

DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND RACISM IN FINNISH LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

In this article, we examine the experiences of students in the ninth grade (aged 15–16 years) in relation to harassment, discrimination and racism. The study was carried out at eight Finnish lower secondary schools with a high proportion of students with an immigrant background in 2015. The sample consisted of survey data ($n = 445$) and thematic interviews ($n = 112$) conducted with young people of Finnish and immigrant origins. Approximately one-quarter of the respondents said that they had been harassed or discriminated against at schools, and one-tenth had experienced this behaviour in their free time. In addition, almost half of the young people thought that discrimination is widespread in Finland. The more often a student experienced discrimination, the less they liked school. Experiences of harassment, discrimination and racism were especially downplayed when the respondent was the target.

Keywords

comprehensive school • lower secondary • immigration • racism • discrimination

Introduction

Among the Nordic countries, Finland had restrictive immigration policies until the 1990s, and even by the turn of the twenty-first century, the proportion of people in Finland from a non-Finnish background amounted to only just over 2% of the population (Westin 2006: 375). In 2015, the number of immigrants in Finland was approximately 220 000 and the number of people with a mother tongue other than Finnish, Swedish or Sami (official languages of the country) was approximately 310 000, which was just under 6% of the population (OSF 2015a).

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For the majority of young people with an immigrant background, schools and other educational institutions are central places for cross-cultural encounters and acculturation (Vedder & Horenczyk 2006: 419). Finnish immigration policy sees education as an important route to integration. However, this view often emphasises the formal tasks of schools: teaching academic and linguistic skills. Research has paid less attention to questions regarding young people's informal groups, their friendship and their encounters of everyday racism (Souto 2011: 16).

In this article, we examine the young people's opinions on, and experiences of, harassment, discrimination and racism, inside and outside school. The study focuses on young people in the ninth grade at eight Finnish schools with a high proportion of students with an immigrant background, in 2015. The research material consisted of a survey completed by students ($n = 445$) and thematic interviews with selected students ($n = 112$). In this study, 'young person with an immigrant background' means a young person with one or both parents or guardians born abroad. In other words, young people with an immigrant background can be first generation (born abroad themselves) or second generation (one or both parents or guardians born abroad). We analyse these young people as both one general group of 'young people with an immigrant background' and two subgroups of 'first- and 'second-generation immigrants'. Other young people are termed 'young people with a Finnish background'. The article has the following structure. First, we describe the multidimensional concept of racism and outline our research frame. Then, we introduce some information about the prevalence of racism in Europe, including the Nordic countries and Finland. After that, we describe our data and the research methods. The two final sections include the main results and conclusions.

Conceptualising racism

Our approach to the racism experienced is multidimensional. Following the philosopher Jani Sinokki (2017a: 279-280), we highlight that there are three conditions for the racist way of thinking. First, the target of racism is considered to be clearly defined and uniform. Second, the normative attitude concerns the group of people who are defined according to certain characteristics. Third, the group of people is valued by these characteristics. Therefore, it is possible to view all their members through their membership of that group. The racist way of thinking assumes that the world (including human beings) can be divided into groups in a way which makes it possible to value different groups (Sinokki 2017b: 17; 2017c: 38, 46, 52).

Further, the racist way of thinking becomes apparent in the processes of *racialisation*. Racialisation refers to practices of classifying groups of people by perceptible and definite features which are based on presumptions. People who are the target of practices of racialisation are thought to form clear, race-like classes, for example according to ethnicity, culture, disability, addiction, disease or homelessness. The individuals and their actions are comprehended first and foremost according to the membership of that racialised group

(Sinokki 2017a: 284-286, see also Puuronen 2011: 8, 20-22, 65, 269). In this study, we approach the experiences of racism as a question of categorisations, groups and group belongings. We seek to comprehend how our interviewees see and recognise the hierarchies and how they experience these hierarchies.

