one’s own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position” (Davies & Harré 1999, 35).

As discussed in the previous chapter, we have degrees as to how much value we give to certain aspects of ourselves and how defining we believe those aspects to be. Walking against a red light over an empty street perhaps in the middle of the night at a sleepy suburb is rarely considered an amoral action and even rarer is the person for whom this
would be a dire transgression of their most defining moral system, the breaking of which would produce a need for a complete overhaul of their sense of self. As we move up the scale of an individual’s morality however, there comes a point where certain actions become “personal unthinkabilities”; things we cannot imagine ever doing, because it’s just not who we take ourselves to be. These actions mark the line between being something and not something else (Benson 2003, 72), which, as stated earlier, is not a pleasurable experience. These unthinkable boundaries represent “an inability to vividly and realistically imagine my doing certain “extreme” things without, at the same time, having inhibitory negative feelings” (Benson 2003, 71). This means that as much as our identities are constructed by what we can do or conceive of doing, they are also strongly affected by our ability to resist doing certain things; “Simply put, I am what I can and will do, but also, of neglected significance, what I cannot do and will resist doing.” (Benson 2003, 64). These ‘boundaries of self’ are socio-culturally constructed roughly between the ages of two and five, during the development of our pre-frontal lobes, which houses our inhibitory systems. This presents an interesting correlation with the study cited in the previous chapter, according to which our sense of self and the way others perceive us is most affected by illnesses and impairments caused to this very region of the brain. During the initial formation of the pre-frontal lobes our most intimate relationships and “emotionally significant people” are the ones who define its’ formation the most (Benson 2003, 71). Once our “limits of the reach of the set of action-skills that constitute a self” are formed, we act within those limits, because they are the ones we feel emotionally most connected to (Benson 2003, 62). These ‘identity-defining boundaries’ are guarded by strong negative emotions such as shame, fear, guilt and disgust, leading to strong emotional responses when subject to breaking (Nussbaum 2001). To shed light on how this all plays out in a situation of moral significance, Benson offers the example of the developed skill of taking responsibility;

“The skill has to do with what the person feels emotionally connected to. The reach of this connection signifies the reach of that person’s self as a responsibility taker. So, if that person feels a connection to the well-being of, say asylum-seekers, then they are likely to feel that they have some responsibility for acting in the best interests of that group. The ways in which they act towards that end, the skills that constitute those ways of acting, determine boundaries of their selves.” (Benson 2003, 64)
Central to the way in which we “decide” these ‘unthinkabilities’ is that they are founded primarily upon emotions and, importantly, “…in fundamental ways, people intuitively trust their feelings before they trust their conceptual understanding, even when the evidence from expert others as presented to a person is, apparently, incontrovertible” (Benson 2003, 67)(Emphasis in original). Benson is talking about a person’s understanding of their actual, physical bodily boundaries here – the case is that of a patient with a rare mental illness, which causes the sense that her hand simply isn’t “hers” – but as she states, the implications, primacy of feelings to even expert evidence, can be used when studying personal and even large-scale group identities (Benson 2003, 66, 68).

2016 was a year characterised perhaps best by the enormous political upheaval witnessed in forms of “Brexit” and the presidential campaign and eventual election of Donald Trump. As the media tried to grasp the origins of these phenomena, which both seemed to take place to the great surprise of significant portions of our population, the term “post-truth” kept being mentioned as a part of the overall explanation. It was mentioned and talked about so much actually, that it was picked as the international “Word of the Year 2016” by the Oxford Dictionary, described as follows:

“post-truth adjective

Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion or personal belief.” (www.oxforddictionaries.com)

The concept of post-truth seems to support Benson’s argument of the primacy of feeling when forming one’s opinion about something. The issue of immigration was one of the factors behind “Brexit” and building a wall against illegal Mexican immigration was one of the core messages in the Presidential campaign of Donald Trump. It is often a very passionately debated topic with heated arguments voiced by pro- and anti-groups, both often lacking the apparent will to enhance mutual understanding. This however has not stifled the conversation, which seems to serve more as a tool for self-identification than anything else. In this sense the on-going debate is understandable, because as long
as it remains unsolved, it serves as a vehicle of self-representation and perhaps of social
class distinction. As mentioned above, Nussbaum has argued that the boundaries of our
identities are guarded by fundamentally strong emotions, of which disgust specifically
has served (among other ends) as a tool for the privileged classes to create ever
important distinction with lower ones. Quoting Nussbaum,

“If disgust is problematic in principle, we have all the more reason to
regard it with suspicion when we observe that it has throughout history
been used as a powerful weapon in social efforts to exclude certain groups
and persons … We need a group of humans to bound ourselves against,
who will come to exemplify the boundary line between the truly human
and the basely animal. If those quasi-animals stand between us and our
own animality, then we are one step further away from being animal and
mortal ourselves. Thus throughout history certain disgust properties –
sliminess, bad smell, stickiness, decay, foulness – have repeatedly and
monotonously been associated with, indeed projected onto, groups by
reference to whom privileged groups seek to define their superior human
status. (Nussbaum 2009, 98) (Emphasis mine)

While Nussbaum was talking about the projection of actual physical “disgust
properties” (sliminess, decay etc.) to advance forms of discrimination such as
antisemitism, misogyny and homophobia, the important part to note is that such
properties don’t have to be solely physical in nature in order for them to be a viable
means for the definition of a superior status in relation to another group or individual.
The intent of such projection is after all to create separation between social groups and
not to point to existing “disgust properties” which, of course, don’t actually exist.
Highly negative, emotional projections towards someone seen to uphold an opposing
sentiment about something run rampant in online discussions, even though the persons
involved remained totally anonymous (and perhaps especially then!) to each other. But
while emotions often lack in rational argumentative power, they have the ability to
define and establish identities or “places within a moral order” as seen within
positioning theory (Parrot 2003, 30). Indeed they play a central part. According to
Parrot, who studied emotion based positioning practises in the case of the downfall of
the energy company Enron;
The importance of emotions to positioning is especially apparent when considering the manoeuvring of rivals or adversaries. Under such circumstances, one party’s emotional expression can be understood strategically as an attempt to establish a superior social identity while assigning an inferior one to the rival.” (Parrot 2003, 30)

This is what much of positioning is typically about; the effort to gain a favourable position in relation to others (Parrot 2003, 31). In the case of Enron this favourable position was fought between the executive staff and the employees and stockholders of the company through acts of discourse (or “speech-acts”) strategically and intentionally chosen to advance this end. These strategic qualities become especially apparent in conflict situations (Parrot 2003, 29). Consider the example of a courtroom with the accused, the victim(s), their representatives, the judge and the jury present. In this setting it is clear for all concerned that no matter what the facts are, the arguments of the defence are aimed at gaining a “not guilty” verdict while the prosecutor is trying to argue for the opposite. Both parties are trying to gain a “favourable position” in the eyes of the jury (the one party holding irrevocable meaning for both sides) and every piece of discourse is aimed more or less directly at promoting this end. The defence thus tries to intentionally position the different parties in a way that has the best chance of gaining the wanted verdict and the opposition does the exact same from their point of view. In the case of identity construction a person who takes part in a discussion about anything related to an understanding of one’s morality and thus with possible implications for one’s nature as a person, rare is the case in which we intentionally try to gain an unfavourable position in the eyes of those of whose understanding of us we actually care about. Even individuals who claim to belong to a certain type of counter-culture value their social standing within that specific group, when their actions (discursive or otherwise) might have the opposite effect on the culture at large. So when a truly racist person commits a crime of racial discrimination with the understanding of how it’s going to be perceived and judged by the larger society, because their care lies in how their own social group (other racists) perceives their act, they have actually advanced their position within their preferred social group. And conflict isn’t something that takes place only by accident, but is actually often sought out specifically, partly because it offers the opportunity to make ones position (individual understanding of morality),
‘boundaries of unthinkability’ or put another way, identity, most visible. By taking part in a discursive conflict through the act of positioning a person has the ability to construct one’s identity in relation to those of others (Harré & Slocum 2003, 29):

“Positions are relative to one another. If one is positioned as “nurse,” the expectation will be that someone else is positioned as “patient.” Taking on the position of nurse may serve to position someone else as patient, whether or not he or she wants that position. Often, positioning oneself as a patient drives someone else into the position of nurse.” (Harré & Slocum 2001, 108)

This shows the often dichotomous (or trichotomous) and relational nature of positioning. In the context of a discursive conflict each party often has some rather undeniable core matters, group-wide “unthinkabilities”, if you will, which when threatened, threaten the very identity of the group or its position in society. For example, for the Finnish Christian Democratic party the opposition of gay-marriage has been one such matter while the parties on the political left consider it a human-right violation if not made into a law. The debate, which was at times very emotional in nature, offered a chance for politicians and their parties to position themselves in relation to the others, which was all the more powerful because of the polarizing nature between the right and the left. In these kinds of discursive conflicts the attainment of a moral “high ground” is of paramount importance, because in addition to the obvious benefit of gaining a favourable position among one’s peers, it also “has the advantage of making sure that what one’s opponents say or do is interpreted according to a story line (and as a speech-act) that suits one’s own case” (Harré & Slocum 2003, 109-110). The same effort to gain a moral high ground was evident during the presidential election campaigns between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, made concrete in part by the intentional speech-acts aimed at denouncing the other side (Trump called Clinton “Crooked-Hillary” while Clinton named Trump and his potential voters “The Deplorables”). Indeed it is very important for competing groups to be able to create conflict and position the other party in a negative way, if the goal is to “win” an ideological argument, or perhaps a game of football (Harré et al. 2009, 8-9).
Deeply moral and emotional discursive conflict offers an attractive arena for powerful individual identification and intentional positioning of self and other. Positioning is reciprocal in nature, meaning that for each emotion (anger, pain, disgust, shame), there has to be an adequate target (Averill 1979). It is also selfish and individualistic, because whenever positioning is practiced, it is done in order to gain “the most rewarding position, the one that brings positive reinforcement and helps define the individual as unique and special” (Taylor, Bougie & Caouette 2003, 211). It is not of course only presidential candidates and political parties who take part in passionate name-calling, seek to separate themselves from unwanted groups and use a variety of other discursive tools to express emotion and identity. We all seek to define ourselves in everyday discourse in a more or less conscious way, granted we – one hopes at least – usually resort to more subtle and tactful “speech-acts” than the ones mentioned above.
2 Positioning theory

“The words are never a final story. You have to look at the illocutionary force”

– Rom Harré

The term “positioning” was originally a marketing term, introduced in a three part series of articles concerning advertising. They were all written by Jack Trout and Al Ries and titled “The Positioning Era Cometh”, “Positioning Cuts through Chaos in Marketplace” and “How to Position Your Product”, published in an advertising magazine called “Advertising Age” during the spring of 1972. Since then the term has been adopted by sociology first by Wendy Hollway et al. in an article titled “Gender Difference and the Production of Subjectivity” (1984) in which it was used “as a tool for research on the dynamic inter-personal relations in which selves were given content” (Harré et al. 2009, 25) and later by Rom Harré and Bronwyn Davies (1990) as a more fluid substitute for the concept of ‘role’, which to them was unable to grasp the “dynamic aspects of encounters” (Davies & Harré 1990, 43). In their article titled “Positioning: The discursive Production of Selves” they suggest that people take up and are given (or at least proposed) different positions in different discursive situations (at this point most often meaning simply conversations), depending upon the surrounding circumstances. These positions then in part define the rights and duties a person is perceived to have in any given situation, leading to the probability of certain kind of discursive action and improbability or even impossibility of others. Since then positioning has developed as a tool and a concept chiefly by Rom Harré with the assistance of many collaborators in a variety of ways, some of which introduced below.

The current chapter works as an introduction first to the basics of the theory, how it has developed through application in different settings and at last, how it has been utilized to study the core subjects of this paper, the discursive construction of private and group identities.

2.1. Rights, duties and speech-acts

According to Harré, the original and main contribution of positioning theory was that it provided a moral dimension for social psychology. There are three domains of the conception of social (interpersonal) action, called: what a person can do, what they
actually do and finally, what they are permitted to do or forbidden from doing. This third domain is that of positioning theory and it has to do with the situational provision of ‘rights and duties’, which simply means the plethora of different types of actual rights and duties that can arise in a situation. If a person’s cell-phone rings during a lecture for example, they have the duty to silence it and the other participants have the right to have it silenced. These kinds of basic rights and duties are usually agreed upon by those involved, leading to the commonly automatic proceedings in such situations. Often the rights and duties in discourse and other social situations aren’t this singular, but actually come in “clusters”, which people believe, are told and/or slip into for the duration of a situation (Harré et al. 2009, 9). The verb ‘positioning’ refers to: “the various ways in which people employ discursive tools to “attribute” characteristics, “evoke” identities, “allocate” rights and duties, “invoke” story lines, and so forth” (Slocum-Bradley 2009, 91).

Positioning theory falls under the umbrella of social constructivism, described by Harré and van Langenhove as follows:

“The word ‘position’ has been used in many ways in social and psychological writings. In recent years it has come to take on a quite specific meaning for developing work in the analysis of fine-grained symbolically mediated interactions between people, both from their individual standpoints and as representatives or even exemplars of groups.” (Harre & van Langenhove 1999, 1)

Being a part of social constructivism, it “stresses that social phenomena are considered to be generated in and through conversation and conversation-like activities” (Harre & van Langenhove 1999, 2–3). According to L. Frazer (1990) “‘actors’ understanding and experience of their social identity, the social world and their place in it, is discursively constructed … their personal-social identity can only be expressed and understood through the categories available to them in discourse” (Harré & Davies, 1999, 35). Quoting Harré & Davies again: “An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate (Harré & Davies, 35). Positioning theory offers a set of tools to begin the investigation of different types of discourse, when hoping to find implications of people expressing their
identity. It sets off from the notion that personal identity is indeed manifested in discursive practices (Harré & van Langenhove 1999, 60), often in everyday scenarios as outlined by Goffman in his book on presentations of self in the workplace (1971).

A commonly used basic example of this “emergence of individuals” within the theory is the situation between a doctor and a patient. One of the core values of a well-fare state is that a citizen has a fundamental right to receive medical care provided by the state and the state has a duty to provide it. Here the person receiving said care can be positioned as “the patient” and the state as “the caregiver” and the story line can simply be seen as a “slice of life” in which a person in need of and receiving medical care, with the following speech-acts would be determined by these factors. Moving on to a more intimate social situation, we can look inside the medical room and find the person positioned once again as the “patient”, the “caregiver” this time being a doctor of some kind and the speech-acts once again determined by these positions and story lines. The doctor has a mutually understood right to ask the patient to open their mouth and say “aa” in order to be able to provide the necessary care, and the patient has the agreed duty to oblige (Harré & Moghaddam 2003, 9). This simplistic distribution of rights and duties and the current story line define the available speech-acts to each position, and the speech-acts in turn define the positions and the story line, completing the positioning triad as shown below:

Figure 1: The mutually determining triad: (Langenhove & Harré 1999, 18)\(^1\)

1\(^1\) Figure 1: The mutually determining triad: (Langenhove & Harré 1999, 18)\(^1\)
More detailed descriptions of the three dimensions according to Harré & Moghaddam explain:

1. “‘Position’: a cluster of rights and duties to perform certain actions with certain significance as acts, but which also may include prohibitions or denials of access to some of the local repertoire of meaningful acts. In a certain sense in each social milieu there is a kind of Platonic realm of positions, realized in current practices, which people can adopt, strive to locate themselves in, be pushed into, be displaced from or be refused access, recess themselves from and so on, in a highly mobile and dynamic way.

