

Introduction

Migration and crisis identity

 **Andreas Musolff**

 **Lorella Viola**

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/dapsac.81.01mus>

 Available under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

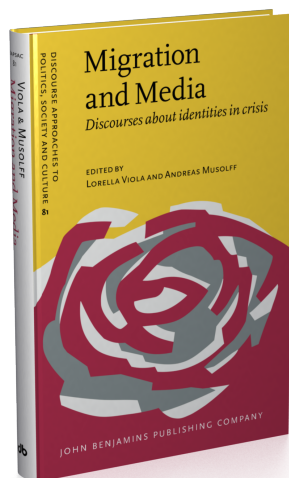
Pages 1–10 of

Migration and Media: Discourses about identities in crisis

Edited by Lorella Viola and Andreas Musolff

[Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society and Culture, 81]

2019. xi, 360 pp.



© John Benjamins Publishing Company

This electronic file may not be altered in any way. For any reuse of this material, beyond the permissions granted by the Open Access license, written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: www.copyright.com).

For further information, please contact rights@benjamins.nl or consult our website at benjamins.com/rights

Introduction

Migration and crisis identity

Andreas Musolff and Lorella Viola

University of East Anglia / Utrecht University

That present-day migrations have impacted significantly on public discourses and political cultures is a truism, given that they have by now ‘inspired’ a whole raft of new, mostly anti-immigration motivated, social movements and have dominated election campaigns, referenda and media debates in Europe, the United States of America and many other countries. Reflecting and interpreting the perceived upsurge in mass migration, public discourse has, in turn, also shaped the political context of migration through redefining, agenda-setting, and influencing relevant policy decisions (Freeman, Hansen, and Leal 2013; Hampshire 2013; Haynes, Power, and Devereux 2016; Wodak 2015). As a result, the socio-discursive landscape is characterised by a growing sense of crisis in both personal and collective identities, ranging from the imagined large-scale, national and even supra-national identities (e.g. “Europe”, “Western world”) through regional and sub-national groups and “communities of practice” (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999; Wenger 2008) to the (im-)migrants themselves who have given up their previous ‘home’-identities, however fragile they may have been, and not (yet) gained new ones.

But the crisis that is at the centre of most public discourses on migration is that of ‘host’ societies that appear to some as being threatened in their core existence. How closely this threat is felt can be gleaned from the escalation of an imagined immigration scenario in a discussion thread (Excerpts 1, 2, and 3 below) on the British Broadcasting Corporation’s online forum “Have Your Say” (BBC 2010) (italics by authors):

- (1) Illegal immigrants [...] are not welcome here. ... *If I walked into someones [sic] home that I didn’t know unannounced and said I was moving in I would expect to get filled in.* Obviously I’m not saying do that just deport them to wherever they came from.

- (2) So, what you are saying is that *if you live in a nicer house than I do, it is OK with you that I just move into your house, let you and your family live in one of the rooms while my family and I take over the rest, eat the food that you work and pay for, set the TV to receive only the channels that I want to watch, while forcing you to learn my language and observe only my traditions and customs?* [...] you would have a great deal of difficulty finding such a tolerant society that would put your views and needs above the views and needs of their own citizenry. I feel sure that many of us will be only too willing to wish you “Goodbye”!
- (3) OK so I to [sic] would like a better life for myself and my family [;] *so on this basis all I have to do is move into a multi millionaires [sic] home (with indoor swimming pool of course) expect the owners and servants to allow us to stay there, feed all of us for years, cloth all of us for years, tend to all our medical needs and not say a “Bigoted” word against us and in general give us anything we ask for why we do nothing or give nothing in return.* Sorry it does not work like that!