Since our focus is on public organisations such as schools, the concept of *structural racism* is of importance. Structural racism becomes apparent, for instance, in the curriculum, in which the extensive body of research has been shown to represent a European way of life and to invalidate non-Western societies. Although multiculturalism has encouraged the challenging of many problematic historical viewpoints, an inclination to present the West as the centre of the civilised world has not disappeared (Leonardo & Grubb 2014: 3-7, 27-28; see also Twyman Hoff 2016: 1201-1202; Forrest, Lean & Dunn 2016: 620, 633-634), and teachers and pupils might represent and reproduce these historical viewpoints. In addition, another form of structural racism on focus here is the non-interference in racism by teachers (Souto 2011).

Finally, our aim was to analytically separate *discrimination* from racism. Discrimination means segregating people and taking action to place people in a different position. Grounds that a person cannot influence through his/her choices and actions are especially discriminatory (Häkkinen & Mattila 2011: 13). Setting up individuals and groups in an unequal position in some cases may be morally justified (eg, services offered to people with disabilities). However, discrimination based on skin colour, gender or sexual orientation cannot be accepted in any circumstances (Launis 2017: 257). In this article, our analysis touches on these forms of racism and discrimination, although we do not conceptually make distinction between them in our conclusions.

Racism in Finland

How common is racism in Finland compared with other European countries? Even though Gorodzeisky & Semyonov (2016: 336) found that *racial prejudice* against immigrants is lower in Finland and other Nordic countries compared with many other European countries, many forms of racism and discrimination in Finland exist (Mannila, Castaneda & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2012: 234, 241; Väänänen *et al.* 2009: 1, 63, 76). According to the European Union (EU) Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), discrimination against sub-Saharan people in Finland is the second most common in 12 EU countries. During the year before the survey, 45% of sub-Saharan people had faced discrimination in Finland. Only Luxembourg (50%) was ahead of Finland. Discrimination against sub-Saharan people was also quite common in other Nordic countries such as Denmark (41%) and Sweden (38%), and the average across EU countries was 24% (FRA 2017: 31). If we focus on a younger age group (15–19 years old) in Finland, people with an immigrant background, especially those belonging to the second generation had to face more discrimination than young people with a Finnish background (Myllyniemi 2017: 54). There was also a striking increase (52%) in suspected hate crimes between 2014 and 2015. Over 79% of the suspected hate crimes were related to ethnic or

national background. Suspected racist crimes on the Internet have also increased since 2010 (Tihveräinen 2016).

There has not been much research on the racism experienced within the Finnish schools. According to Wikström, Haikkola & Laatikainen (2014), students of immigrant origin were harassed at school more often than their native counterparts. Souto (2011: 60, 134-151) portrayed, in her ethnographic study, many forms of racism experienced by students. In general, people with an immigrant background in that school had to face daily staring, hooting, sneering, derisive laughter, name calling, exclusion and slandering of non-Finnish cultures. The school staff did not take these forms of racism seriously enough. The racism was generally denied or underrated in schools.

There are some studies of racism at the school level in the Nordic countries. According to Hällgren (2005), many young people with ethnic background in Sweden suffered the experiences of racism from early childhood. However, the young people had learnt strategies for dealing with racism and prejudice. Young people with an immigrant background argued that they needed to be tough if they wanted to be successful in Sweden. They concluded that they needed to work much harder than those belonging to the majority (Hällgren 2005: 319, 336-339). Moreover, one reason for the racism in Norway is that the whiteness is part of national identification, but this has largely been silenced. Many students with an immigrant background knew that they were not 'ethnic Norwegian' despite their citizenship because they were not white. Racism is allowed to flourish in Norwegian schools because teachers are in denial of its significance (Svendsen 2014: 18-21).

Earlier research has mainly focussed on the question of harassment and racism within certain ethnic groups, and most often with qualitative data. In this article, we address the question in a wider scope with the mixed method approach and rich qualitative and quantitative research design. We utilised quantitative data to analyse and compare the magnitude of being bullied or discriminated against and have tried to comprehend the multivoiced experiences and implications by qualitative data.

Data and methods

In this article, we examine the following questions:

- 1) How common are the experiences of harassment, discrimination and racism among ninth-grade students with immigrant and Finnish backgrounds?
- 2) What kinds of experiences of harassment, discrimination and racism have young people had?