2. “Speech and other acts: every socially significant action, intended movement, or speech must be interpreted as an act, a socially meaningful and significant performance. A handshake is an intended action. Does it express a greeting a farewell, congratulations, seal a bet, or what? It is only significant as far as it is given a meaning in the unfolding episode of which it forms a part. Once interpreted it falls under the rules of propriety and standards of correctness, not only in itself but also in what are its proper precursors and consequences.”

3. “Story line: we have emphasized the enormous importance of the dynamics of social episodes, how they unfold in any random way. They tend to follow already established patterns of development, which for convenience have come to be called story lines. Each story line is expressible in a loose cluster of narrative conventions.”

(Harré & Moghaddam 2003, 6)

Harré has also suggested the possibility of a 4th dimension or ‘vertex’, which would include the physical positions and their effects on a situation and gives doctor standing/patient lying as such an example (Harré 2015, 501). For now this particular
dimension however hasn’t been developed and therefore (and also because it isn’t relevant in the context of online discourse) will not be included in this paper.

The ‘illocutionary’ force of speech-acts refers to John R. Searle (whose book in turn was largely based on J.L. Austin’s speech-act theory outlined in *How to do things with words* (1961) and his book “Expression and Meaning – Studies in the Theory of Speech-acts” (1979), in which he outlines five different categories of illocutionary acts:

“We tell people how things are (Assertives), we try to get them to do things (Directives), we commit ourselves to doings things (Commissives), we express our feelings and attitudes (Expressives), and we bring about changes in the world through utterances (Declarations).” (Searle 1979, VIII)

In their original article Harré and Davies argued that to them a conversation from the point of view of positioning theory should not be seen as a “hazardous decoding (by the hearers) of the individual social intentions of each speaker” (Davies & Harré 1990, 45), alluding that being the case in Searle’s version of the speech-act theory. Instead to Harré and Davies the determining force of a speech-act depended upon it either being taken up or discarded by the other party or parties involved in any on-going discourse. In their own words, “A speech-action can become a determinate speech-act to the extent that it is taken up by all the participants” (Davies & Harré 1990, 45). At this point in time however, positioning theory was chiefly concerned with inter-personal situations (a simple back and forth conversation between two people being a common example scenario) and later on it has been developed and utilized in a variety of ways, expanding the scope of the theory at both ends of the scale. It is now able to include larger contexts such as the study of localized conflict between “rival” communities taking part in the act of positioning (Slocum 2001) and even international relations (Moghaddam & Kavulich 2007). It has also been utilized to study the very intimate sphere of intra-personal, private discourse, in which a person intentionally or unintentionally positions themselves through stories told only to the self (Harré 2015, 502). Obviously this type of ‘self-positioning’ lacks the need and sheer possibility of “social uptake”, while making it no less effective as a tool for the purposes of positioning. A person can for example issue self-imposed or “supererogatory” duties perhaps because of a personal moral struggle of some kind (Harré 2015, 502) without ever voicing it to another soul,
thus never raising it to the level of the interpersonal. Another example of this kind of intra-personal or ‘reflexive’ positioning (Harré & van Langenhove, Moghaddam 1999) is the writing of a diary, which again is meant to be private, negating the possibility and/or intent of achieving social uptake – quite the opposite. This is to say that positioning, while originally concerned with the interpersonal and underlining the importance of mutually achieved discursive positions, has through its development over the years began to include the kind of “hazardous decoding” Davies and Harré argued against in their original article. Especially in the case of identity, which is at the heart of this paper, the more unconscious parts of a discourse can actually be a valuable resource and one that shouldn’t be discarded simply because of the possible negative connotation of a type of “eavesdropping”.

2.2. The two phases of positioning

Positioning happens in two phases of which the first is called “prepositioning”, containing the establishment of the character and competence of the one being positioned. A person can preposition another or themselves by “listing and sometimes justifying attributions of skills, character traits [and/or] biographical “facts”, deemed relevant to whatever positioning is going forward” (Harré et al. 2009, 10). What follows is the actual act of positioning, meaning the corresponding allocation of rights and duties based upon the prepositioning. In conversation:

“A position … is a metaphorical concept through reference to which a person’s ‘moral’ and personal attributes as a speaker are compendiously collected. One can position oneself or be positioned as e.g., powerful or powerless, confident or apologetic, dominant or submissive, definitive or tentative, authorized or unauthorized, and so on.” (van Langenhove & Harré 1999, 17)

As an example Davies and Harré offer the case of “Sano and Enfermada”, in which two imagined characters – a boy and a girl – are looking for a pharmacy in a snowy city in order to find medicine for Enfermada, the girl in this story, who has fallen ill. After being unable to find said medicine the situation becomes increasingly cumbersome, eventually leading to Sano’s apologizing to Enfermada, “for having dragged her all this way”. Enfermada replies that she hasn’t been “dragged” but instead chose to come herself. In this example Sano, according to Harré, first tries to position the ill Enfermada
as a “victim” (a position with certain kinds of rights and duties), which Enfermada rejects by voicing that she herself made the decision to come, repositioning (also referred to as second order positioning. Sano having done the first order kind) herself as an active agent instead (Davies & Harré 1999, 45–46). This example sheds light to how positioning is not only concerned when it comes to common and well understood titles and their roles in social situations, but also how it ties to peoples’ preferred understanding of a certain situation and themselves. The next chapter will expand upon the two phased manner of positioning while also illuminating the concept and importance of story line.

2.3. On the importance of Story line

The last remaining part of the original positioning triad is called story line, which begins to show how the different interpretations of situations ties back to the corresponding positioning and speech-acts, and ultimately our sense of self. According to the original description:

“Conversations have story lines and the positions people take in a conversation will be linked to these story lines. Someone can be seen to act like a teacher in the way his/her talk takes on a familiar form: the story line of instruction, of the goings-on in the classroom” (van Langenhove & Harré 1999, 17)

and moving closer to the matter of identity;

“Depending on how one is positioned, a person may be fairly tightly constrained as to what story line it is possible, proper or even necessary to be living out. Positioned as the class dunce one may be “required” to perform also as the class clown (Harré & Slocum 2003, 128)

Harré and Slocum demonstrate the central importance of story line when trying to remedy a conflict situation through their study concerning Georgetown University and its neighbouring community, which began after Georgetown decided to accept more students in the following years. They started off by identifying the ‘main issues’ as voiced in one way or another by the participants, in order to find the heart of the conflict
and also to make visible the central short/long term goals for each participant or ‘position’. Next they tried to identify the main groups concerning the conflict, how they’re defined by themselves and others, and who is let in and who is cast out of the group (Harré & Slocum 2003, 130–131). What followed was an analysis of perceptions of the conflict in order to identify:

a. the various story lines that constitute the collection of narratives,
b. the positioning of others and oneself in each story line,
c. the illocutionary forces of utterances in the story lines

(Harré & Slocum 2003, 131)

The result was a catalogue of sorts including the positions, story lines and available speech-acts for the participants in the conflict, who had power and who lacked it, which story lines became dominant and what was actually achieved through the interaction. Examples of story lines included “students as savages”, “the aggressive University”, “parent/children”, “the malicious residents”, “the benevolent University” and “historical rights” (Harré & Slocum 2003, 132–133). Harré and Slocum concluded, that in order to remedy this conflict and others like it, one has to come up with new story lines (in this case the “mature student” story line) in order to support better positions, hopefully leading to better speech-acts possibly able to relieve the conflict (Harré & Slocum 2003, 135).

Another example of the interactive nature of positions, speech-acts and story lines is the positioning analysis of the hearings conducted by The House Un-American Activities Committee on several artists thought to have communist ties during the “Red Scare” of the mid-1940s and late 1950s. This study, while at the same time able to show the positioning triad “in action”, also further explains the back and forth nature of first and second order positioning. Moreover, it has the ability to show how the more “overarching” narratives or story lines within a culture have the ability to affect positioning and speech-acts:

”… within this frame was the right-wing conservatives’ struggle to wrest political control from the left-wing liberals. This political struggle, led by Senator Eugene McCarthy, involved intimidation and threats of prosecution for a range of
activities collectively defined as “Un-American.” This new American rhetoric, combined with the shift in domestic and foreign policies, fanned the fear of a Soviet invasion and created the cultural conditions for the rise of McCarthyism. The cultural story-line of a possible invasion by the Soviets set the stage for the Committee hearings, loosely defining the set of rights, duties, and obligations permitted by the various actors within the unfolding episode, in short the available positions.” (Harré et al. 2015, 17).

Initially the committee positioned the ones being questioned as “Unfriendly Witnesses”, based upon their supposed ties to communism and unwillingness to name their supposed constituents. This positioning could be changed to “Friendly Witnesses” by naming such names, with the cost of being positioned as “Betraying” by other “Unfriendly Witnesses”. As to the committee’s positioning of themselves, they were seen as defenders of the American public with the duty of protection and the public as having the right to be protected. This duty then gave the committee the right for the questioning and those summoned had the duty of answering (Harré et al. 2015, 17–18). Based upon these factors, the positioning triad according to the committees positioning formed as seen below:

![Position = Committee as "Guardian"

Speech Act = Ceremonial Hearings

Story line = Communism is evil

Figure 2: “Unfriendly Witnesses are not meeting their duty to expose subversive activities.”

Those questioned could then either agree with the positioning of the committee, or reject it by practising second order positioning through discourse, “renaming” the

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2 Harré et al. 2015, 19
respective parts of the positioning triad. In this example the speech-act was then called “Pleading First and Fifth amendment”, the story line “Inquisition/Witch Hunt” and positioning “Self as Citizen” with the right to free speech etc. (Harré et al. 2015, 19). Just as in the case of Sano and Enfermada outlined earlier, the way one is positioned often isn’t a trivial matter, presuming the one being positioned cares about the moral repercussions. When they do, it is because they care about how the positioning makes them seem to the outside world, how they “come off” as a person. In the case of the committee hearings, a person could either be seen as a communist sympathiser at a time and place in which that held significant negative connotations, or as a citizen merely practising their right to free speech. Clearly anyone who cares about his or her public image or other social standing would choose the latter.

The way story lines are made available, especially in conflict situations, is of paramount importance as Harré & Slocum pointed out in the Georgetown example outlined earlier. Going back to the case of the committee hearings, there was an “overarching” larger story line of the “Red Scare” – a fear of communist takeover – and an on-going political struggle between the right and the left, which combined had an impact on the proceedings of the hearings:

“The cultural story-line of a possible invasion by the soviets set the stage for the committee hearings, loosely defining the set of rights, duties and obligations permitted by the various actants within the unfolding episode, in short the available positions.” (Harré et al. 2015, 17)

In a similar manner the current story line of the migrant crisis in Europe is connected to an overarching “cultural story line” concerning heightened tension and general unpredictability in current world politics including devastating episodes of terrorism, mostly at the moment carried out by the terrorist group ISIL (“Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant”). This connection has an influence on how immigration and immigrants themselves are perceived and what kinds of story lines and positions become available in more local settings. According to Slocum-Bradley, who has among other conflicts studied the positioning practises at the U.S. – Mexico border (Slocum-Bradley 2009):
“For example, within the context of a “migration” story line, the sojourners may be referred to as *inter alia* “human beings”, “migrants”, “foreigners”, Mexicans”, “*mestizos*”, “Hispanics”, “Browns”, “Catholics”, “pilgrims” or “guests”. Inhabitants of the area where the migrants arrive might be conceived as “locals”, “natives”, “Americans”, “Whites”, “Protestants”, “hosts”, or “human beings”. Each of these different identities evoked in explaining, or constructing the meaning of, the episode has very different implications for the rights and duties attributed to each actor … Therefore it can have vital consequences for how the episode unfolds.” (Slocum-Bradley 2008, 90)

The fact that *any* person can be referred to with different terms of course a given, but the factors which have an influence on the terms used by someone aren’t as simplistic as some of the immigration discussion might imply. It is sometimes suggested more or less implicitly that those opposed to immigration are somehow ‘cruel’ or ‘simple’ or downright ‘deplorable’ than those who welcome it more readily. The other side is no worse in coming up with derogatory names and the argumentation on immigration has a tendency to become very personal in nature, leading to *ad hominem* remarks pointed at the opposing agent, making any meaningful progress towards mutual understanding very unlikely. It is no question a fact that some people are simply racist and their whole reasoning to even take part in the discussion on immigration lies simply in their willingness to advance racist goals through more or less well-camouflaged arguments. This is however by no means a satisfactory explanation for the conflict insofar as one is unable to accept the notion that some people are simply “evil”. The way an individual perceives immigrants – or “strangers” as Bauman puts it – seems to have a connection with their current social standing in the surrounding society. Writing about uncertainty experienced in contemporary living Bauman states that,

“…the freedom of movement within the city has become … the principal *stratifying* factor. A position in the social hierarchy of the city may best be measured by the degree to which confinement to a single area may be avoided (or not), and wether the ‘no go’ areas may or may not be ignored or securely bypassed” (Bauman 2001, 89)(emphasis in original).
He then goes on to argue that the resources to choose one’s daily route throughout the
city are unevenly distributed, which creates a divide in how “strangers” are perceived
into those who see them,

“… as pleasurable as the surfing beach, and not at all threatening. The strangers
run restaurants promising unusual, exciting experiences to the taste-buds, sell
curious-looking, mysterious objects fit to be talking points at the next party, offer
services other people would not stoop or deign to offer, dangle morsels of wisdom
refreshingly different from the routine and boring … In that life, the strangers are
pursuers of pleasures. Their presence is a break in the tedium. One should thank
God they are here. So what is all that uproar and outcry for?” (Bauman 2001, 89–
90)

Immediately answering his own question he continues,

“The uproar and the outcry come, let there be no mistake, from other areas of the
city, ones which the pleasure-seeking consumers never visit, let alone live in. Those areas are populated by the people not able to choose whom they meet and
for how long and unable to pay for having their choices respected; by powerless
people, who experience the world as a trap, not an adventure park; who are
incarcerated in a territory from which there is no exit for them, but which others
may enter or leave at will” (Bauman 2001, 90) (emphasis in original)

For some the increasing amount of immigrants seems to mainly represent a story line of
“threat” to their day-to-day life in the form of increased uncertainty, fear of violence,
loss of jobs and other societal benefits. This can lead to positioning acts which
underline the perceived rights of “host countries” instead of the duties, frames the story
line in a highly negative way (to the “hosts”) and leads to more critical and sometimes
even hostile speech-acts and positioning. Others see the crisis first and foremost as a
humanitarian challenge, in which the rights of those fleeing war-torn countries like
Syria, Irak and Afghanistan are of paramount importance and instead of being
positioned as ‘terrorists’ or ‘welfare shoppers’ they are seen as victims of horrible
circumstances in desperate need of humanitarian aid.
Based on Bauman’s reasoning one might make the assumption that an individual’s stance on immigration depends upon one’s ability to avoid its’ negative repercussions. While a logical stance it cannot alone explain the often highly polarized stances on immigration and even less the willingness to take part in the discussion. There seems to be a mutual need to somehow convince the “other side” about what would be the proper way forward, while the imagined audience has no apparent willingness to accept those reasons. The only reasonable motive to take part in any argumentation is the shared willingness to be able to expand one’s own mind and that of the conversation partner, but this feature doesn’t seem to interest the one’s taking part in the current debate, which begs the question; why bother?