These are not ironical, inverse elaborations of a stereotypical ‘immigrants-as-home-invaders’ scenario, as one might suspect when reading the italicized passages in isolation. On the contrary, the explicit conclusions in the three consecutive postings leave no doubt that their authors compete in earnest for producing the most outrageous, grotesquely exaggerated depiction of the immigrants’ catastrophic impact on their home, complete with details of how the invaders take over control of TV, language, healthcare, swimming pool and even the definition of bigotry. The forum posters’ shared conceit of assuming the role of the home-invading migrant underlines how much of the authors’ own identities is at stake: they cast themselves in the role of the wrongdoer to convince themselves and their readers that condemnation and, following that, getting rid of the aggressors is justified. The escalation from the first, relatively simple home-invasion scenario to the wholesale takeover of a multimillionaire’s mansion shows just how fascinated the speakers are by their self-identification with the migrant-aggressor! In their online fantasies, they not just marginalise the previous, ‘rightful’ home-owners but take over their existence completely, like a super-parasite that survives even its host’s demise by taking over his very identity (Musolf 2012).

If one assumed that this was mere online rhetoric bravado, the electoral successes of politicians calling for “liberating” or “regaining” the home nation or “taking back control” indicate otherwise. Xenophobic home-invasion scenarios informed, to name but three examples, the 2016 “Brexit” campaign in Britain, US President Trump’s “Build the Wall” initiative and the electoral gains of the anti-immigration party, “Alternative for Germany” (AFD) in the federal parliament elections in Germany in 2017. At the height of the German election campaign, the AFD-leader A. Gauland, for instance, demanded that the federal government’s chief

immigration officer A. Özoguz who had Turkish family background should be “disposed of” (*entsorgt*) in Anatolia after she had dared to query an ‘essential’ German cultural identity beyond language-based definitions (FAZ 2017). Despite heavy criticism from all the other political parties in Germany, from Federal Chancellor A. Merkel (who disqualified his statements as “racist”, SZ, 2017) as well as from most of the media including the tabloids, Gauland did not retract any of his words and successfully triggered what Ruth Wodak has called the “populist perpetuum mobile” through creating a scandal that instrumentalises the media criticism to gain even more popularity (Wodak 2015: 19–20). Once again, the trick worked: Gauland’s party, which had not been represented in the federal parliament before, scored 12.6% of the national vote in the elections two weeks later (www.bundestag.de 2017). But it was not just Gauland’s media-savviness that helped to achieve such a result, its identity-defending message itself was clearly approved by his followers: to them he became the guardian of a national identity that appeared to be under threat from people like A. Özoguz and the whole history of post-World War II internationalisation in Germany and Europe that she stands and works for.

In the context of migration debates, the attribution of national/cultural identity is not only a matter of academic debate (where it is usually critically deconstructed, see e.g. Anderson 2006; Bhabha 2004; Billig 1995) but an essential means of socio-political orientation for parts of the public who feel *acutely* threatened by an aggressive Other that is seemingly taking over their home and their existence. For them, the alleged threat from (im-)migration has been there for a long time¹ – and so have probably been their xenophobic attitudes and feelings towards it –, but what makes it appear urgent and powerful is its perceived proximity, its supposedly immediate impact on the centre of their world(-view), i.e. the effect of “proximization” (Cap 2013, and in this volume). The speakers’ home identity is vulnerable and questionable; it is, in both senses of the word, ‘critical’: i.e. essential for its supporters’ identities, and at the same time in need of urgent re-assertion and active protection.

From this viewpoint, discourses about immigration are also always attempts at reconstructing the threatened ‘home identity’ of the respective host society. Through the construal of the (arrival of) the migrant Other as an imminent threat, as well as of the current situation as an existential crisis and the rejection of alternative concepts (such as “multiculturalism”), the home identity is re-asserted and discursively repaired. It is such attempts at reasserting identity-in crisis (due

1. For the long – if not continuous – tradition of post-WW II xenophobic anti-immigrant populism in (West) Germany see Becker (2015); Jung et al. (1997); Selfe (2017); in Britain see Charteris-Black (2006); Kushner (2003); Hart 2010; KhosraviNik, Krzyżanowski, and Wodak (2012).

to migration) that are the focus of this volume. It presents fourteen case-studies of varying sets of data (print media texts, TV broadcasts, online comments and debating forums, politicians' speeches, legal and administrative texts, oral narratives), drawn from discourses in a range of languages – Croatian, English (UK and US), French, German, Greek, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Slovenian, Spanish, Ukrainian –, employing different discourse-analytical methods, such as Argumentation and Metaphor Analysis, Gendered Language Studies, Corpus-assisted Semantics and Pragmatics, and Proximity Theory. All chapters are corpus-based and guided by the “discourse-historical approach” pioneered by Ruth Wodak (2001), which aims at the integration of linguistic, social and historical data, so as to arrive at their in-depth “triangulation”, to understand language use in its full socio-historical context and its implied/implicated ideological intentions and effects. As a result, the findings are predominantly qualitative though some of them also make use of frequency counts of linguistic, especially lexical constructions. The book's main objective is not to prove one analytical model right (and others wrong) but the exploration of dominant discourse strategies and modes which construct the link between (im-)migration and threatened home identity so as to make it sound plausible, self-evident and (supposedly) consensual.