Our data were collected as a *selective sample* (or *homogeneous purposive sampling*, see e.g., Onwuegbuzie & Collins 2007; Palinkas *et al.* 2015) from three lower secondary schools from the city of Turku and five from the Helsinki metropolitan area. We wanted to follow the study by Zinga and Gordon (2016: 1088) and to analyse the experiences of both minority and majority students. Therefore, we applied selective sampling that would include young

people with immigrant and Finnish backgrounds. Since the overall population with an immigrant background in Finland among the younger age cohorts was still quite small, the sampling was targeted to schools with high proportions of immigrant-origin students. The sampling aimed to reach schools and students equally with immigrant and Finnish origins as well as with different socioeconomic backgrounds (Teddlie & Yu 2007), and the number of schools was increased as long as the sampling was large enough for the empirical analysis (Heckathorn 1997). To protect the anonymity of the schools, we have not revealed their names or locations.

The socioeconomic composition of neighbourhoods where the selected schools are located is below and above the average. Five schools are located in neighbourhoods with an above-average proportion of highly educated people (classified by their postal code), and three schools are below the average on this measure (9%; OSF 2015b). The share of the immigrant-origin youth in the selective sample varied from 18% to 67%. The proportion of non-Finnish-speaking students among the selected schools varied from 10% to 59% (OSF 2016). Among the studied municipals, the average of non-Finnish-speaking students in municipal schools is between 11% and 16%, compared with the 5% of all Finnish schools. Therefore, the selected schools represent the socioeconomically different (urban) neighbourhood schools with the above-average number of immigrant-origin students. Since the proportion of respondents is reasonable (67%), we utilised statistical methods with significance tests. Nevertheless, we cannot generalise our outcomes to the whole ninth-grade population, and the external validity of our study needs to be evaluated in the context of transferability (Onwuegbuzie & Collins 2007; Palinkas *et al.* 2015).

The sample contained 445 young people studying their ninth and final year of compulsory education, 284 (64%) of whom were from a Finnish background (the student and both their parents were born in Finland) and 161 (36%) had an immigrant background, 232 (52%) girls and 213 (48%) boys. Of the young people with an immigrant background, 115 (71%) were the second-generation immigrants (born in Finland, but with at least one of their parents having been born abroad) and 46 (29%) were the first-generation immigrants. Eighteen (39%) of the latter group were born in Asian and Middle Eastern countries, 14 (30%) in Eastern Europe countries, six (13%) in Western Europe, five (11%) in Africa and three (<1%) in other countries. This variety corresponds approximately to the largest Finnish foreign-born population among children (Syria, Russia and Great Britain; OSF 2017).

The parents of young people with an immigrant background (second generation) were mainly born in Asian and Middle Eastern countries, such as Iraq and Iran: 41 fathers (42%) and 37 mothers (39%). The second largest group was Eastern European (31 [32%] fathers and 35 [37%] mothers, most commonly from Estonia). Parents with an African background made up approximately 15% of the sample (20 fathers [20%] and 13 mothers [14%]). These groups of country of birth correspond partly to the population structure (2016), in which the largest groups of foreign-born population were born in Eastern Europe (with Russian Federation and Former Soviet Union), Sweden, Iraq and Somalia (OSF 2017). Since our sampling was not conducted in Swedish-speaking schools, the young people with Swedish background were not covered. The parents had lived in Finland for an average of 17 years; thus, the majority

had come to Finland in the 1990s and early 2000s. They came mainly from Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Iran (Pohjanpää, Paananen & Nieminen 2003: 10-11).

Our first research question aimed to acquire general knowledge about the frequency of harassment, discrimination and racism through a survey ($n = 445$). We studied these experiences using two series of questions, the first of which (nine statements; seven statements are presented in Table 1) concerned the young person's experiences and overall view of harassment and discrimination, similarity and dissimilarity and self-satisfaction. Thus, the questions in various ways were concerned with young people's experiences of otherness. We reduced the indicators into a sum score of harassment and discrimination (Appendix 1). The series of questions were designed so that they could be answered by young people with a Finnish or an immigrant background. The second series of questions (nine statements; three statements are analysed in Table 2) were also concerned with experiences of harassment and discrimination, but these were targeted only at young people with an immigrant background. Using the χ^2 test of independence, we cross-tabulated the variable of origin (the young people with Finnish and the first- and second-generation immigrant backgrounds) with the statements concerning harassment and discrimination (Tables 1-2) and tested the significance of mean values of the sum score of harassment and discrimination and school liking by using a t -test and analysis of variance (Appendix 1).