Part of the answer lies perhaps in how a person sees themselves, what is their understanding of what kind of a person they are, which leads to acts in accordance with the ‘core beliefs’ of their identity, in order to maintain that sense of self. Another piece of the explanation could be that a discursive conflict which offers relatively “clear-cut” positioning acts of self and other is an attractive proposition to those who seek to build and manifest their identity. One way to pursue both ends can be done by taking part in various discursive situations.
3 Subject matter and methodology

The material for this study consists of two separate TV discussion programs produced by the Finnish national broadcasting company, YLE. Both discussions are about the subject of immigration in Finland, the first one named “Immigration-night” (6.10.2015) and the second “Insecurity-night” (2.3.2016). As the understanding of the larger cultural context and the many overarching story lines affecting discursive episodes is necessary for a successful analysis utilizing positioning theory, I will first spend a little time to try and give a very general description of certain characteristics of the debate surrounding immigration in Finland specifically, beginning from the early 1990’s, ranging all the way to the time of the publication of the shows. This allows me to then propose some hypothetical story lines for the analysis, which is often the most useful point of departure when utilizing the positioning triad for analysis, as opposed to the ‘position’ or ‘speech-act’ portions (Harré & Moghaddam 2003, 9). Once the initial story lines have been established, I’ll move on to describe the shows themselves and try to then argue for the usefulness and potential pitfalls of positioning theory for their study. Then I’ll explain the methods used to gather the material, what was necessary to include, what could reasonably be left out and why and, finally, I’ll introduce the analytical framework of an analysis utilizing positioning theory.

3.1. Immigration talk in Finland – Story lines of opposition

The subject of immigration has been a divisive topic of discussion in Finland for decades, in part because of the way it has been handled by different media. In a book titled, “I’m not racist, but…” (2009) several Finnish academics from different fields together with highly successful immigrants currently living in Finland describe the characteristics of the discussion around immigration spanning the past twenty years or so. The early 1990’s saw the arrival of immigrants into Finland from places like the Middle East, Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) and the Former Soviet Union, into a Finland going through a tough economic depression. It also saw the arrival of Somali immigrants, who according to psychotherapist and a Somali immigrant himself, Said Aden, were almost instantly picked out by the media, which decided to portray them in a one-sided and negative light, resulting in fear, prejudice and hate towards the Somali immigrants among the Finnish population (Keskinen,
Rastas & Tuori 2009, 26). He argues, that to this day a rational discussion about immigration is rare to come by in Finland and the little that actually does take place, mainly concentrates on the economic implications of accepting immigrants into Finland. He blames the one-sided nature of the discussion for the ascent of the “hard right” and the opinions of the “so called immigration critics” arguing, that if a more open forum was offered by the media, then maybe we wouldn’t find ourselves where we are now (Keskinen ym. 2009, 29–30).

Aden´s arguments are echoed by Professor of journalism in the University of Tampere, Pentti Raittila, who writes that according to their extensive study on the subject, articles written in the media about immigration during the new millennium have been “structurally distorted”. What he means by this is that while the media has offered positive stories concerning immigration and immigrants, it at the same time has no problem in selling of issues by writing about crime in which the active agent has been an immigrant (Keskinen et al. 2009, 71). Another finding from the same study was that those more opposed towards immigration, and surely the downright racist sentiments, were almost completely shunned from the mainstream media, resulting in those opposed retreating into their own (online) communities and becoming overall resentful towards the press (Keskinen et al. 2009 69–70). According to Raittila, this is a key problem, and by instantly branding someone a racist for being a self-proclaimed “immigration critic” we are only hurting ourselves, if we ever wish to bring into dialogue all the different opinions around immigration (Keskinen et al. 2009, 73).

The way in which immigration has been represented in different Finnish media seems to follow some of the tenants of Galtung and Ruge´s classic “news values” (1965). Especially the lure of negative news with opposition and conflict seem too to have been too good to pass up by the press, as they simply make for news that have a wide interest among the populous. This is not of course only a problem in Finland, but in Europe in general, as has been pointed out by van Dijk in his seminal study of British and Dutch newspapers concerning the handling of immigrants and other minorities in several publications (van Dijk 1991). One of the results has been the formation of a somewhat divided public surrounding the subject of immigration, which cannot be blamed on the media completely, but which certainly has played a part in the creation of the division.
In Finland the year 2011 finally saw the rise of The Finns Party, led by the current minister for foreign affairs, Timo Soini, as they achieved a substantial political following in the election that year. Their message was in large part a protest with nationalist and populist narratives, underlining a critical stance on immigration. Many of their members and affiliate groups have since been accused of and judged in the court of law for voicing of racist opinions through personal blogs or other forms of social media, and resorting to forms of discrimination based on race. Most recently the chairman of The Tampere Finns Party, Terhi Kiemunki, was discharged from her position based upon racist comments written online (YLE 26.2.2017).

During the end of the summer of 2015 many immigrants from mainly Syria and Irak started seeking refuge in Finland in much larger numbers than before as part of the “immigrant crisis” occurring in Europe at large. Leading up to and continuing after the increased immigration, multiple terrorist attacks with a large amount of casualties have taken place in many places all over Europe, adding to the overall sense of fear. A new rise in anti-immigrant sentiment started gaining an ever-stronger foothold, which was one of the reasons for Britain’s leaving of the European Union in the form of ‘Brexit’ (BBC 24.6.2016 ‘Eight Reasons Leave won the UK’s referendum on the EU’) with many important elections based on heavily nationalist principles still to take place in Europe in the course of the current year.

In Finland today self-proclaimed “street patrols” such as the group “Soldiers of Odin” roam the streets sporting openly anti-immigrant slogans such as “Migrants not welcome” (Reuters 13.1.2016), and others take part in anti-racist protests, such as the “Stop this game” (“Peli poikki”) demonstration, which was aimed in part directly at the “violent Neo-Natzi organization active in Finland currently, that calls itself Suomen vastarintaliike (SVL) a.k.a. The Finnish Resistance Movement.” (Facebook – Peli poikki). Meanwhile there is talk of a “sensible people” (“Tolkun ihmiset”), which was a term coined in an article written by a Finnish author, Jyri Paretskoi, echoed by the President of Finland himself, Sauli Niinistö, in his Twitter account as an article that according to him, “needs to be read”. The core meaning of the term was that there are people who are able to take part in sensible discussion on immigration who do not use it as a means to a personal end, the only problem being that they are a group that “do not wish to make a big deal out of themselves” and “even though there are a lot of them,
they remain invisible” (Isalmen Sanomat 28.1.2016). One reason for the disappearance of the moderate middle could be explained by a recent study done in the University of Vaasa, according to which Finnish citizens are afraid of taking part in the discussion for fear of being then branded as either a racist or a “suvakki”, a derogatory name meaning people who are somehow unjustifiably – according to the ones using the term – for immigration (HS 22.3.2017).

So if indeed the moderate middle is missing from the public sphere, what is left are the more or less opposing “story lines” of those generally against immigration and those generally for it. This stance is then reflected in the corresponding positioning and the allocation of rights and duties to different parties. A person with a generally opposing attitude highlights the rights of native people and the duties of immigrants, whereas a person of the opposing mind-set highlights the rights of immigrants and the native’s duties to accommodate and help those in need. In the study on positioning practices along the U.S. & Mexico border, Slocum-Bradley outlined several story lines with the following characterizations as examples (Slocum-Bradley 2008, 116–117):

- **“Immigrants abuse taxpayers”**: Immigrants leech off of the US social security system and cause a host of ills.
- **“National security”**: (would-be) illegal immigrants pose a security threat to the US
- **“Immigrant exploitation”**: The US border is a tool to keep the vast majority of workers in a situation of brutal exploitation

For a person with even a cursive view of the current immigration debate in Finland, at least the first two story line examples mentioned above must seem somewhat familiar. One way to analyse the material used in this thesis could be to try and find all the possible story lines (and corresponding positioning) in a similar manner, but as the purpose of this study is not as much to find out if there is a conflict (it takes that for granted), but how the way an individual positions themselves in relation to immigration construct identities through various speech-acts, this type of storyline characterization isn’t necessary. The show takes this idea of generally opposing story lines as a given as well, as the guests have been deliberately chosen as representatives of a stance they are known to hold and then “pitted” against each other in the debate, which is reflected in
the way in which they sit facing each other according to their supposed stance on the subject. I do not believe for example, that the chairman of the “Finnish Defense League” arrived to the studio as his goal to argue for example for the benefits of immigration, or that the many immigrants present would like to argue against them. Each party has a certain understanding of the rights and duties within the debate, which then places them into the corresponding category of a general “for” or “against”. The presupposition that actors involved in a discursive episode are aware of each other’s possible positions in relation to the subject at hand is taken for granted within positioning theory, and the presenting of these beliefs is a vital part of a research report utilizing the method (Harré & van Langenhove 1999, 2).

Of course the guests who are more opposed rarely – if ever – reveal their actual, personal beliefs, but rather try to argue towards certain goals as proficiently as their individual skills in discourse allow them. One way in which this can be done is pointed out during the discussions by one of the studio guests, as they argue that the concept of fear can be used as a socially acceptable means to pursue discriminatory goals. Within positioning theory these kinds of acts are called “relabelling of emotions”, which are commonplace in political conflicts in particular and refer to the way in which expressed emotions such as “anger” or feelings of neglect can be relabelled by opposing parties into other emotions, with less rhetoric potency, such as “envy”. A person can also relabel their own emotions after an unwanted labelling by an opposing party has taken place. So when someone’s argument has been “labelled” to be founded in discriminatory beliefs, one way to fight this labelling is to relabel it as an act of fear, in order to try and make the actual argument, whatever it may have been, more socially acceptable (Parrot 2003, 35).

Another important fact to note is that there is no talk of any other religions other than Islam, nor are there any immigrants from countries that don’t have a Muslim majority populous. So the subject at hand isn’t immigration in general and how, for example, should Finland try to help Australian or German immigrants of Christian or Buddhist faith integrate into the Finnish society. The debate is chiefly about Muslim immigration originating in the Middle East, making the “overarching” story line for the shows the “European immigrant crisis”, much in the same way as “The Red Scare” was the
overarching story line for the committee hearing examples presented in an earlier chapter.

Based on these arguments I propose the following very general story lines as a starting point for the analysis.

1. “Muslim immigration into Finland as primarily a violation of native’s rights”
2. “Muslim immigration into Finland as primarily a question of securing immigrant’s rights”

The reason for laying out these hypotheticals is that they give a general idea of what it is that’s to be expected in the analysis, making it possible to propose interpretations for the speech-actions and their intended ‘acts’ (Harré & Moghaddam edit. 2003, 9). Once the analysis begins, more accurate story lines will start to take shape and will then be presented to the reader.

3.2. The ‘A-talk’ program as a discursive episode

The A-talk panel discussion TV-show is an almost perfect representation of a scene for public debate à la Ancient Rome about issues of ‘common concern’ (the YLE website for on-demand watching of most of their content is also aptly named “Areena”, suggesting a “place” for political discussion). There are two large scaffolds with seats facing each other with the two hosts of the night standing in the middle. There isn’t a complete distribution of guests according to their general stance on the subject, but those seated on the left hand side (from the point of view of the viewer) seem to be the ones generally opposed or at least more critical. There are a few guests on the left with a “pro”-immigration stance, but none on the right with an “anti” stance, at least among those who actually took part in the debate by offering an account of some kind. The reason for this setting is not explained even though it’s the same way in both shows, which leads one to believe that it’s a regular way of setting up the discussion in this show in general. Among the guests are politicians from various parties, professionals of various fields, celebrities of some type or another, members of the media, representatives of different organizations, and individuals with a more or less direct
connection to the subject, with a personal point of view to offer. In addition to the
guests who have been chosen to attend the show to take part in the discussion, there is
an “audience” portion. These are people who sit at the same seats, but do not for one
reason or another take part in the discussion, even though they seemingly could if they
wanted to.

After a short introduction to the subject the debate is begun and several different themes
around immigration discussed. Opportunities to speak are handed out by the hosts out of
their own accord, with guests also having the possibility to ask for permission to speak
by raising their hand. If an argument is directed at someone else in the audience, that
person is typically given a chance or even asked to retort immediately after. At certain
intervals there are “breaks” in the form of introducing a new guest with a specific point
of view or by for example visiting immigrants residing at an immigration centre and
giving them a chance to weigh in on the subject through a translator. After these
sections the discussion returns to the studio, until the shows finally come to a close.

The format of the program offers a useful source material for positioning theory,
especially because of the way in which dialogue is directed back and forth between
guests who hold at least somewhat opposing views on the subject. In its original form
(Bronwyn & Harré 1990) positioning theory was used to study dialogue between two
people, with the “doctor and patient” and “Sano and Enfermada” situations as some of
the initial examples. Especially the latter shows how positions are proposed (to self and
other), negotiated, rejected, accepted, questioned, etc., in order to do something socially,
all this possible within even a brief or disjointed dialogue. These efforts of mutual
positioning through intentional speech-acts are a major part of the analysis, therefore a
situation in which opposing sides get to actively argue against one another gives birth to
an increased quantity of different efforts of positioning compared to, say, a discussion
between people who more or less agree on whatever subject is discussed. The effort to
gain a “moral high ground” for example – an important part of positioning – has no use
in a situation in which that ground is already mutually occupied by the ones engaging in
the dialogue. Because of the rather extensive way in which positioning theory has been
utilized to study discursive conflicts (Slocum-Bradley 2008a., Harré & Slocum 2003,
Parrot 2003) also with a political dimension (Slocum-Bradley & van Langenhove
2003), it offers a wide array of tools ready to be used in the analysis of the subject of
this study. Positioning is often a strategic activity, in which those involved try to gain a favourable position in relation to others, sometimes having to “fight” for a position several times during a discussion. These instances are naturally more prominent when there is a somewhat equal distribution of different points of view. In addition, a debate between two groups, as opposed to a one-on-one type scenario, the different kinds of ways of constructing an identity are naturally more numerous, hopefully leading to a more comprehensive analysis on the ways in which it can be done by individuals.

3.3. Ethical considerations

The analysis portion of this study leans heavily on methods of discourse analysis that have been used before to help explain the positioning efforts within an episode. For example in the case of efforts of identity construction, it has been shown that the use of declarations (a report of the nature of things from the speakers point of view) and narrations (presentation of self and others in a “drama”) (Harré & van Langenhove 1999, 8) are the most enlightening, so naturally these kinds of instances are something that will be analysed if and when they should present themselves. When a person for example proclaims that they’ve had a positive or negative personal experience with an immigrant, and then go on to present this narration as an argument of for or against immigration in general (a rather commonplace phenomenon in the material), I will take this proclamation and argue for its main social meaning – its “speech-act” – serving as perhaps a declaration of identity or an effort of positioning of self or other, instead of just an argument. The danger here is that this act of analysis could be perceived as somehow malicious in intent, since in a way it leads to me questioning a person’s “trustworthiness” about what they’ve said and propose a perhaps hidden motive. The point of discourse analysis however is to study the text in respect to what it does, not the possible underlying attitudes (Eskola & Suoranta 1999, 198), which one could of course never reliably point to. So when I analyse a speech-act as doing something other than its apparent intent, it’s not to question motive, but to propose through hopefully adequate argumentation, that it also serves to do something else.

Positioning theory has a strong relation to social constructivism, meaning that it takes as a given the following principles (Harré & van Langenhove 1999, 2):
1. “What people do, publicly or privately, is intentional, that is, directed to something beyond itself, and normatively constrained, that is, subject to such assessments as correct/incorrect, proper/improper and so on.”

2. “What people are, to themselves and to others, is a product of a lifetime of interpersonal interactions superimposed over a very general ethological endowment.”