This emphasis on a multi-layered discourse analysis provides the structural framework for our volume: its first and second parts respectively study representational, especially lexical, framing devices and pragmatic, figurative/metaphorical and proximating strategies that characterise public discourse about migration, i.e. the linguistic means of constructing the ‘identity-in-crisis’ scenario. Part III widens the perspective further to multi-modal and multi-media analyses, including migrants' reactions to being discursively constructed and stigmatised by the home community, insofar as the latter is represented as a (supposedly) homogeneous entity. The final part questions exactly this supposition by analysing in detail online debates among the home community's members (e.g. readers' online comments and discussion forums). The analyses show that they are in fact *not* characterised by homogeneity but rather by complex and, in parts, creative processes of realignment, recontextualisation and meta-communication. They often use the statements by officially or institutionally entitled public voices, such as politicians and journalists or official spokespersons, as material for rhetorical escalation that can embolden or justify hate-speech, including the denigration of any Other-identity, but also for critical reflection and argument.

Part I of the volume explores a range of representational strategies used to frame migration as a crisis of identity. Chapter 1 investigates how the narrative of a threatened home identity is implicitly embedded in the use of the word *multiculturalism* in four languages, British English, French, German and Italian. Using Corpus Assisted Discourse Analysis, Melani Schröter, Marie Veniard, Charlotte Taylor and

Andreas Blätte analyse corpora of newspaper articles covering the time span 1998–2012 in each language, collated from one conservative and one left-liberal national newspaper. Across the languages, the authors' findings show that the word *multicultural* is mostly descriptive of a state of affairs, typically without negative evaluation. *Multiculturalism*, on the contrary, is associated with abstract concepts and points to a more negative discourse prosody, indicated by collocates such as *failure*.

Also drawing on the discourse-historical approach, Lorella Viola in Chapter 2 investigates the linguistic means of constructing the 'identity-in-crisis' scenario within the context of the conflict between the Italian Northern and Southern regions' ideologies. By diachronically analysing texts from 1861 to 2016, the chapter investigates how this scenario has become linguistically apparent in the use of the discriminating words *polentone* attached to people living in the North and *terrone* referring to people from the South. The dataset consists of daily newspapers, magazines, periodicals, novels, short stories, essays, laws, decrees, judgments, web material. By identifying how such internalised cultural models manifest themselves in these two derogatory terms, the analysis provides an in-depth triangulation for understanding the long-established North/South dichotomy and unveils correlations between the discursive discrimination against Italian intra-migrants and the implicit ideologies circulated by governmental choices.

The representational, mainly lexical, framing devices that characterise judicial and legal forms of public discourse about migration are the focus of the final chapter of this section. From the analysis of a corpus of legislation and of information texts produced by the administrations of Spain and the United Kingdom during the period 2007–2011, Purificación Sánchez, Pilar Pérez-Paredes and Pascual Aguado highlight the different approaches to the construction of immigrants and citizens' representations that both countries seem to have favoured in the period analysed. Through the analysis of the collocation of targeted terms such as *immigrant*, *inmigrante*, *citizen* and *ciudadano*, the authors explain how, while the British administration highlights control procedures for immigrants, the Spanish one concentrates on the necessity of integration.