Our second research question was formulated to increase the understanding of the nature of harassment, discrimination and racism experienced by the young people. The qualitative material consisted of thematic interviews ($n = 112$) made for selected students based on the background information they provided in the survey. Students were selected equally for each of the schools who participated in the survey. The selection was based on origin (Finnish/migrant origin), gender and plans for further education (applying to general and vocational upper secondary education).

The interviewees consisted of 54 young people with a Finnish background and 58 with an immigrant background, of whom 66 were girls and 46 were boys. Of the 58 young people with an immigrant background, 26 belonged to the first generation: nine were born in Eastern European countries (including countries from the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia), two in Western Europe, seven in Asia (including Middle Eastern countries), four in Africa and one in South America. Three students did not tell us which country they were born in. The other 32 interviewees with an immigrant background belonged to the second generation: 12 had roots in Africa, ten in Eastern Europe, nine in Asia and one in Oceania.

The majority of the interviews were held in Finnish, but if the interviewee had been in Finland for such a short period of time that he/she did not speak Finnish well, the interview was held in English. The themes of the interviews were as follows: 1) school experiences and orientations, 2) educational aspirations and getting ready for the joint application system, 3) future orientations, 4) family and peer relations, 5) leisure time, 6) views on multiculturalism and 7) experiences of harassment, discrimination and racism.

The interviews were held at schools during the school day. The interviews lasted from 30 to 60 minutes. They were voluntary, and the students were told that they could stop the

interview at any time. Most of the interviews were with individual students, but 20 of the interviews included between two and four students, since some of the students preferred group interviews with their friends. These group interviews are included in the analysis, although they included fewer stories about individual experiences. The researchers asked some opening questions from the list of themes, but the students were free to talk about their experiences without any tight structure. As the topic of racism is sensitive, the researchers were very careful not to re-traumatise the students, but listened to their stories if they were willing to tell them (Uptin, Wright & Harwood 2016: 599). Some students did not want to talk about racism at all, while others felt relieved to be able to talk about their experiences.

To comprehend different ways in which people experience or think about harassment, discrimination and racism (Marton 1986), the interview data were analysed with phenomenographic approach. In our interpretation, we made use of the concepts of ignoring and otherness. By 'ignoring', we mean talk in which young people describe their mutual isolation and the gulfs between them (Anttila 2010: 6). By 'otherness', we refer to experiences of difference, being an outsider and being of different value (Löytty 2005). In this article, we drew on the expressions and the ways in which the young people relate themselves to other individuals and communities. With this methodological pluralism, we addressed the issue of harassment, discrimination and racism twofold: the quantitative data give us some preliminary understanding of the differences and frequencies, but with the qualitative data we test and interpret these outcomes of the quantitative analysis.

Downplaying discrimination

How common are the experiences of harassment, discrimination and racism among ninth-grade students in urban Finnish schools in 2015? Our first finding is that the greatest differences between young people with a Finnish background and young people with an immigrant background lay in their sense of Finnish nationality (Table 1). Although over 90% of young people with a Finnish background agreed or totally agreed with the statement that they felt Finnish, less than 50% of young people with an immigrant background did so. This is irrespective of the fact that the vast majority of the students with an immigrant background among our respondents belonged to the second generation who were born in Finland.

Second, the young people with an immigrant background (24%) more often than those with a Finnish background (12%) agreed or totally agreed that they wanted to be the same as other students at their school. However, a reasonably large proportion of young people with an immigrant background (about one-third) totally disagreed with this statement. Third, almost half of the young people with an immigrant background totally agreed that they liked themselves as they are, while only 28% of young people with a Finnish background were of the same opinion. Fourth, young people with a Finnish background most commonly totally agreed or agreed that there is a lot of discrimination in Finland (51%), while less than half of all other respondents (46%) thought so. Fifth, irrespective of their background,

around one-quarter of young people said that they had been discriminated against or harassed at school. Young people with an immigrant background had been bullied or discriminated against in their leisure time slightly more often than young people with a Finnish background, but there was no difference between these two groups on experiencing discrimination or being bullied at school.