These principles have two important implications concerning this study. The first one being the underlining of intentionality and the second one the understanding of the origins of these actions. The combined meaning of these principles is that what we do through discourse is rarely accidental, and that the carefully constructed meanings (which may very well be hidden to the speaker themselves) can be analysed with tools provided by discourse analysis and that whatever the content and meaning might be suggested to be, the purpose of the analysis isn’t to act as a form of judgement of anyone’s’ character. As Davies and Harré argue, “One lives one’s life in terms of the kind of person one takes oneself to be, whoever or whatever might be responsible for its production” (Davies & Harré 1990, 48) (Emphasis mine). The moral nature of immigration is precisely why it makes for such a fruitful subject matter for positioning theory and analysis of identity constructions. As explained earlier, our individual systems of morality are what define our identities the most and positioning theory is among other things a theory mainly concerned with how rights and duties are to be distributed among a certain group of people. In this study I aim to analyse how people distribute these rights and duties between natives of a currently privileged “first world” country and those seeking refuge from war-torn “third world” countries such as Syria, Irak and Afghanistan – a profoundly moral question indeed. I’m well aware that among the guests of the shows analysed there might be people who would like to see the borders of Europe closed from any and all immigrants with even a brownish tint to their skin without losing much sleep. Equally I’m aware that some of the guests arguing for immigration might simply take part in the discussion in order to score “social points” within their peers, or to perhaps advance their chances in the next election. But this is a study in the end concerned with larger phenomena, not the individual, and there surely is no need for me to try and point out that some people sometimes act out of
questionable foundations. So when during the analysis I point out instances of someone trying to gain a moral high ground for example (another rather common occurrence in the material), the aim is not to accuse this person of acting somehow “out of character” or to suggest that what they’ve said doesn’t somehow align with their personal belief system (how could I possibly know?) and perhaps even suggest a sinister motive. The aim is to create an accurate image of the positioning efforts evident in the debate and maybe, if all goes well, later discuss the possible existence of some larger societal development behind it all.

In addition I have to consider the question of my own personal belief system and how that might distort the analysis, perhaps even without me ever becoming aware (Eskola & Suoranta 1999, 20). The questions of reliability and quality of analysis are of course problems all those practising any research have to face, but I feel the highly moral and ethical nature of the question of immigration combined with the qualitative method adds an additional burden. I evidently have a strong, emotional connection with the subject, leading to the initial sparking of interest and prolonged will and ability to continue with the project, and I’m sure whoever has read all the way up to this point in the text has a relatively clear image of my thoughts and beliefs about the current debate, simply through reading “between the lines” in the parts where I’ve been most unable to keep my personal self at bay. In the end this study is only an account of how things in a very specific context appear to me to be, without much opportunity for larger application, which is the nature of discourse analysis (Eskola & Suoranta 1999, 200). Within the human sciences in general there simply are no ultimate truths (Eskola & Suoranta 1999, 251 – 253), which frees me from trying to achieve any, and the quality of a study utilizing the qualitative research method lies in how well the reader is able to follow the argumentation, and how unambiguously I’ll be able to present the categorisations and other analysis (Eskola & Suoranta 1999, 217).

3.3. Gathering of the material

The shows last exactly three and a half hours combined, with the one titled “Immigrant-night” lasting 1 hour and 58 minutes and “Insecurity-night” 1 hour and 32 minutes. They consist mainly of Finnish speech produced by natives, immigrants with varying skills in the Finnish language ranging from very weak to native fluency, short instances of English, after which the interviewer gives a short translation, and a few interviews in
which immigrants talk in their native language, which is then translated into Finnish by either an immigrant or native mediator. In addition to the speech-acts, there is a “real time” presentation of messages sent through the social media service Twitter, curated by an YLE employee, and also an instance in which hateful and racist Facebook-messages censored from the YLE Facebook-page are shown as a graphic and then read out loud by one of the hosts. At various points there are also short videos in which immigrants in different situations are interviewed, after which the discussions returns back into the studio.

While undoubtedly many of these aspects of the shows could be fruitful material for the uses of positioning theory, only the actual speech-acts between the “pro” and “anti” groups within the studio are gathered and used in the analysis. While a single “tweet” about immigration, perhaps coupled with a personal point of view or even a judgement on the matter to offer could very well be used in the analysis to propose an underlying system of beliefs about rights and duties, there are a few issues with them. First, they are picked and chosen by an YLE employee, leading to a “pre-curated” source material. If one was to study these messages, it would in my opinion be best to do that utilizing Twitter directly, gathering all the tweets with the “#A2-ila” identifier to create a more substantial body of material. Second, these messages are merely shown and not acted upon during the programs in any way, so they serve mainly as something for the viewers to ponder, more than as an actual source for the dialogue taking place in the show. While individual expressions of identity for sure, they lack the context of an actual dialogue and the back and forth nature that is so important for an analysis of positioning.

The “visit” to the immigrant shelter and the videos representing immigrants either already in Finland or still applying are left out for similar reasons as the tweets, but an additional reason needs to be explored, which has to do with the nature of YLE and its public broadcasting status as a media company. The valiant aspiration of the shows is to lessen discrimination and create an “emotional bridge” between immigrants and the natives, leading to a rather one-sided way in which immigrants are represented. This stretches to the way in which the hosts “act out” the shows, which questions are asked, in what manner, how the guests are positioned etc., which, again, while a fascinating
subject for another study, seems outside the scope for this particular one, as it lacks the factor of personal identity.

What is left are the speech-actions of the hosts and the studio guests present in the discussion, which are all written into text form first in the original language, and then translated into English as they appear in the analysis. This might pose a problem if this was a purely discourse analytic study, in which lot could be lost in translation, but as the most fruitful part of the material are the instances of efforts of positioning, translating shouldn’t pose a problem. In case there are difficulties of translating the meaning of a sentence, for example when sarcasm is used, it can simply be explained afterwards to help the reader understand the implied intent.

The shows will be analysed simultaneously as one "text", as many of the subjects were the same, the main story lines the same and the overall context for the discourse nearly identical.

3.4. The Positioning Theory Analytical Framework – What to look for and how?

“The constitutive force of each discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions” – Davies & Harre

To understand positioning in the context of such as the one studied in this paper, one might find it helpful to equate it to a game of chess or some other strategic activity. During the (discursive) conflict, each “player” tries to advance whatever goal they wish to advance at a specific time, ultimately to “win”, which is to gain a favourable position in relation to others. In this sense the positioning activities people undertake are strategic, meaning that whatever the speech-action, it always has an intended speech-act, which is the social meaning it achieves (Harré & Moghaddam 2003, 5). This social meaning isn’t always the intended one of course, because people taking part and watching the conversation unfold study and interpret it from their own point of view or “story line”. So when a politician for example argues that we should as a people pay more attention to such and such a thing and perhaps less to some other, those who share the person’s point of view often readily agree, but others, interpreting the utterance from
an opposing point of view, might and often do see it in a wholly different way, perhaps even as a hostile or a despicable act. This is the source of the conflict in many situations; “a discrepancy over which rights and duties should be accorded to which actors” (Slocum-Bradley 2009, 101).

The analytic framework used in positioning theory begins with the proposal of tentative story lines in order to give an overview into the discussion, an action already presented earlier in this chapter. Once those have been laid out the analysis can begin, consisting of a detailed account of all the available points of view by way of trying to make sense of the speech-actions as acts. This is done by suggesting possible answers to the question what does it mean? Why does a certain person say a certain thing at a certain time and what might be desired social outcome? Is it to advance a personal goal or that of some other person or group? To achieve a certain goal in the debate, reach a moral high ground to help one’s chances in an argument or to simply add an attractive aspect of identity onto oneself? Finally, what follows is a detailed analysis of the participant’s perceptions of the conflict and exploration of the different ways in which they perceive it, that is, their subjective realities. The goal of this phase is to identify:

a. the various storylines that constitute the collection of narratives
b. the positioning of others and oneself in each storyline
c. the illocutionary forces of utterances in the story lines

Harré & Moghaddam editors 2003, 131

While an effort to explain the discursive conflict around immigration, this thesis is mainly about identity constructions for self and other, meaning that most attention will be paid to section b., efforts of positioning of self and other, as these deliberate, often strategic efforts to positioning a person in a moral location are instances from which the effort to express one’s identity is often best seen (Harré & van Langenhove 1999, 22–23). Often the effort of positioning someone else is also an act of self-positioning in one way or another, as identity constructions require the use of categories, which are often at least dichotomous by nature. By claiming to be something, the implication is also that the person isn’t something else and vice versa. Usually when someone calls another a racist or a “suvakki”, the implication is that the one doing the name-calling is not to be
included in that category. These categories then define our identity in the current social situation. As explained by Harré & van Langenhove: “…people construct social identities for themselves by naming or implying categories and attributes and participating in the discursive practises through which meanings are allocated to those labels” (emphasis mine) (Harré & Langenhove 1999, 62). Often these actions are purely intentional, as a person tries to find the most favourable position in a social situation. The forms of intentional positioning of self and other are seen in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-positioning</th>
<th>Deliberate self-positioning</th>
<th>Forcéd other positioning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other-positioning</td>
<td>Deliberate positioning of others</td>
<td>Forced positioning of others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Types of intentional positioning

More direct acts of self-positioning include stressing of agency in claiming responsibility for an action, indexing statements with the point of view a person has on its world, and finally, by presenting descriptions of past events as contributions to one’s identity (Harré & Langenhove 1999, 62). While these could also be considered as acts of deliberate positioning of self, they’re often more substantial in nature, consisting of measured statements and can thus be considered as powerful expressions of identity.

Part c. will take place simultaneously, as I look for intentional positioning of self through prepositioning acts (implicit) or positioning of others (explicit), efforts of gaining a favourable position, a moral high ground, declarations on how things ought to be and applications of supererogatory duties.

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3 Harré & van Langenhove 1999, 62
4 Analysis

The main themes explored in the two shows were fear towards immigration and difficulties faced in the integration of immigrants. Fear was explored extensively in the beginning of both shows for the most part by debating about who has the right to be afraid – natives, immigrants or anyone? The other show was centred almost fully around the subject of fear, as it was titled “Insecurity-night”, sparked in part because of the many high profile stories in the media at the time about crimes of violent and sexual nature committed by immigrants towards natives, and in part because of the birth of the so called “street patrols”, which, according to their representatives, were aimed to secure the streets of any similar crime from taking place. Since the airing of the shows the only group with a representative present in the show, called “Street Hawks”, has been disbanded, while the other group talked about in the show called “Soldiers of Odin” remains active. Employment was widely agreed by all groups (anti-immigration, pro-immigration and immigrants themselves) as the best way for a successful integration into the Finnish society. Opinions differed on whose fault it is that some immigrants don’t seem to be able to find employment, dividing the rights and duties of this issue accordingly.

The overall economic situation in Finland was often seen as both the culprit for the rise of critical and negative sentiments towards immigration, and as the primary cure for many problems around immigration and other issues ailing the welfare state model. With enough money and employment, it seems society would simply cease having social conflict, as the ‘invisible hand’ would distribute happiness and tolerance along with food, shelter and entertainment. The reasons for why such a blissful societal state is yet to be attained varied immensely. Positioning and repositioning of self and other were raised around such questions as whose duty it is to help immigrants integrate, who is to blame for its partial ineffectiveness, what is the appropriate way to handle the situation socially and individually, the answers always relying on the way in which the one talking distributes rights and duties.

4.1. Groups and Story Lines
Both shows were strongly solution centred, as the hosts repeatedly asked questions about how to resolve the issues that plague successful immigration. This sentiment that Finland has indeed become divided around the issue of immigration was repeated many times by the hosts and the guests as “common sense”. The very introductions to the shows were similar in this manner:

**Wali Hashi (host):** Welcome. Today we’ll discuss if we’re still us and them, immigrants against native Finns, or could we be more together?

**Annika Damström (host):** What is scary about immigrants, are street-patrols a threat, is our society becoming divided?

As stated earlier, the guests were ”positioned” according to this pre-established fact as well. Following this setup, the story lines evident in the discussions mainly consisted of opposing opinions and argumentations about a shared topic. At times, if a guest tried to introduce a topic of their own, they were quickly led back to the original discussion by one of the hosts, until the hosts themselves changed the subject. This means a little less “organic” set of story lines, compared to a subject matter consisting of, for example, a wide array of news articles about a common theme, which would perhaps present a more diverse set of positions. In this way the subject matter of the two shows chosen for this study represent a rather simplistic, black and white world, with only a few shades of gray. Below are the four main story lines discussed in the shows, divided into “pro” and “anti” groups:

Story Lines offered mostly by “anti-immigration” guests:

1. *Immigrants as criminals, rapists and child-molesters Story Line:* Immigrants who come to Finland endanger the safety of native women, children and elders, justifying “street patrol”-groups formed by natives.
2. *Immigrants as an economic burden Story Line:* Immigrants endanger the Finnish economy through failing to integrate and ending up depending upon well-fare benefits.

Story lines offered mostly by “pro-immigration” guests:
1. *Malicious and racist natives* Story Line: Immigrants who come to Finland face unjustified acts of discrimination and racism from irrationally fearful natives. “Street patrol”-groups a form of unjustified discrimination.

2. *Immigrants as victims of a failed integration* Story Line: Immigrants possess many skills with which to be able to perform jobs and otherwise promote the Finnish economy. Often face structurally racist challenges that prevent from joining institutions and workforce.

The subjects of fear and successful integration (with a healthy economy as an underlying implication) are evident in all the story lines. Immigrants were seen as both an individual threat in the form of violent crime, and as an economic one. Correspondingly, they were also seen as victims of racist discrimination, as an “opportunity” to practice moral values and as a new form of workforce able to aid in the economic sphere in Finland.

As the four story lines are in this way polarized, they will be analysed in two parts in an opposing manner, starting with the “Immigrants as criminals…” and “Malicious and racist natives…” story lines. The reasoning for this is that by studying two opposing story lines in this context, the strategic and dialogical nature of positioning acts becomes more visible, compared to an exploration of story lines in a “one by one” fashion, in which I’d simply go through the positioning inherent in each storyline. As the groups are clear and the topics pre-set, this kind of analysis of “positions of opposition” seems justified.

Once the points of view relating to the story lines are analysed and a sufficient image of the difference between allocated rights and duties made apparent, both the "pro" and "anti" story lines and the positions found therein will be placed into their corresponding places within the positioning triad in order to give an overview of their mutually determining relationship.
4.2. Acts of positioning in story line #1: Immigrants as criminals, rapists and child-molesters vs. Malicious and racist natives

Throughout the discussions between the story lines analysed in this chapter two common tactics stood out. First, the group working from within the “anti” story line repeatedly used deliberate positioning of others, most often women, children and elders as either actual or potential victims of violence and violence of sexual nature, in which immigrants were positioned as the perpetrators. This positioning was then used in acts of deliberate self-positioning as a “protector” of said victim groups as a means to argue against immigration.

Those acting from within the ”pro” story line positioned immigrants as victims of unjustified fear and deserving of patience and understanding and as the ones actually entitled to the feeling of fear. The other common tactic evident in these story lines was that of relabelling emotions, as fear expressed by natives was often seen as false and used as a tool of pursuing discriminatory goals. Fear was relabelled as masked racism, paranoia, abstract terror and as a substitute for a variety of other feelings having to do with dissatisfaction on an individual and group level, sourced mainly in economic poverty. Money was even proposed as the ultimate and only solution for the current conflict, as it’s increase especially on the lower socioeconomic level was often seen by all parties as a significant reason for the birth of discriminatory or critical stances towards immigrants. This relabelling of fear as unjust and representative of other, perhaps even deplorable characterizations is a form of indirect or presumptive positioning, in which negative characteristics are used to deny someone the right to a certain position and additionally the right to position others. The effort of gaining a moral high ground, a relatively common and useful tactic in a discursive conflict, was used by both groups either directly or obliquely.