The second section of the book features three chapters which share the focus on argumentation, pragmatic and figurative strategies that are used to frame migration as a crisis of identity. It starts with a chapter by Zeynep Cihan Koca-Helvaci addressing the topic of media representation of the European migration crisis. The chapter explores the nature of British media discourse focussing on two recent cases concerning migrants: the tragic death of the 3-year-old Syrian refugee Aylan Kurdi in the Mediterranean Sea in 2015 and the sex assaults in the German city of Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015/16. While the images of Aylan Kurdi's washed up body stirred the conscience of the public, the latter caused alarm because of the influx of immigrants in Europe. Applying the Discourse-Historical Approach to the

analysis of the referential, predication and argumentation strategies, Koca-Helvaci provides an analytical framework that provides explanations to understand the ideological intentions of discourse construction of migration in Britain and their possible effects on perceptions of the events in the general public.

The construal of the arrival of the migrant Other as an imminent threat and as a means to reassert and legitimise the home identity scenario is the focal point of Chapter 5. Using Proximity Theory, Piotr Cap investigates the discursive construction of closeness and remoteness in anti-immigration discourse in Poland and how the ‘emerging’, ‘growing’, ‘gathering’ threats – physical as well as ideological – are construed by the Polish right-wing government, so as to claim a right to oppose EU immigration agreements and pursue strict anti-immigration measures.

In the final chapter of this part of the volume, Liudmila Arcimaviciene discusses gender and metaphor correlations in media migration discussions. Through applying the “Metaphor Identification Procedure” (Group 2007) to media texts collected from the US and UK online media sources in 2015–2017 on the topic of the EU 2015 migration, the author examines the discursive manipulation of the Other and how the evoked frames of quantifiable and tradable objects, natural phenomena, crimes, war and terrorism contribute to suppressing positive emotions, related to empathy or compassion.

The third part of the volume revolves around the investigation of multimodality in crisis communication. Chapter 7 explores how identities of the Other, the threatened host and other dynamics of public frames are constructed in television discussions in Greece. In her analysis of twenty TV discussions from 1996 to 2016, Eleni Butulussi combines Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Practical Reasoning Theory and Metaphor Analysis to demonstrate how metaphors are used to strengthen specific arguments and conclusions, thus revealing the viewpoints, ideologies, intentions, feelings and desires of the different speakers as well as relations of power and common notions of right and wrong.

Chapter 8 is also situated within the context of multimodality. Through the analysis of the linguistic and multimodal instantiations of the WALL metaphor in Serbian media texts published in 2015, Nadežda Silaški and Tatjana Đurović identify the most frequent metaphor scenarios modelled around the portrayal of Europe’s migrant crisis in Serbia. Complementing the framework of Critical Metaphor Analysis with research on multimodality, the authors discuss the notions of marginalisation and non-belonging to the EU space, emanating from verbally and visually constructed images of both migrants and the Serbian nation.

Continuing the investigation of migration in the Balkan route, Chapter 9 portrays how discourses about immigration are implicit attempts at reconstructing the threatened ‘home identity’ of the respective host society. Tatjana Felberg and Ljiljana Šarić investigate similarities and differences in the representation of the

“refugee crisis” and of migrants in Croatia and Serbia by applying multimodal analysis of data from the online portals of Croatian and Serbian public broadcasters. By mainly exploring the representation of actors, the authors show how the “refugee crisis” reflected wider political discourses of Schengen and non-Schengen countries and of EU and non-EU countries’ towards migrants in the politically sensitive region of ex-Yugoslavia.

The effects of identity attribution by the ‘receiving’ society on migrants’ own identity construction and perception is at the centre of the last chapter of this part of the volume. Theresa Catalano and Jessica Mitchell-McCullough examine the representation of unaccompanied minor children fleeing Central America (Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador) in U.S. online national news sources over a one-year period. Also drawing on interviews with children collected from the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations, the linguistic data are compared to the way these children talk about their own perceptions of migration and their motivation for moving. Using multimodal critical discourse analysis, the authors reveal a qualitative difference in discourse (e.g., use of metaphor, metonymy, deixis and visual elements) that varies depending on whether the sources are media reports or personal accounts from the children themselves.

The final part of the volume is concerned with the investigation of how the crisis about migration is experienced in online debates and it features four chapters. In Chapter 11, denigration of any Other-identity, threats to the home identity and stigmatisation are some of the notions emerging from Ludmilla A’Beckett’s analysis of online characterisations of refugees from the conflict zone in Eastern Ukraine in Russian and Ukrainian. The chapter charts the semantic vectors of relevant texts and between these texts and discourse ideologies. The author concludes that the varying sets of abuses developed during the confrontation through Russian and Ukrainian social media reinforce the specifics of the respective national vision of the conflict development.