According to our quantitative data, all the informants seemed to share fairly similar views on the existence of harassment and discrimination in their environment: there were no statistically significant differences between different backgrounds in the sum score of harassment and discrimination (Appendix 1). Nevertheless, the interviews portray how ethnic background is intertwined with experiences of downplayed racism and discrimination (Zinga & Gordon 2016). The interviewees generally stated that they did not want to make a fuss about their experiences of racism.

“Well I don’t think that kind of thing has really happened to me, as I’ve always had friends, though yes sometimes there’s discrimination in some situations but it hasn’t affected me very much. I’ve always had a mate all the time... I haven’t directly experienced racism but maybe the kind of thing, how would I put it... if you get some picture of others for example based on their appearance, but it isn’t like a misunderstanding or some stereotype about some person, that kind of thing has definitely happened a bit but not the kind of thing that I think has affected me terribly...” (Interview 10, boy, immigrant background)

However, during the interview his experiences of racism started to emerge. These everyday experiences of racism are difficult to measure, but they are those that a person encounters in day-to-day life.

“I would say that it’s probably a little... it’s probably not what I think it is, but for example, if I’m in a shop I sort of feel that they start to keep an eye on me or something, as if I was kind of different from the others and I might try to do something, that’s how it feels, but I don’t know if it’s that, I don’t know if it’s really like that. If I happen to be walking somewhere where there are only native Finns, I sort of feel as if they’re afraid of me, you could say that they notice that one over there is a foreigner and from an Arab background too and they start to be suspicious and get afraid, kind of afraid of us... As if they’ve somehow got a picture of us Arabs as if we’re some sort of criminals, terrorists and everything. And then if they see someone like that they immediately get the idea that him... he could be one of them...” (Interview 10, boy, immigrant background)

One form of discrimination and harassment is Finnish young people joking and using stereotypes about refugees and ideas associated with the helplessness of people with an immigrant background. In general, this joking is seen as normal among teenagers with a Finnish background. Failing to laugh at these jokes often means exclusion from the group. Young people with an immigrant background are expected to accept insults and attacks in the name of humour and not to rise to them (Souto 2011: 126). This way of using jokes to hide emphasising otherness came out in several of our interviews with young people.

“I don’t think it happens among young people, there aren’t any groups on the basis of where you come from, so in that sense it’s not about quarrelling, but I think it’s mainly

Table 1: Ninth-grade students' experiences of harassment, discrimination and desire to be like others (%).

		I totally disagree		I disagree		I agree		I totally agree		Total
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N
I identify myself as a Finn	First-generation immigrant	13	27.7	21	44.7	10	21.3	3	6	47
	Second-generation immigrant ^a	20	21.3	26	27.7	36	38.3	12	13	94
	Immigrant-origin youth together ^b	33	23.4	47	33.3	46	32.6	15	11	141
	Finnish background	6	2.2	12	4.4	81	29.9	172	64	271
I want to be like other students in my school	First-generation immigrant	12	25.5	18	38.3	16	34.0	1	2	47
	Second-generation immigrant ^c	39	37.5	45	43.3	13	12.5	7	7	104
	Immigrant-origin youth together ^d	51	33.8	63	41.7	29	19.2	8	5	151
	Finnish background	72	29.3	144	58.5	30	12.2	0	0	246
I like myself as I am	First-generation immigrant	1	2.2	2	4.3	25	54.3	18	39	46
	Second-generation immigrant ^e	2	1.8	10	9.1	41	37.3	57	52	110
	Immigrant-origin youth together ^f	3	1.9	12	7.7	66	42.3	75	48	156
	Finnish background	9	3.3	21	7.7	164	60.5	77	28	271

Continued Table 1: Ninth-grade students' experiences of harassment, discrimination and desire to be like others (%).