“Insecurity-night” began with a discussion with a mother in charge of an address aimed at ”securing a safe journey to school for children”. She was asked for the reasoning behind such an initiative, to which she replied in the following manner:
Sari Hassinen (mother in charge of collecting an address): We wanted to do this because now there has been a lot of these incidents in which children are targets of cruelty and we wanted to pre-emptively act upon them not happening.

The host then asked her about the “incidents” she’s referring to, to which she replies “all around Finland”. After being asked if anything had actually happened in her hometown, we are given the following reply:

Sari Hassinen (mother in charge of collecting an address): Well they (immigrants) haven’t yet done anything, while there have of course been looks, talk we don’t understand, laughing, so ... but we want to still be pre-emptive so that nothing will happen.

Now clear that nothing has actually happened to "justify" the address, the host asks the woman where she herself thinks her fears are founded:

Sari Hassinen (mother in charge of collecting an address): Well I’m from Turku. There even as a young person I’ve seen what foreigners have done, violence and then what I see in the television and read the news, so those things have caused these fears. So that nothing happens to my own children.

This could be seen as an act of malignant or malevolent positioning, as she’s trying to prohibit a certain group’s basic freedom to go where they please, based on no evidence of foul play by those she’s trying to restrain. After this the woman sits down to join the other guests and the conversation moves on for a moment, returning then to the main subject of the night – fear. This time voice is given to a person with an immigrant background, as the host asks him how he feels about the fear of the mother behind the address, who proceeds to switch the positioning from immigrants as a threat and natives as victims to the polar opposite:

Haider Al-Hello (chairman, The Irak culture forum of Finland): Well yes you have to be alert, but you have to also remember that in Kankaampää there has been an incident in which, a stabbing incident, which was aimed at these immigrants, so actually the fear about these, shall we say, trouble individuals has been more on the immigrants than on Finnish people.

This is the first example of many occasions during the course of the two programs, in which a single episode of positive or negative nature is used to try and justify a larger conclusion. It’s problematic as an argument because of its inherently limited capacity for generalization, and in this specific occasion, because of the implication that the
amount of incidents could be seen as a justifying or a disqualifying factor of an individual’s sense of fear, no matter how unreasonable it might seem. In this narrative the native’s right to fear is undermined and immigrants are in fact the ones who reserve that right, as a result of an immigrant being the victim of a knife attack.

After the host asks what he meant by the need to still be a “little bit careful”, he gets the following response:

Haider Al-Hello (chairman, The Irak culture forum of Finland): Well you have to relate to these, these foreigners or immigrants with understanding. They don’t necessarily understand Finnish culture. They should be explained about Finnish culture and how to behave in Finland. And we try our best to explain to them, to these immigrants, new immigrants, how to act, starting from how to queue when going to a store. And these things help us forward. If we’re always fearful and fear immigrants, we’ll never be able to move forward, get to know each other and find a solution.

As the question was specifically about the need to “remain careful” in relation to immigrants, this answer can be seen as rejection of a suggested first order positioning to avoid the implication of immigrants being violent. Instead they are described as victims who reserve the right for understanding and simply need to be taught about Finnish culture, with the difficulty of acting properly when going to a store recalled as an example issue. Moreover, the man applies the duty of trying harder not to be afraid to natives, in order for the situation to ever be resolved.

Faced now with the threat of being positioned as a ”block for the solution”, the woman behind the address, perhaps sensing the weakness in her own argument, grasps onto the “defender of children” position:

Sari Hassinen (mother in charge of collecting an address): Well it’s of course true that we should try to rid ourselves of prejudice, but also, what I want to pursue is that we’re pre-emptive, so that nothing will happen, which to me is very important. To secure the children.

This is an example of the beginnings of an effort to claim a moral high ground, allowing the woman apparent “untouchability” when it comes to any and all moral judgement, prejudice included. It was visible since her very first answer, now becoming more and more central in her argumentation. Finally the host asks her if she thinks that this kind of “pre-emptive action” is realistic, getting the following reply:
Sari Hassinen (mother in charge of collecting an address): Yes, to me it’s realistic. 
And in the children is first of all the future, and so they should be secured.

This final reply is quite startling first for the devastation of its sheer discursive power considering the insinuation (do you not care about the children?) and second, for the almost mechanic use of the age-old phrase “children are the future” in an actual argument. The intended speech-act is quite evident here, which is to raise children to an almost unimaginably holy position of unquestionable worth – no less than the future of the human species. While obviously true in a banal sense, here it seems needlessly overpowering, leaving no favourable positions for the interlocutors to choose from. Case closed, unless you don’t care about the children of course. It seems to set the tone for the rest of the discussion on fear in the first show, as many reject the thankless positioning, offering alternative views on the matter. First to do this is a professor from our very own University:

Heikki Hiilamo (professor of social policy, University of Helsinki): Actually I’d like to say now that since we’re worried about the children here, I’m worried about the children drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. Two children drown every day when they’re trying to cross and find an asylum and to me this is the question of insecurity and this is what we should be worried about. We should be talking about this and I hope that this kind of a discussion would be arranged about this theme, but now that were talking about insecurity in Finland, I think it’s more, now that there’s been allegations of immigrants and foreigners actions, I think that this is more the kind of an issue that’s between the ears of Finnish people. This is insecurity that’s located between the ears of Finnish people and I heard it in Sari’s speech and in a way I think this is in large amount a question of pure prejudice and I hope that in this discussion we could bring down these prejudices and in a way burst this bubble, this insecurity bubble, because we are in a big bubble. The real problem of insecurity is in the reality where our immigrants come from.

This is an example of strategic positioning on two levels at the same time; a strong expression of personal identity and an emotional positioning coupled with relabelling of the emotions of a significant group of people. First he voices his concern for immigrant children in danger and directly argues for it being the “real question of insecurity”, as opposed to the one presently discussed. This is an act of identity construction in two ways at the same time; an indexed statement with a point of view and an expression aimed at claiming responsibility, in this case for the children who drown while trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea. In this positioning the rights of immigrants and immigrant children are held more important than those of natives. According to him, we are in an “insecurity bubble”, that is our duty to burst in order to be able to advance the situation
to a favourable direction. He directly relabels the expressed emotion of fear of the woman along with all who share it as “prejudice” and then goes on to characterize it as “inappropriate”, a combined act of relabelling of emotion and presumptive positioning.

An aide arrives to the mother´s side in the form of a member of The Finns party, as she legitimizes the fear by going through some of the more recent incidents of sexual harassment and other attacks done by immigrants and terrorists in Europe, naming the terror attack in Paris, France as an example.

Veera Ruoho (Member of Parliament, The Finns): Yeah, I believe that the fear´s aren’t useless, and it doesn’t console any raped woman if they’re just this one rare case and now that we have these new phenomena, which haven’t been in Finland ever before. These group harassments, even gang rapes and, and as we know what happened in Paris and know that here in Finland at this time we have people suspected of terrorism, so these aren’t groundless these fears and only between the ears of people.

This is an act of legitimizing the foundations for the questioned fear through rejecting the suggested second order positioning as “discriminatory” and relabeling of emotions by Hiilamo, as it even directly refers to the words “between their ears” used by him in his original characterization. In this story line fear towards immigrants is justifiable and immediately it gains even more support, as a young Finnish woman with a history of being a member of the Muslim community voices her opinion on the matter. Interestingly, she too places the safety of children as the most important thing to consider, but not before giving an extremely personal and negative point of view on the matter:

Mari Nezihe (in rehabilitation): And for good reason. They (immigrants) have with their own actions shown, so I’ve lived in the Middle East for a long time and have myself been raped. A Somali immigrant raped me and I also live in a Turkish community and all my Turkish friends think that it’s a good thing I’m here to talk and they’re also against this reckless immigration. You can’t let into the country people of whom you don’t know where they come from, who they are. And this is completely irresponsible and it puts all our children in danger.

This is the beginning of an example of a narration or a "drama", in which the positioning of Muslim immigrants is at an extreme negative, based obviously on regrettable personal experiences. One would in my opinion be justified to ask how responsible it is to have this person, a victim of rape by a Somali immigrant, currently in therapy and in rehabilitation, to be invited to discuss Muslim immigration on a
publicly broadcast TV-show. Her profoundly negative and emotional experiences have clearly affected her judgement to a point from which there seems no return, which is evident from many of her subsequent statements. Nearly all have the same characteristics of a drama and highly negative positioning of Muslim immigrants as the first one. She repeatedly positions herself as a kind of "advocate" for Finnish women who might be “too kind” towards immigrants, perhaps out of fear of being branded as racist, and thus end up in her situation, a victim of rape. She also later states that after spending over seven years in the Middle East, she knows “what goes on in there”, “what the culture is like” and “what the men are like”, suggesting a sinister nature for all and thus using malevolent positioning to present the whole religion of Islam as a threat to Finnish people, especially women. She also criticizes the Finnish and European immigration situation system in general, claiming Europe to be “in chaos” and the Schengen area “not working at all”.

The use of a personal drama to reject the foundations for fear is articulated by a politician, as she tells a story about herself and her positive experiences with immigrants:

**Emma Kari (Member of Parliament, The Green Party):** Thank you. I’ve myself lived for over six years next to an immigration center and my child’s daycare center is four meters away from the door of this immigration center and, and, in Helsinki we went through a very similar process, had a lot of paranoia and fear and now years later we’ve discovered that no problems have actually existed, this is a part of the community and has actually enriched the life in that area. *So a lot of this has to do with us just having to get used to people of different types, we have to be more receptive to all of this.* And the police has brought out that the problems with immigration centers are again and again because of the people rejecting these centers, meaning us native Finns who go there to rampage and reject immigration centers, more than the people living there causing problems.

This is a personal narrative with positive positioning for immigrants and negative for natives Finns. As an argument it is similarly problematic as the one by Nezihe, as it’s founded completely upon her own positive experiences. What it succeeds in doing is positioning herself as a friend of immigrants, immigrants as victims and native Finns as lacking in the ability to show compassion to new kinds of people. It relabels fear as “paranoia” or at least makes the two comparable, further decreasing the foundations for a right to be afraid.
One of the more enduring debates between two guests in “Insecurity-night” is seen between Nezihe and a Finnish radio host, Jone Nikula. Nikula rejects the negative first order positioning of immigrants as a threat by Nezihe, arguing first about the sources of fear experienced by natives and then that it’s more likely for a Finnish woman to become a victim of abuse or violence by their own significant other rather than an immigrant:

**Jone Nikula (radio host):** Yeah just to go back to the previous comments a couple of statistical facts, now that we’re talking about what a Finnish person is afraid of. First they’re afraid of unemployment, we have more than 200 000 unemployed at this moment. As a consequence they’re afraid of their own livelihood, because the job market isn’t going to become easier and the national economy has been in trouble for years. After that they’re afraid of immigrants of whom there have now arrived 32 000 during the last year. And if we discuss violence, one really can’t downplay a person’s fear and, as we’re talking about individual cases it’s never a matter of statistics. It’s always a tragedy. But a Finnish woman is more likely to be beat, raped or killed by their own man, which is a regrettable statistic which human rights organizations have given a notice to Finland about, that violence towards women is an issue of the Finnish society as a whole and in no way tied to the immigration question.

One could argue that Nikula, through presenting a factual account of the situation of women in Finnish society when it comes to domestic abuse and other violence, obliquely positions himself as a “rational mediator” or even a “defender of immigration”, but even if it were so, he manages to do it with significant subtlety compared to some other efforts in the shows. As an act of deliberate self-positioning it does have a point of view to offer, but it is very mild, based on facts rather than a biographical narration and contains no personal commentary on how things ought to be, keeping it separate from the world of rights and duties; i.e., positioning. This is also the first of many instances in which the fear of immigration and birth of discriminatory actions is explained as a more or less direct result of a group’s or individual’s poor economic stance. This ties back to Bauman’s thoughts on the freedom to choose one’s path through a city, and the lack of ability to do this as a possible reason for the “outrage” of the less fortunate. What seems noteworthy about this, is that the same line of thought was even expressed by those who openly identified themselves as opposed towards immigration:

**Sari Hassinen (mother in charge of collecting an address):** Well this is kind of a double-edged sword in that, when it was said that these immigrants should be put to work, we don’t at all think that there’s a lot of Finnish people without a job. *Why don’t we think here and put Finn’s to work first. And when Finn’s are satisfied, they might better accept these immigrants.*
In this narrative the economically less fortunate Finnish natives are positioned as “victims” who, if only given employment might develop a necessarily satisfied state, which would then open the possibility for compassion towards immigrants. This kind of “if-then” rationalization about morality is inherently problematic, as discriminatory behaviour is explained by both sides as something “outside” the person, a simple repercussion of a disadvantaged state, over which the victim (Finnish native) has next to no control. Towards the end of “Insecurity-night”, Nikula continues along these lines, this time expressing a little more emotion:

**Jone Nikula (radio host):** Well I’d just like to repeat that here this immigrant, immigration question acts as a hobby horse for all kinds of dissatisfaction, which is a result of our economy not working at all. We have, well, the sixpack of Katainen is a laughable joke. A more impotent cabinet has never been seen, did they get one decision made? And this “three S” thing hasn’t really convinced anyone and the informing has been absolutely terrible. I wouldn’t believe that middle-aged men and women are so limber that they can fit their foot into their mouth whenever they open it. What I mean is that we have all kinds of instability factors and this is a very easy and visible to bring up. But as has been said in this conversation before, we have a quarter million unemployed in our country and these 32 000 immigrants aren’t an issue in any other way than because of the fact that we’re out of money…

This time economy is presented as a cure-all for seemingly any and all problems ailing society, immigration included, as it’s a problem only in the way that we’ve run out of money, and more specifically, money to give to the poor either through well-fare or work. The issue with this line of thinking, while perhaps a partial explanation for some of the problem, is that it effectively positions all those critical towards the state of current immigration as a member of the disadvantaged groups of society. If money is “the only problem”, then those who happen to have it are by indication simply immune to acting in a racist manner. These implications represent an act of profoundly negative indirect positioning, based upon the notion that personal character flaws (laziness, inability to find work etc.) or general lack of satisfaction with one’s own status in society are the only possible explanation for any criticism of immigration.

The discussion then moves on to the subject of “street patrolling” and their legitimization, as the leader of the now disbanded group “Street Hawks” is asked for the reasoning behind him establishing the group. Once again children are positioned as possible victims of violence committed by immigrants:
Jari-Pekka Teurajärvi (founding member, Street Hawks): Well my own motivation for founding it was that I went to Oulu to take part in an info-function in one of these immigration centers to listen how the people felt and there was a definite outcry, that people have a strong feeling of insecurity. And I thought about it and what I as a citizen, citizen could do about creating a safer environment for these people.

This is an example of a personal narration combined with a self-imposed duty – a strong manifestation of identity. He tells a story about his visits to the info-functions and how he felt a “definite outcry” coming from the people, resulting in him establishing the group out of his own initiative in order to secure a safer environment for “them”. This is a duty set by self to self, the fulfilling of which would result in no bad judgement from anyone, which makes it the self-imposed, or “supererogatory” kind. He positions himself as a “protector of the people”, which, after criticism and insinuation of resemblance to the group “Soldiers of Odin”, once again turns to using children as a discursive tool:

Jari-Pekka Teurajärvi (founding member, Street Hawks): Well this could be answered by saying that it matters who patrols. That how it’s done and with what motivation. If there’s stay at home mothers and stay at home fathers, stay at home mothers and fathers patrolling, looking out for example before their own children go to the city to see what the youth culture is like, so that they know before letting their children to the city and these kinds of aspects also belong to the patrolling.

Host: What is your opinion on “Odins”?

Jari-Pekka Teurajärvi (founding member, Street Hawks): Well they have all the rights to practise street patrolling as stay at home mothers and fathers.

At this point Teurajärvi wants to make a clear distinction between his group and ”the Odins”, which he tries to accomplish by positioning himself and those part of the group as friendly and safe “stay at home mothers and fathers” and “family men and women” only looking after their own children. As he is questioned about his opinion on “Odins”, he repeats this sentiment, describing their group as purely “stay-at-home mothers and fathers”, resisting from even using the name “Street Hawks” to describe his own group. The aim here seems two-fold; to describe the group as friendly and respectable “every people” and to imply, through a necessary dichotomy of ’parent and child’, that the children are in need of protection.

The use of safety of children as a means to argue for the limitation of immigrants’ freedom to go where they please was also visible in the show titled “Immigration-
night”. As a person inhabiting a relatively small Finnish town argues in the following manner:

Mika Kankaansyrjä (entrepreneur, Kauhava): But if we think about the situation in Kauhava, we made a decision about it a couple of weeks ago, could be even three, the city council made a decision … we decided that immigrants can come to Kauhava, to the area of the pilot school. We’ve had no complaints to that and then a week from then the city council gathered and they made an initiative that we have to get the high-school away, because we’ve had issues at Kauhava, that we have young children in the same place with immigrants, at the same area and the cafeteria and everything are the same and a lot of hobbies and sports and everything. So I saw as an issue of safety that young children can’t, young girls, young boys can’t be in that area and…

Host: Why?

Mika Kankaansyrjä (entrepreneur, Kauhava): They’re certainly afraid that in the social media there’s all kinds of rape, everything is being talked about all the time and the people are afraid and curious, they follow, I don’t as a politician follow any of those nonsense channels and I’ve always decided for myself what I think about and overall the decisions I’ve made, I’m not a turncoat and, and…

Host: How do you know that everybody there at Kauhava is afraid of rape?

Mika Kankaansyrjä (entrepreneur, Kauhava): Well if a councilman such as myself gets 300 contacts, with e-mail, phone calls, instant messages, people ask when I go to the store what is the nature of the situation, what are we doing, why are the children there? But if I say one more thing that in Kauhava the city council made an upright decision that we remove the high-school completely.

In this narrative immigrants are positioned as a direct threat to children in the form of rape and violence and shouldn’t be allowed to the same areas where “young girls, young boys” engage in sports. Kankaansyrjä explains that he has received hundreds of queries about children and immigrants being placed too close to one another, after which the city council made an “upright” decision to remove the school from the area. In addition he engages in a variety of self-positioning acts by characterizing himself as a “politician who doesn’t follow any of those nonsense channels” and someone who “has always decided his own opinions on things” and “isn’t a “turncoat””. He explains that the media and the inability of the people to turn their backs on its messaging of negative events is to blame for the discriminatory acts, yet they seem justified to him, even though the source is something he himself strongly objects to. He positions himself as a “harmless mediator” between the people and the city council, who impartially enacts the will of the people who keep following the “nonsense media” to their own deprivation.

Later on Kankaansyrjä explains that there has been a query directed at parents and children currently in school in his area, about how fearful parents and their children are
towards immigrants, of which the results were (from the parents part) overwhelmingly negative, meaning that “almost all parents” on a scale of 1-5 had checked 5, the maximum for “afraid of immigrants”. The results of this query are then questioned by an employee of the Red Cross in Finland, who claims to have some rather alarming information about the circumstances before the query was made available:

**Johanna Matikainen (development manager, SPR):** But actually I’d like to say about Kauhava that I’m not at all surprised that the parents have voted “five”, that they’re afraid, because before this query there has been a huge info function, four hundred people and a thousand more watching at home by the television. And I know that the function has been very scary. There was a lot fearmongering, worry, threats and it has been a very harsh occasion and it has undoubtedly made the parents afraid quite a lot. So I’m not surprised. But in a way I hope that now that you have the (immigration) center there that the practicality shows that the fears are unfounded.

This direct second order positioning of the man as, if nothing else, dishonest in the way he draws conclusions about the mentioned query, gets added steam from a city councilman of Turku with an immigrant background:

**Muhis Azizi (city councilman, Turku):** … We need to definitely take into account also what our policymakers say about these things. If a person from Kauhava says so clearly that they (immigrants) can’t be put to the same places and at the same time this person demands immigrants, asylum seekers to integrate. I ask him how can a person integrate, if you put them in advance into a box, where they can’t meet any Finnish people?

Kankaansyrjä responds to this by explaining that his hometown of Kauhava has had to receive more immigrants compared to other Finnish towns and cities and that this is the source of the current discontent. Quickly after, while being more or less directly positioned as a racist, we are offered the following piece of dialogue:

**Mika Kankaansyrjä (entrepreneur, Kauhava):** Can I answer that, that you can’t understand that we start dividing people, that they can’t… For forty years I’ve been taking part of the rescue department as a hobby. I’ll get out of bed to help anyone in need.

**Host:** But let’s not go into your life story.

**Mika Kankaansyrjä (entrepreneur, Kauhava):** But it has to be understood.

**Host:** Now, really, stop it. I want solutions.

This is another example of an effort of trying to gain a moral high ground through a positive characterization of self to help one’s chances in an argument. Facing the public humiliation of being positioned in a highly negative way in public television, the man
explains how for forty years he’s been ready to “get out of bed to help anyone in need”. This effort is immediately sensed and verbally “blocked” by the host, as she prevents him from “going into his life story”. In truth going into “life stories” isn’t the issue here, since many are allowed and even urged to do so during the course of the show, even as a part of an argument aimed at a successful generalization. The issue is that the deliberate positioning of self seems dishonest, as it has no bearing on the matter at hand, other than to shine a positive light on the man while under scrutiny.

Continuing with “Immigration-night”, many instances of labelling and relabelling of the emotion of fear can be found, as the subject is explored by the guests. Even the host, while asking a researcher guest about the subject, directly asks her if it is justified, if there is a right to feel fear or not:

Host: Let’s ask, yeah, let’s ask Karin Creutz. You’ve studied immigration and racism and Islamophobia in Finland. Is this fear justified?

Karin Creutz (researcher, University of Helsinki): Well to the extent that if it’s a matter of fear, we of course have to practice responsible and fact-based dialogue. Educate people about what these imagined threats are based on. But also I believe we have to remember that fear is used to psychologize away, or by referring to fear we can psychologize away a kind of discrimination towards strangers that has been on the rise since 2005 already and has also landed into the public debate, populist politics and also by way of threat imagery used by the evening newspapers.

Karin Creutz (researcher, University of Helsinki): Fear is real, the fear is surely fear in a lot of ways, but also in a lot of ways it is not, and the two should be kept separate. A portion of the people simply don’t want people from outside Europe to come into Finland, so we shouldn’t forget that there also exists a kind of racist movement. But also with the cases that are about fear or worry and such, that people experience the changes happening too fast and, so with these people we have to continue the dialogue and do it publicly. To me it’s still good to remember that this immigration situation hasn’t created the atmosphere of worry, or the worry in the public sphere, but it’s been smoldering before there’s been a lot of immigrants coming to Finland. So just like everywhere in Europe, England, everywhere there has been a rise of the far-right movement.

Later a similar sentiment is expressed with considerably more emotion by a journalist with an immigrant background. What is notable about the following example is how it begins with a call for “real dialogue”, then quickly turning into an act of malignant positioning of most anyone who claims to be afraid of immigrants:

Renaz Ebrahimi (journalist, Radio Helsinki): I strongly believe that we should have more dialogue, should have a real dialogue and somehow a kind of, that the dialogue has turned into fear being used to hide racism and in a way normalize it, and to me that’s
somehow extremely distressing, because the fact is that of course we all have prejudice, we all have at some point acted wrong, judged people based on looks or something. But that doesn’t justify it in any way and, that in a way it’s masked into fear and is being promoted through fear and that’s extremely frightening, that, that in a way it’s acceptable and in a way the conversation has gone into that it’s possible to spread this filth and let people in a way purge their bad feelings with the excuse that they’re afraid and it’s not right. It has to be stopped.

In these pieces of narrative fear, while granted for some, is often relabelled as masked racism, enacted by those who “simply don’t want anyone from outside Europe to enter Finland” or have a need to relieve “bad feelings”. Media are again – more specifically the “yellow” newspapers – partly to blame for the spreading of discriminatory behaviour. In this story line the natives feeling fear are positioned as either victims of populist politics, a scandalous media, or as racists hiding behind false, substitute emotions. No duties are applied to immigrants, who appear as victims of a racist, needlessly fearful people. This positioning is then rejected by another representative of The Finns party:

Juho Eerola (Member of Parliament, The Finns): … But this fear isn’t just a provocation or a thing created by the evening newspapers. If we look into the research done by Oikeuspoliittinen tutkimuslaitos about the subject there’s clear evidence, wanted or not, but unfortunately people coming from the Middle East and Northern Africa, are more often than the natives and others immigrant groups charged with a certain kind of crime, for example of sexual nature and looting and such. Even if we cleaned, as a researcher I’m sure you know (points at Creutz), even if we removed the over-representation of men, or the young nature of this age-group, even if we clean these away and compare to natives, they’re still over-represented, these groups. So these fears aren’t only unfounded and these kinds of incidents do regrettably happen.

In this narrative right to fear is reclaimed by native’s, who are no longer the hapless victims of the media barrage, but instead positioned as victims of crimes of violent and sexual nature. Eerola offers a variety of statistics having to do with certain immigrant groups as justifications for the expressed fear, which is a clear effort of trying to assign duties to immigrants as the source. This is then repudiated by Creutz and then an entrepreneur with an immigrant background:

Karin Creutz (researcher, University of Helsinki): Well in that way if we talk about statistics we have to remember what the explanatory factors are and that while yes it is true that a kind of failed integration and, and isolation and marginalization, everything like this affects that. If, if a person isn’t a part of society the committing of crimes might be an easier option.

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Farzad Moghammad Pour (entrepreneur): …First of all we have to analyse what is meant by the word fear, because every society is surely afraid or a little bit skeptic when, when strange people come from another country, even another continent without a common language, common culture, and what I wanted to say is that the immigrant doesn’t create the fear necessarily, but the situation in which the immigrants is positioned creates fear. So that now when everybody is thinking that to my street or alley, if some immigrants move in, I might be a little bit thoughtful about how to get along with these people without a common language and culture and I am too a little bit careful and will try to carefully move closer to them. But I think that about rapes is said that natives rape and steal too, but and so on. But when immigrants come here, they’re in the end under a difficult psychological stress, have come, they have a rough journey and have been through rough violence, they could still in a way resort to this. They have kind of a tendency to resort to crime.

These are further rejections of the proposed second order positioning by Eerola in which the blame is put to either a failed integration or a trauma experienced before reaching Finland, which can then lead to criminal action becoming an “easier option” and immigrants becoming dispositioned to “cave in to criminal action”. Fear is again further relabelled as an emotion in “need of re-analysis” and as a general anxiety brought forth by immigrants “moving into the same streets with natives”.

Finally elders along with women are positioned as fearful victims who stand to benefit from the protection of “street patrollers”, as Veera Ruoho gives her own personal narratives on the issue:

Veera Ruoho (Member of Parliament, The Finns): But street patrols, their mission is precisely to prevent crime. I’ve myself been involved in international civil crisis management assignments as a commander, been there myself to teach the UN police mandate ruled community policy, in which as one central message is that a community is made responsible of its own surroundings and to inform the local police. It would seem crazy if I now started to here in Finland deny such action that has internationally proven results. Break-ins have dropped even completely in certain areas and the feeling of community is made better and in Espoo I’ve heard from many aging people, who are lonely and such and they long for someone to look after them a little bit so that they can go to the store. Nowadays they don’t even dare to go to the store alone.

This is basically a personal “commercial” by a politician of The Finns party, the only major party in Finland with a distinctively critical political stance towards immigration. It includes reference to her past as a member of the police, her work with international crisis situations, and finally, a personal narration of old people residing in the city of Espoo (her political district), “too afraid to go to the store alone”. She positions herself as a respectable and dependable voice of reason and “protector of elders” based on the stories she’s been told. In this narrative immigrants are positioned as a threat to the
elders and in the next piece of text as a threat to women, as she argues for the legitimization of fear through a story she heard from her friend:

Veera Ruoho (Member of Parliament, The Finns):) Yeah, I believe that fear is healthy in certain situations. My female colleague who works in Helsinki says that she no longer dares walk home alone, my... a couple of kilometers, she works at the center of Helsinki. So that has to say something about the fears not always being unnecessary … and Finnish people really wonder how the Muslim communities residing here, how women are treated and, and what is place of women here in Finland also in your own cultural background.

Once again, through a narration of woman too afraid to walk home alone through the city center, Ms. Ruoho positions specifically Muslim men as a “threat to women”, later going even further by expressing doubt about the general way in which both Muslim and Finnish women are treated by Muslim men.

4.3. Acts of positioning in story line #2: Immigrants as an economic burden vs. Immigrants as willing and capable employees being refused an entry to working life

During the discussion about successful integration and overall economy one thing was almost unanimously agreed upon by all those included in the debate, be it pro- or anti-immigration natives or immigrants themselves – Work is the door through which any person, be it native or immigrant, enters the Finnish society as a “full member.” Finding a place in the job market was also seen as the best way to successful integration for immigrants in the form of learning the language, local customs and creation of lasting social bonds. The main issue between the two competing story lines was unshared beliefs about who or what is to blame for the at times unsuccessful integration and employment of immigrants. The disagreements about the proper distribution of rights and duties on the matter were quite polarized, as some saw immigrants as a powerful potential addition to the workforce being held at bay by racist and discriminatory constructions, while others saw some immigrant groups as specifically problematic and mostly to blame for their unsuccessful integration. Acts of positioning in the discussion between these story lines included indirect positioning (implications of positive or negative mental attributes) of immigrants depending upon the story line, efforts to reach
a moral high ground and stressing of agency and responsibility towards integration. More implicit efforts of identity construction were apparent in the forms of declarations of a personal point of view, stressing of agency and narrations of a drama.

The recurring interactions between a member of The Finns party, Juho Eerola and a project manager with an immigrant background, Maryan Askar serves as a useful starting point to introduce the discrepancy between these story lines. First, it represents one of the more enduring pieces of dialogue between two people in the shows, making it a valid candidate to illuminate the on-going and relational nature of positioning within a piece of discourse. The other reason is that in particular some of the speech-acts of Askar aimed at Eerola show how seemingly irresistible it can be for a member of a group or a community engaged in a debate with a member of an opposing story line to try and use discursive tools meant to position the other person in a negative way. It’s an act of indirect positioning of a rival, much like in the example given earlier, about how important it is for competing football teams to see the other team as “the enemy” through negative characterizations of an “opponent”.