		I totally disagree		I disagree		I agree		I totally agree		Total
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N
There is much discrimination in Finland	First-generation immigrant	5	13.2	14	36.8	15	39.5	4	11	38
	Second-generation immigrant ^g	19	20.2	33	35.1	34	36.2	8	9	94
	Immigrant-origin youth together ^h	24	18.2	47	35.6	49	37.1	12	9	132
	Finnish background	15	7.3	86	41.7	94	45.6	11	5	206
I have been bullied or discriminated against at school	First-generation immigrant	13	27.1	20	41.7	12	25.0	3	6	48
	Second-generation immigrant ⁱ	54	50.5	29	27.1	18	16.8	6	6	107
	Immigrant-origin youth together ^j	67	43.2	49	31.6	30	19.4	9	6	155
	Finnish background	114	42.9	90	33.8	46	17.3	16	6	266
I have been bullied or discriminated against in my leisure time	First-generation immigrant	20	40.0	19	38.0	10	20.0	1	2	50
	Second-generation immigrant ^k	70	66.0	23	21.7	10	9.4	3	3	106
	Immigrant-origin youth together ^l	90	57.7	42	26.9	20	12.8	4	3	156
	Finnish background	164	61.4	77	28.8	21	7.9	5	2	267

Continued Table 1: Ninth-grade students' experiences of harassment, discrimination and desire to be like others (%).

		I totally disagree		I disagree		I agree		I totally agree		Total
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N
People think I am different	First-generation immigrant	5	11.6	17	39.5	19	44.2	2	5	43
	Second-generation immigrant ^m	34	37.0	37	40.2	15	16.3	6	7	92
	Immigrant-origin youth together ⁿ	39	28.9	54	40.0	34	25.2	8	6	135
	Finnish background	56	23.7	112	47.5	60	25.4	8	3	236

Notes: ^a $\chi^2(6) = 166.28, p < 0.001$. ^b $\chi^2(3) = 155.36, p < 0.001$. ^c $\chi^2(6) = 39.98, p < 0.001$. ^d $\chi^2(3) = 21.81, p < 0.001$. ^e $\chi^2(6) = 21.72, p < 0.01$. ^f $\chi^2(3) = 17.54, p < 0.01$. ^g $\chi^2(6) = 13.52, p < 0.05$. ^h $\chi^2(3) = 12.10, p < 0.01$. ⁱ $\chi^2(6) = 7.98, p > 0.05$. ^j $\chi^2(3) = 0.38, p > 0.05$. ^k $\chi^2(6) = 14.14, p < 0.05$. ^l $\chi^2(3) = 3.07, p > 0.05$. ^m $\chi^2(6) = 19.82, p < 0.01$. ⁿ $\chi^2(3) = 3.24, p > 0.05$.

by joking that that kind of thing happens ... it can be a bit like half joking, I'm not sure." (Interview 15, girl, Finnish background)

"Sometimes we just use some 'negro-jokes', but not something like... Well, we only say something like... 'hey negro, come here' to someone who has a dark skin... As long as the other person does not think that is disturbing." (Interview 49, girl, Finnish background)

Verbal harassment and discrimination can also include openly hostile expressions with no attempt to pass it off as humour. Our material includes many stories similar to the one below:

"Yes, I've experienced it [racism], after training when I was walking on my own at about six in the evening, and two or three men came past and started shouting at me, calling me 'negro' and that kind of thing. So I just ignored it and carried on walking. Then they came after me and it was all 'why don't I go back to my own country', so I said I didn't want to talk to them and then I didn't do anything, I just kept going and didn't let it get to me and I tried to just carry on." (Interview 36, boy, immigrant background)

It is important to note that young people's experiences of harassment and discrimination were related to their appreciation of school: those who did not value school at all had experienced discrimination and harassment more often (Appendix 1). It is apparent that if one experiences harassment or discrimination inside or outside school, and shares the view that there is a lot of discrimination in Finland, this is reflected in how much one values school. This assumption is strengthened by cross-tabulating young people's experiences

of harassment and discrimination at school and their levels of appreciation of school. Only half of those who fully agreed that they had been harassed or discriminated against at school said that they liked school, while those who had not experienced harassment and said that they appreciated school accounted for a significantly larger proportion of school liking: 63% ($\chi^2 [9] = 21.74; p = 0.01$).