Another noteworthy thing to mention before going further with the analysis is that even though Eerola doesn’t partake in this kind of negative positioning of Askar, it doesn’t mean he wouldn’t do so in some other situation with some other people, or that Askar by doing so here is somehow “worse” as a debater. Different discursive tools of positioning become usable in different situations, depending in part upon the story line within which the person acts. It would hardly be of much benefit for a politician of The Finns party to be openly negative towards a person with an immigrant background in national television. Eerola has to resort to other ways in order to advance his politics and in this example he uses the argumentation of a problematic economy.

During the beginning of the interaction between Eerola and Askar the topic of discussion is the “price-tag” for the Finnish tax-payer caused by admitting (at the time) twenty thousand immigrants into the country, a number expected to rise all the way to fifty thousand before the end of the year. At this point Eerola is asked by the other host about the overall cost this presents, to which he replies with the following:
Juho Eerola (Member of Parliament, The Finns): Thank you. One asylum seeker costs approximately fifteen thousand euros a year, so you can’t begin to count how many have now come and how many will possibly still come, and if we think that about a half of them get the admission to stay here possibly… Well now the cabinet is making the family unifying practicalities more strict, a lot more strict, but if all those who get the admission to stay in the country means approximately three to six, six family members here and so it’s going to be hundreds of millions and over the years over billions, because employment, even though many of them have the will to become employed, but the chances are in the end really low for those coming from Irak and Somalia. They I guess have the highest rates of unemployment so I’m, I’m really skeptical that our ability to integrate, even though good will, good will is there…

In this narrative immigrants, specifically those from Irak and Somalia are positioned primarily as a financial burden of which Finland cannot hope to take care of because of the financial cost and historical inability of immigrants from these countries of gaining employment. This argument, one based solely on the negative financial repercussions of immigration, was a common one in the shows and it is often found in other discussions about immigration. It shares some similarities with the fear argument in that it can be cumbersome to debate in any constructive manner. It’s difficult to know what should be the correct way forward when some people report being afraid of immigrants. Does the fear of some Finns justify putting a stop to immigration and if not, what should be done about said fear and by whom? What is the desired outcome? Where do the rights and duties lie? The economic argument is similar in the way it gives birth to similarly difficult questions. Can we truly not afford the current level of immigration? What happens if we can’t? Is Finland securing its’ financial standing more important (in the sense of a Universal Morality) than the helping of people fleeing from war? The difficulty of these questions seems to have something to do with the troubling answers they begin to evoke, which are extremely moral in their nature. They are so difficult, that they’d require an army of professionals of at least economy and social sciences to be answered in any respectable way, yet the lack of such professionals in any discussion about the matter never seems to stifle it. Instead the roles of professionals are played by people from various backgrounds offering emotion and anecdotal evidence in the place of actual research. Judging from how immigration poses similar issues in many European countries, one might be justified in making the assumption that actual answers as to what would be the best way forward simply don’t exist, leading to a discussion which never manages to bring the two parties closer to each other. Financial arguments are used to counter moral ones and vice versa and rare (if not completely absent) is the moment in which an uttered argument of any kind manages to inspire novel thought in the interlocutor, perhaps witnessed as an exchange of ideas that might further mutual
understanding of each other, if not the issue itself. The positions are extreme and fixed, both parties seemingly content with the situation.

A few moments after Eerola’s reply to the host we get a response from Askar aimed directly at Eerola:

Maryan Askar (project manager): To Eerola that, you in the cabinet are cutting developmental aids. Are you talking yourself into a dead-end when you're cutting developmental aids and don’t want to help those in the country, in their own homeland, but still don’t want them here either, so what is your solution?

Eerola is accused of possibly talking themselves into a “dead-end”, being effectively positioned first as unreliable and immediately after as someone who simply, along with the rest of the current political cabinet, doesn’t care for immigrants here nor there. The positioning is extremely negative and an attack on Eerola’s person, which, as we’ll see from the reply, seems misplaced:

Juho Eerola (Member of Parliament, the Finns): Good. The cuts that the cabinet is now doing to developmental aid are about the future, it has nothing to do with the flow of immigrants, this is this flow of immigrants has come by aid of the earlier developmental aid and if the earlier aid was more generous and caused this situation then, then maybe we should in the end give it up more…

This answer, a rejection of the negative positioning of Askar, seems accepted by all involved and the conversation continues. A little later, after an immigrant family is introduced and interviewed in the studio, Askar is asked about her being a “cultural translator” between natives and immigrants. After saying that she tries to be one, she then engages in a kind of “off-hand” attack on Eerola again, who, according to her, smiled a lot while the immigrant family was being interviewed. The latter part of represents a story line with an extreme distribution of rights and duties, in which there is simply no foundation for the expressed fear of immigrants, other than the fearful natives being victims of the media engaging in false or unnecessarily negative messaging:

Maryan Askar (project manager): Well I try to be a cultural translator and I do my best, but if I go back to the solutions the immigration critic Eerola was smiling a lot when this immigrant family was sitting here and so in my opinion a humane solution is that we get to know these people. And you see, really, they’re not really scary, because many Finnish people base... Their opinion is based on what is written in the papers or what they see on television, but hey, open the door, go and get to know these people, they're not scary, I’m not scary, I was an immigrant as a child, that family isn’t scary.
While Askar’s skills in the Finnish language are of native level, it’s difficult to be completely sure what she means by this, but judging from her previously indicated stance towards Eerola, combined with their polarized positioning in relation to immigration, it seems evident that she simply sees Eerola as the “enemy”, whose mere smile towards the immigrant family was somehow a sign of contempt or perhaps individual flaw of character. She uses the term “immigration critic” as a primary title for Eerola, while commenting on his smile, further solidifying her take on his person. Eerola, still bound by the ultimate goal of maintaining peace with his interlocutor, while perhaps also trying to give a sympathetic image to the audience, gives an almost sheepish account on his twelve years of experience of working with immigrants, some of whom he considers personal friends:

**Juho Eerola (Member of Parliament, The Finns)**: Yeah, thank you, in fact I’ve worked for twelve years with asylum seekers and other immigrants, so I’ve, I’ve gotten to know them a lot even as a civilian I have friends from all over the world, is very nice, very nice to see this family, was smiling, nice people…

One is tempted to wonder how this exchange between Askar and Eerola would play out, were it not for the audience present in the studio and those watching at home. It is no secret for the members in the studio that Eerola, a current member of the only prominent political party in Finland with a strongly critical take on immigration, and a former member of “Suomen Sisu”, a nationalist, far-right extremist group, isn’t happy about the current state of affairs. Yet, when confronted about his very smile, he simply resorts to giving an account on how he has an extensive and positive personal history with immigrants from various countries, simply content with positioning himself as a "friend of immigrants" instead of trying to argue anything more.

Interestingly, a similar tactic was also used in multiple occasions by the leader of The Finnish Defence League, Jukka Ketonen during “Insecurity Night”:

**Host**: I’ll ask you, Jukka, now that you’ve also been called a racist. What do you say to that?

**Jukka Ketonen (chairman, Finnish Defence League ry)**: Well… when I started coming here today, three Muslims wished me a good trip and luck with the occasion, so uh… If I was a racist, I believe that I wouldn’t have gotten those kinds of greetings.
Jukka Ketonen (chairman, Finnish Defence League ry): ... I can for example have a lot more intelligent discussion with Muslims, than these so-called tolerant people, because tolerant people are significantly more fanatic. You don’t almost get a chance to speak. When you talk with a Muslim, a leader of an extremist group such as myself reputedly am, there’s a mutual respect meaning you listen what the other person is saying.

These pieces of dialogue are best analysed by way of trying to make out what might be the intended speech-act behind the action, which is to try and position the one uttering them in a beneficial way in relation to the conflict. These people are very aware of how they are perceived by the audience and instead of being instigated, they try to position themselves in a beneficial manner, giving positive accounts of their interactions with immigrants as a kind of affirmation for how they too are capable of empathy. This is important because being positioned as a “racist”, which is the original suggestion in the case of Ketonen, effectively negates all credibility of the person in the eyes of others, because what could such a person possibly bring to the conversation, other than their malicious ideas? In order to maintain even remote credibility, such suggestions have to be denied at all costs, perhaps explaining the almost routine way in which such remarks become visible in the speech of Ketonen and Eerola. This could be seen as a deliberate act of self-positioning through a narration of a personal history in order to hold onto a favourable position from which to argue a point.

Going back to the subject of rights and duties concerning successful integration, now in the form of immigrants learning the language, we are introduced to an interesting exchange between many guests debating the reasons for some immigrants not learning and whether or not immigrants should feel gratitude about being let into the country and if this gratitude should become evident in a real effort of trying to learn the language. The debate is interesting for positioning analysis, because the question of gratitude is profoundly moral and connected to judgements about rights and duties. First reasons for the difficulties faced when learning the language are given, such as a “weird” or “boring” way of teaching, after which a member of the National Coalition Party gives their account on the question of integration:

Susanna Koski (Member of Parliament, The National Coalition Party): Well I believe that the central thought of, of integration was encapsulated well by a detective who was in YLE’s morning show last week and he, he said that a person who comes, comes for safety, escapes from and gets to safety is grateful for the help they receive and the safety, and also do their own part to reach successful integration, because they never want to end up in that situation again.
In this narrative immigrants who fail to learn the language are either somehow morally corrupt, or not really seeking asylum to escape war or other hardships, as if they had, their gratitude would help with motivation. This positioning, or the implied combination of gratitude with learning skill is then rejected by another guest, a consultant with an immigrant background:

Rajkumar Sabanadesan (consult): I want to return to that gratitude, theme of gratitude and I really don’t understand why a person should be grateful and how that gratitude, gratitude is connected to learning ability. We’re different people, we, we learn in different ways and, and others learn fast, others learn slow. And if we’ve failed with this integration system and it’s our problem, we as a society weren’t able to build this integration system at the level it should be built. But when it comes to a person ability to learn and combining that with gratitude, I, I don’t...

At this point Koski shakes her head to suggest that this wasn’t her intent and Sabanadesan seems to accept her motion. In his narrative the duty of a successful integration is based solely on the Finland as a country, as if there’s any problems with integration, it must be because the system isn’t built well enough. No duties are set upon immigrants on succeeding to integrate, as with a good enough system there would be no issues. After the discussion has already moved on to other subjects, perhaps unsurprisingly another member of The Finns party has this to add to the gratitude discussion:

Laura Huhtasaari (Member of Parliament, The Finns): …and also that, if a person should feel gratitude, yes they should! We’re spending hundreds of millions of euros on immigrants, currently spending, and integration it requires commitment, it requires motivation and it requires that they really want to learn the Finnish values, want to abide by the Finnish law, want to integrate here and if the integration was successful, if this integration was successful in Finland there would be no critical parties towards immigration in Finland or in Europe. But the Philosopher’s Stone is missing!

In this strongly emphasized argument immigrants are again seen mainly as a costly expenditure, who should be grateful for the sacrifice the Finnish taxpayer is making. Now the duty to integrate and to learn the language and local values and abide by them is set strongly upon immigrants. Finnish people as a whole are positioned as generous and hospitable, and immigrants should be grateful to be let into and willing to work hard in order to integrate. This narrative is then rejected by Creutz, who suggests that the demanding of gratitude for the practice of basic human rights is ethically questionable:
Karin Creutz (researcher, University of Helsinki): … the point in which we start talking about being indebted for the practice of basic human rights were starting to go ethically to the wrong direction.

This is an act of positioning of the self and other simultaneously, as its implication is that anyone who demands gratitude from immigrants are being morally questionable in their demands. At the same time she positions herself as a kind of “moral guardian” granted with the right to deal out such judgement. Finally the positioning is switched again to the polar opposite by Askar, who believes the problem is in the very teaching methods used:

Maryan Askar (project manager): Yeah, learning the language is very important but also important is that the teaching of the Finnish language is very boring and weird and when they teach you grammatical cases and instead of taking you to work, by working you learn a lot more than by sitting at school and integrate through work a lot more. But then it’s also difficult to find a job when for example there was blame here earlier that Somali people don’t find jobs, well what do you know, when somewhere in the city they don’t take, don’t want taxi drivers, when one taxi entrepreneur took a Somali worker and then they said that we don’t want your service anymore at that point and isn’t, isn’t that contradictory that you want to yeah integrate, work and things, but then we don’t want you to work, I mean hello, think about it.

In this narrative immigrants are victims of the Finnish system, who are given “boring” and “weird” education in the Finnish language, and would be better off in terms of integration if just put to work. What follows is a complete rejection of the rights and duties offered earlier by Eerola as she positions immigrants as victims of a hostile nation through a story about a taxi-company which employed a Somali immigrant. This narrative of an able and willing immigrant workforce facing challenges on a discriminatory job market is seconded by many other guests in the debate:

Karin Creutz (researcher, University of Helsinki): It isn’t about what kind of talent you have but also that it’s really difficult to get into the Finnish job market with a foreign name and in Helsinki, the University of Helsinki did a study a couple of years ago, in which we looked at, for example to Russian and Finnish last names were given equally good applications and this was about the restaurant business, construction business or other… and, and it was clear that it was doubly hard to get a job with a Russian name. You can only guess how hard it is to many who come from outside Europe. So the constructions are troubling and these we have to get into as well. Constructive racism.

Renaz Ebrahimi (toimittaja, Radio Helsinki): … When you say that a lot of people come here well motivated and then you’re here for three years and nobody offers you an
intern job and, nobody, your strength ends at some point and the motivation disappears and, we should get people more quickly in some way and if the offices would do more teamwork then maybe we could find some better solutions and when you just lead people from office to office and nobody really helps the person in the end.

Renaz Ebrahimi (journalist, Radio Helsinki): … But it also tells that, here we’ve failed miserably. A young person, who has integrated in the best possible ways doesn’t feel this country as a place where they want to work, where they want to raise children or a family, or do what a lot of us want, so those people who have integrated the best don’t feel like they belong into this society and this is the, the atmosphere we should change.

Emma Kari (Member of Parliament, The Green Party): … they (immigrants) want to be a part of the Finnish society, they want to get to work, this is what people want. So we have as Finns a lot to learn and if even researchers say that it’s clear that the name matters when you send an application for a job. So we have a lot to do as well so that we give, we open the door for these people and let them come in to the Finnish society.

All of the pieces of dialogue above share the same strong message of immigrants as an able and willing potential workforce facing significant problems with employment, even in the form of structured racism. In this narrative immigrants are victims who, though able and willing, simply cannot find employment due to no fault of their own, whereas native Finns are positioned as racist and a discriminatory people, who are charged with the duty to “do better”, “open the doors” and “better the attitudinal atmosphere”. These are acts of claiming supererogatory duties, with the implication that there are racist people and racist structures to which the people making these claims do not belong.
5 Discussion

This has been a study about how identities are created for self and others through taking part in a televised discussion on immigration. The initial reasoning for studying identity creation was a general interest about the seemingly low quality of the debate overall, leading to a slowly emerging suspicion that instead of trying to solve the issue, the difficult and conflict-ridden nature could perhaps be a sign of something outside the discussion. Something that when looked into, might reveal a larger theme about our time and especially about the current uses and applications of public discussion. The main question was that if the discussion on immigration doesn’t seem poised to solving the issue through advancing mutual understanding, what is the purpose and main motivation for people to still take part in it? The following hypothesis was then that the difficult yet enduring discussion might actually be serving as a platform for community building and identity construction more than anything else. A sign of an inward turn and an effort of trying to reach a sense of security in an increasingly unpredictable world. To find a “local solution to a global issue” that according to Bauman is impossible to achieve.

One of the reasons for choosing positioning theory as the primary method with which to study the discussions was its connection with discourse analysis, concerned specifically with manifestations of self. The idea shared in positioning theory that the self is moral and identity mainly consists of a certain understanding of morality, combined with the profoundly ethical nature of immigration seemed like a good combination. The idea was that our identities, or certain, primary aspects of our understanding of right and wrong largely define the decision to embark on a certain story line in relation to the immigration debate which then leads to certain positioning and speech-acts. Positions, as explained earlier, are simply an individual understanding about how clusters of rights and duties ought to be distributed in a certain story line. While yet not perhaps a strong act of identity construction, the decision to take part in the discussion in order to voice these understandings most definitely can be, and often was as the analysis showed. The conflict nature of the debate could perhaps be explained in part by this connection and our individual “unthinkabilities” as outlined by Ciarán Benson. If one accepts the argument that we do indeed have these kinds of emotionally based borders for action, unthinkable and un-negotiable, it becomes exceedingly easier to understand the nature
of the debate. It is waged between two groups of people with very different sets of unthinkabilities, who for this reason are simply unable to accept the opposing argument and, as they could never see themselves acting in the way the “other side” does, actually see these people as more or less despicable. This is where the discussion stops being about immigration and begins to be about the ones talking about it. There is obviously nothing wrong with debating immigration, or any similarly difficult issue, but to bring these personal beliefs into the discussion and hold on to them even when presented with arguments that should make one question their beliefs, is to stop it from ever advancing into any direction. The issue isn’t the existence of emotion in political debate, but the apparent primacy of it over any other factors.

At this point the discussion is no longer political, but personal in nature, thus serving only those who take part in it, wishing to strengthen their sense of self and perhaps acquire a sense of safety amidst profound unpredictability. Many such actions were found in the form of declarations of a point of view, narrations of a drama, claiming of supererogatory duties, efforts of reaching a moral high ground, stressing of agency and responsibility, and in many of the category based positioning of self and other, which through their dich- or trichotomous implications manage to say something about one or more of the interlocutors taking part in the discussion. Almost all of these tools were used by both the pro and anti-groups, but in fundamentally different ways. Whereas the anti-group used them to argue for things they wanted (mainly stop to immigration) through negative positioning of immigrants and a kind of “holier than thou” positioning of themselves and groups they claimed to protect, the latter group is far more interesting, as they used these tools much more as a means to say something about themselves than anyone else, recalling another quote by Bauman on how differently different groups see immigration, based upon their ability to choose where and how they come to touch with it.

Another interesting difference between the pro and anti-groups was that the instances of trying to position members of the opposing group was reserved completely to the pro-group. It had a variety of negative positioning to offer about those critical of immigration, but the critics never used any kind of negative positioning of the “pro”-group, resorting only to position immigrants. This, to me, also seems likely to be explained at least in party by the format of the show, as any instances of calling a
member of the “pro”-group with a derogatory name would not be kindly accepted. There was one telling occasion of this in “Insecurity-night” in which the leader of the Finnish Defence League was talking about those more tolerant of immigration, saying they are harder to debate with than Muslims even. This seemed to me not aimed at anyone in the audience, yet still as he used the term “suvakki” (a kind of derogatory name for those more willing to accept immigrants into Finland), the host quickly corrected him and told him not to use the term. Meanwhile the pro-group could openly characterize members of the opposing sentiment as racists and paranoids using fear as a tool to promote their despicable goals.

There has been talk about the disappearance of the middle classes and the increase of the income gap between those well off and those not as much. Those able to choose were they go and those who can’t. One of the most interesting things about the conflict to me seems that where there is endless sympathy for immigrants, who are seen as a group of victims by the “pro”-group, there is none for those who oppose immigration, even though all parties included pointed to lack of money as one of the main reasons for discrimination and racism. Their negative stance towards immigration is seen purely as a symptom of lack of money and a personal experience of discontent with one’s own situation in life, yet they are continuously seen as an active and hostile group deserving of little sympathy.

As to the making of any generalizations about the analysis a few thoughts need to be considered. First, as the material is a TV-show, it automatically affects the way in which people taking part in it use language. While it creates a more suitable platform for identity manifestations for others, for some people this is not the case. While those opposed towards immigration might not see anything wrong with their stance, they often seem very aware of their situation. One can almost sense that when an anti-immigration person voiced their opinion, they were talking to those of their social circles they knew to be watching at home, rather than the audience in the studio. In my opinion the shows turned out to be a rather good target of analysis, the material within the first story lines proving significantly more fruitful, as especially the question of fear of immigration and the justifications of it sparked at times heated debate. One might do worse trying to find a relatively even arena of debate about the subject of immigration in Finland than the “A2” programs. In a way they offered a “microcosm” of the
discussion with representatives from a variety of backgrounds, with one fatal flaw when it comes to larger applicability of the results – It was public.

The potential usefulness of the online-comments was that they were, while public, anonymous. Anonymity offers a kind of “free pass” for identity construction, as a person can say what they will and play any “character” without much fear of it ever having any negative effects on their real life. It’s possible of course to have a negative comment aimed at you, but such is the nature of online discussions and many of us know not to take anonymous comments from strangers too seriously. And when a person does get what they want, a positive affirmation of their identity, they can give it all the significance they want. The issue with the public setting of a TV-show is that it forces a person to put on a role and to actually be accountable for what they say, applying especially to politicians and other representatives of different organizations. They’re taking part in the discussion to advance a political or other agenda that a potentially very large group of people assign themselves to. Their words have to be weighed heavily before voiced out loud and they’d better ”tow the party line”. This leaves little space for manifestations of personal identity compared to a more personal setting, in which one is surrounded by their peers with similar worldviews.

Another point to consider is that most often the aspects of one’s personality one wishes to promote are positive in nature, at least to those in their social circles. This perhaps partly explains why those poised more critically towards immigration rarely talked about themselves while arguing a point, because they know how they might be perceived. This was even brought out by the hosts in the beginning of “Insecurity-night” as she asked the leader of Finnish Defence League about some people calling them a racist, a tough position for identity construction for sure. Then again those with a pro-immigration stance seemed equally aware that they’re being watched by people who strongly disagree with what they say. How much of an effect this had on what they said is difficult to know.

What can be said based upon the analysis is that when faced with a moral question the guests often seemed eager to have the opportunity of expressing their point of view. Instances of guests constructing identities for self included declarations of point of view, narrations of a drama, intentional positioning of self to a moral location,
stressing of agency and responsibility, claims of supererogatory duties and efforts of reaching a moral high ground. Instances of constructing identities for others included strategic positioning of other, malignant or malevolent positioning, indirect positioning and positioning through relabelling of emotions.

No significant difference was found between the groups in this regard, as many of the tools were used by both.

The finding made by Nikki Slocum-Bradley that behind most discursive conflicts is the differing allocation of rights and duties between groups seems to apply well to the material analysed in this thesis. There was seemingly no common ground to be found in relation to the issues raised by immigration, with only some politicians remaining couth and trying to propose a bridge between the groups with speech-acts with a less divided distribution of rights and duties. For the “pro”-group immigrants were simply victims of a failed system and most if not all of the regrettable actions and inactions were explained by racist constructions, racist natives, horrible experiences faced in their own country, or a simple cultural difference leading to misunderstandings. The “anti”-group mostly saw immigrants as a threat, able to offer nothing and only taking, resorting to crime and violence of their own accord and often being characterized in an almost inhuman manner. No wonder the conversation is unable to progress. The discussions analysed rarely even became actual debates, primarily manifesting only as a turn-based voicing of opinions that rarely resulted in an instance of trying to find the better argument. Part of the blame for this surely goes to the format of the show, but still one would hope that if a quality debate is the goal, there ought to be at least some occasions of comparing ideas in a back and forth manner.

The analysis seems to support the hypothesis of Harré and the many colleagues who have worked with him to develop positioning theory, the hypothesis being that of the positioning triad and it’s mutually determining facets. It truly seems to be the case that the story line from which a person acts profoundly determines the available speech-acts and positioning. Whenever immigration was seen as a threat, the speech-acts mainly consisted of underlining the negative aspects and positioning remained extremely negative and, correspondingly, when immigration was seen as a moral issue that is our
(natives) duty to complete, the speech-acts represented a positions of “victims” undeserving of any judgment based upon their behaviour.

To summarize the different manner in which rights and duties were allocated between the “pro” and “anti” groups, the positioning triads are completed as follows. Starting with the "pro" triad, the story lines found from the material were in short "Malicious and racist natives" and "Immigrants as victims of a failed integration." The available positions for the groups involved were the following:

**Position:** Self as "moral guardian": moral *duty* to help immigrants.

**Position:** Immigrants as "victims": *right* for understanding and patience.

**Position:** Racist natives as "economic victims": *right* for understanding.

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**Table 3: Pro-immigration positioning triad**

In the "anti" triad the story lines were "Muslim immigrants as a violent threat" and "threat to the Finnish economy". Available positions included:

**Position:** Self as ”guardian”: *duty* to protect finnish women, children and elders.

**Position:** Finnish women, children and elders as ”victims”: Have a *right* to be protected

**Position:** Immigrants as ”responsible agents”: *duty* to obey law and integrate.
Table 4: Anti-immigration positioning triad

- Self as "guardian", Finnish women and children as "victims" and immigrants as "responsible agents"
- Muslim immigrants as a violent threat/Threat to the Finnish economy
- Speech-act: TV-panel discussion
6 Conclusions

The original goal of this thesis was to study online news commenting on the subject of immigration in Finland in order to find instances of identity construction. Since the beginning this was to be done through the discourse analytic method using many of the tools found within positioning theory, but as the analysis portion was to begin, it quickly became apparent that the dialogical, back and forth type of discussion, that is often useful for an analysis utilizing positioning theory, simply did not exist within the comments to a satisfying degree. My novice mistake had been to concentrate too much on the construction of the theoretical framework and too little on how it would actually work in practice, which, as I then found out, it wouldn’t.

This led to a weeklong halt in the work, as I struggled to find a more suitable source material, finally deciding upon the TV-shows that have now been analysed. Once the decision was made to study a panel discussion instead of news comments, the analysis portion began to form quite well, proving to me that positioning theory could in fact be used in this way in a fruitful manner. While it has been used to study discursive conflict in many different forms and scales in addition to simple "one on one" discussions in order to find instances of identity construction, it hasn’t yet to my knowledge been used in exactly the way done in this paper, leading to quite a relief once I became confident that it could. The primary strength of positioning theory for this thesis were the discursive tools to locate identity constructions together with the positioning triad, which illuminated well the connections between a chose story line and the available positions within it.

What can then be derived of the results of this study, other than the notion that identities are indeed constructed for self and others in a variety of ways through discourse, and that the chosen story line and it’s corresponding system of opinions in large part determines the positions in a moral discussion? What does it matter if this is the case? What is the harm of having different kinds of people discuss a topic from various points of view? Isn’t that actually the ideal?
Towards the very beginning of this thesis I offered a rather bleak description of the discontents of modernity outlined by Bauman, which included the following piece of text by Christopher Lasch:

“Having no hope of improving their lives in any of the ways that matter, people have convinced themselves that what matters is psychic self-improvement; getting in touch with their feelings, eating health food, taking lessons in ballet or belly-dancing, immersing themselves in the wisdom of the East, jogging, learning how to ‘relate’, overcoming ‘the fear of pleasure’. Harmless in themselves, these pursuits, elevated to a programme and wrapped in the rhetoric of authenticity and awareness, signify a retreat from politics…” Christopher Lasch (1979)

The implicit question of the last sentence seems to me to be the following: Where does this “retreat from politics” lead to and what is its potential harm for society? Bauman’s argument was largely based upon the notion that the disappearing of steady, dependable work along with the free movement of money and untethered globalization leads to an increase of general fear and unpredictability, leading to individuality – a rational response! – explaining much of the pains of living in our modern times. I also quoted Bauman on that the creation and upkeep of an identity is one of such elevated activities, then arguing with the help of positioning theory that one way of “creating” and “keeping up” is taking part in discourse around certain subjects in order to be able to manifest one’s personal beliefs and points of view. It seems to me that the answer as to the location of the retreat outlined by Bauman is: to the self. The potential harm? A stagnant public sphere.

Now with the media being as ubiquitous as ever, demanding attention and simultaneously providing more (ideological) alternatives along with the freedom to choose from them, we are faced with a major societal issue sometimes called "the bubble" or "echo-chamber". I would argue that the main reason for the birth of the bubble, which even though the name implies weak barriers of soapy water, is to act as an ironclad defence mechanism against the fear and unpredictability outlined by Bauman. The feeling of being wrong about something and thus perhaps lacking in intelligence or morals seems often impossible to accept, leading to a public sphere of increasing conflict and decreasing time and space as most of the energy is used to
convince the self and others of being right. Simply through engaging in a discursive conflict, often accompanied with a mutually passionate group of peers, we automatically assume ourselves to be "right" and the opposition to be "wrong", which has to be so for the conflict to exist in the first place. And the stronger the conflict – the further apart the allocation of rights and duties, the better. We aren’t just barely disagreeing, but absolutely outraged by the thought of someone somewhere thinking differently. We see each other’s “boundaries of unthinkability” and feel disgust instead of empathy or understanding. Secured within our own community “cherry picked” from all the possible options we no longer need to try and build communion with anyone who doesn’t share our core beliefs.

If the ideal of Habermas was an individual first studying and reading of the world in their private sphere, then returning to the public alternative to test one’s thoughts against those of others, always following the instructions of the better argument, it seems we have come quite far from that admittedly idealistic chain of events. Thanks to technological development we no longer need to be satisfied with those in our more immediate surroundings to find people who share our beliefs, but are free to pick and choose on a global scale those whom with we already agree on whatever matter is presently most important to us. We turn inward and exchange real debate and acceptance of difference with a sense of security, perhaps because of the reasons outlined by Bauman. What is needed is the willingness to accept having being wrong, ability to accept the existence of valid opinions and ideas with which we do not presently agree and actions that increase the parameters of our "bubbles".

If I were to continue studying these issues, my next step would be to try and find a source material of identity constructions in environments in which the people taking part feel accepted and safe to express themselves. The publicity of a TV-show, while not a terrible source material, seems to me to have a negative effect on the amount of possible manifestations of identity, primarily for those opposed to immigration, which was evident in the way in which identity constructions for self and other were used between these groups. One might do well to study discussion forums such as “hommaforum”, which undoubtedly has already been studied using discourse analysis. The problem for positioning theory remains finding source material that has even a somewhat equal representation of different points of view, while still offering an
environment in which all those views can be expressed in a non-judgmental way. Some kind of an interview or other discussion scenario might prove fruitful. Additionally, if positioning theory managed to explain the connections between story lines, positions and speech-acts, the question it cannot hope to answer is why does a certain person choose a certain story line? What kinds of identities fit with each available story line? Much work has already been done by Nikki Slocum-Bradley, who has proposed identity as a possible 4th dimension of the positioning triad.

Another interesting topic for analysis is the part emotions play when "choosing" a story line, mainly what kinds of emotions can be found and how they’re applied. The primacy of emotion over rationality seems to me to be one of the central issues regarding difficulties in public debate.

The part a persons' socioeconomic status plays in opinion formation towards immigration is also an important aspect worthy of research. This sentiment was echoed by all those involved in the discussion, but to me, while it undoubtedly has some merit, is too simple of an explanation for the rise of criticism.
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Figures

Figure 1: The mutually determining triad: (Langenhove & Harré 1999, 18)

Figure 2: “Unfriendly Witnesses are not meeting their duty to expose subversive activities.”

Figure 3: “Anti”-immigration positioning triad

Figure 4: “Pro”-immigration positioning triad