Discrimination and foreignness by immigrant generation

Whether a person is of the first- or second-generation immigrant background has a significant effect on integration. It is a challenge to move to a country in which the majority of students have been attending school from the start, and in the worst case, one might have to join a school in the final year of compulsory education (Zacheus *et al.* 2012; see also Uptin, Wright & Harwood 2016).

Evidently, among the first generation, experiences of harassment and discrimination, on average, were higher than those of the second generation (Appendix 1). It is important to note that in general there were no differences in experiences of harassment and discrimination between young people with a Finnish background and those with an immigrant background, but there were clear differences between young people with a first- and second-generation immigrant background.

“I was the only one from [country of origin of interviewee] in that school. Everyone in that school bullied me [for the] whole year and I didn’t go to school anymore, I didn’t do homework, I didn’t do anything at all. Then one day they followed me and wanted to knock me down. We told the principal and the teacher, but they did not do anything. Then we moved out from that area... I acted normal, and I don’t know why they took me as their target....” (Interview 73, boy, immigrant background)

Examining the statements, one at a time confirms that the young person’s generation is significant in his/her experience of discrimination (Table 1). Of the students with a first-generation immigrant background, 22% totally agreed or agreed that they had experienced discrimination in their leisure time, while 12% of those of the second-generation agreed with this statement. Correspondingly, 78% of the first-generation and 88% of the second-generation young people disagreed or totally disagreed with the same statement. Those in the first generation also felt themselves to be less Finnish and, above all, felt that they were seen as being different from others more often than those in the second generation.

Respondents with an immigrant background were also asked separately about their views on future opportunities in Finland. This was done because according to the observations of Ogbu & Simons (1998), belief in the future and escaping discrimination are clearly linked to educational achievements. When minorities have experienced discrimination for several generations (eg, as African Americans have in the United States), they tend to have a negative attitude towards school and future opportunities.

The only measure showing a statistically significant difference between the young people with a first- or second-generation immigrant background on the scale of ‘belief in

the future' is the statement related to their expectations of how valuable the education they obtained abroad is to the Finnish labour market (Table 2). Almost four out of five of those of the first generation totally agreed or agreed that education obtained abroad is as valuable in the job market as education obtained in Finland, while fewer than three out of five of the second generation shared this opinion. It is possible that this depicts a more cynical attitude towards the job market among those young people with an immigrant background who have lived in Finland for longer. The analysis also shows that the majority of the first- and second-generation respondents did not agree that their family or relatives had experienced harassment or discrimination.

"I would like to move somewhere other than Finland. I don't really like this place. And I just... I don't know. I would like to be an astrophysicist or something like that... I've never liked living here." (Interview 20, girl, immigrant background)

Moreover, half of the people with a first-generation background and 56% of those of the second generation totally agreed or agreed that it is hard for immigrants to find work in Finland (Table 2). Although about half of the respondents disagreed with the statement, this paints a fairly desperate picture of the beliefs among people with an immigrant background about finding employment in Finland.

"I don't know, because I think all Finns, or well some don't really like [country of origin of interviewee] and then they all say we're all thieves and things like that so I don't know whether I'll be able to get a job easily." (Interview 1, girl, immigrant background)

Summary and conclusions

Based on the survey carried out among young urban ninth-grade students at ethnically diverse schools, approximately one-quarter of the young people thought that they had been bullied or discriminated against at school and one-tenth had experienced this in their free time. Experiences of discrimination in leisure time were quite rare. Similarly, of those with an immigrant background, about one-fifth had experienced their family or relatives being the targets of harassment or discrimination in Finland.

Nevertheless, discrimination and harassment do occur to a certain extent. Around half of the young people agreed that discrimination is widespread in Finland. Our study shows that there is a clear link between discrimination and dislike of school. It is also a cause for concern that over half of the respondents with an immigrant background said that they think it is difficult for immigrants to obtain work in Finland.

The immigrant generation was a central factor in young people's experiences of discrimination. It is clear that experiences of discrimination are more common among people with a first-generation background than they are among those with a second-generation background. In addition to experiences of discrimination, respondents who were people with a first-generation immigrant background most frequently felt that they were different from others. These experiences of otherness, if they continue for a long time,

Table 2: Opinions of people with the first- and second-generation immigrant background (ninth grade) on opportunities and discrimination in Finland (%).

		I totally disagree		I disagree		I agree		I totally agree		Total
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Education from abroad is as valuable as Finnish education	First generation	4	11.8	4	11.8	23	67.6	3	8.8	34
	Second generation	7	9.7	25	34.7	29	40.3	11	15.3	72
	Total	11	10.4	29	27.4	52	49.1	14	13.2	106
	$\chi^2(3) = 8.80, p < 0.05$									
My friends or relatives have been bullied or discriminated against in Finland	First generation	18	42.9	12	28.6	11	26.2	1	2.4	42
	Second generation	47	49	33	34.4	13	13.5	3	3.1	96
	Total	65	47.1	45	32.6	24	17.4	4	2.9	138
	$\chi^2(3) = 3.28, p > 0.05$									
It is difficult for immigrants to find jobs in Finland	First generation	6	16.7	12	33.3	12	33.3	6	16.7	36
	Second generation	5	6.1	31	37.8	36	43.9	10	12.2	82
	Total	11	9.3	43	36.4	48	40.7	16	13.6	118
	$\chi^2(3) = 4.19, p > 0.05$									

tend to result in negative attitudes towards a future in Finland and weaken the likelihood of integration.

It is even rare for respondents who were born in Finland but have an immigrant background to think of themselves as Finnish: almost half of the second-generation immigrants did not identify themselves as Finns. This raises several questions: Does discrimination and racism result in such a lack of a sense of belonging that students with an immigrant background do not consider themselves to be Finns, even if they were born in Finland? Alternatively, does the lack of a feeling of ‘togetherness’ with Finns stem from the fact that many people with a second-generation immigrant background have adopted an integration strategy that enables them to live within the spheres of influence of two cultures, taking on board influences from both? Or is it the case that people with an immigrant background do not feel that they belong to any one culture or country? People who feel rootless are likely to find it difficult to forge an attachment to Finland or any other

country. However, a feeling of rootlessness can make them vulnerable to the influence of various extreme groups.

Based on our interview material, we found evidence that experiences of harassment, discrimination and racism are associated with downplaying and keeping silent, hidden discrimination and isolation. Evidently, experiences of everyday racism differ hugely from the point of view of the people with a Finnish background and from the perspective of those who have been the target. Actions that persons with a Finnish background do not see as racist at all may seem racist to someone with an immigrant background, thereby putting up barriers in their day-to-day life and at school. Furthermore, people are not often keen to raise these issues when asked about them, as it is difficult to show that they are real.

Finally, we need to consider carefully the validity and transferability of our interpretations and outcomes. Our mixed-methods research borrowed its methodology from both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Our sample was designed to include enough young people of immigrant and Finnish origins to contrast and compare the experiences of these two groups as well to understand more deeply and holistically the intertwinement and several experiences of racism and ethnicity. Therefore, we used selective sampling and targeted our data collection to schools with the above-average proportion of students of immigrant origin. We increased our *interpretive validity* with the selective sampling and selected interviews, but simultaneously narrowed our *representativeness* (Onwuegbuzie & Collins 2007; Palinkas *et al.* 2015). In the light of both of these validity dimensions, our evaluation is that our analysis covers and is transferrable to the above-average schools with immigrant-origin students in urban Finnish contexts.

Appendix 1. Sum score of harassment and discrimination: statements, reliability analysis and analysis of variance.

Harassment and discrimination (Cronbach's $\alpha = .803$): 'I have been bullied or discriminated against in my leisure time', 'People think I am different', 'I feel I am different from others', 'There is a lot of discrimination in Finland', 'I have been bullied or discriminated against at school'. Scale 1 (least experiences) – 4 (most experiences).

There were no differences in harassment and discrimination between young people with an immigrant background (mean 1.99) and those with a Finnish background (mean 1.99), but a *t*-test analysis showed that there were significant differences between the first- and second-generation immigrants (2.23 and 1.88; $t [160] = 3.20, p < 0.001$).

Analysis of variance for school liking and sum score of harassment and discrimination: $F (3, 439) = 7.19, p < 0.001$. Mean values of sum score of students disliking school are 2.44, liking school 1.94 and liking school very much 1.92.

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