Chapter 12 demonstrates that even the notion of ‘home identity’ does not seem to be characterised by homogeneity but rather by complex processes of recontextualization. Using CDA and partially inspired by Text World Theory, Michael S. Boyd analyses a controversial *New York Times* editorial article and the relative readers’ comments. The analysis focuses on the strategies adopted by text producers to align themselves with or differentiate themselves from different discourse worlds and attempts to determine readers’ varying opinions about the European migration issue and how this reflects and/or diverges from the view(s) presented by the editorial.

Chapter 13 is also interested in Other-identity and its relationship with the concept of integration, with special regard to German society. Using CDA methods and feminist post-structural theory, Janet M. Fuller looks at discourses about immigration in Germany with a focus on policies and events in 2014–16. The analysis

unveils underlying ideological assumptions about immigration, i.e. that immigration and immigrants are seen as positive as long as they integrate but that even the most integrated 'migrant-background citizens' continue to be labelled as 'other', i.e., not German.

The final chapter by Andreas Musolff highlights the denigration of learning, speaking or just listening to other languages as a threat to the home identity in press media and Internet forums. Using argumentation theory, pragmatics and discourse-historical triangulation, Musolff explores expressions of popular skepticism towards multilingualism, multiculturalism and to (super-)diversity, which stand in contrast to their official endorsement and to socio-linguistic analyses of empirical language use in societies characterised by strong immigration.

Throughout the four parts and across the fourteen chapters of this book, we offer a multi-layered discourse analysis approach which, encompassing several methods, varying sets of data, and different discourse scenarios in a range of languages, is structurally coherent, methodologically solid, and comparatively rich. All chapters are guided by a corpus-based and discourse-historical triangulatory perspective so as to provide an empirical, broad, and in-depth understanding of the linguistic means and communicative strategies employed in public discourse to construct 'identity-in-crisis' scenarios. The book will appeal to linguists interested in social discrimination, rhetorical escalation, denigration of any Other-identity, but also to those focussing on contemporary public discourses of migrants and host communities in which identities are negotiated. More widely, the book is of interest for anybody concerned with ethnic studies, racism, especially for researchers, students and teachers of critical social sciences such as politics, anthropology, economics, sociology, social (economic, legal) history, media and communication studies.

Present-day mass migration patterns challenge the identity-construction and -performance for all communities. The present volume aims to contribute to overcoming such challenges for self- and other-understanding.

References

- Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- BBC 2010. *Have your Say: Should politicians be talking about immigration?* Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/haveyoursay/2010/04/should_politicians_be_talking.html on 15 December 2013)
- Becker, Maria. 2015. *Der Asyldiskurs in Deutschland: eine medienlinguistische Untersuchung von Pressetexten, Onlineforen und Polit-Talkshows*. Frankfurt am Main: PL Academic Research.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 2004. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

- Billig, Michael. 1995. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage.
- Bundestagswahl. 2017. Retrieved from www.bundestag.de on 29 September 2017.
- Cap, Piotr. 2013. *Proximization: The Pragmatics of Symbolic Distance Crossing*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.232>
- Charteris-Black, Jonathan. 2006. 'Britain as a Container: Immigration Metaphors in the 2005 Election Campaign'. *Discourse & Society* 17 (5): 563–581. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926506066345>
- FAZ 2017. "Gauland: Özoguz in Anatolien entsorgen". *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 28 August 2017.
- Freeman, Gary P, Randall Hansen, and David L Leal. 2013. *Immigration and Public Opinion in Liberal Democracies*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203095133>
- Group, Pragglejazz. 2007. 'MIP: A Method for Identifying Metaphorically Used Words in Discourse'. *Metaphor and Symbol* 22 (1): 1–39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926480709336752>
- Hampshire, James. 2013. *The Politics of Immigration: Contradictions of the Liberal State*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hart, Christopher. 2010. *Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Science: New Perspectives on Immigration Discourse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230299009>
- Haynes, Amanda, Martin J Power, and Eoin Devereux. 2016. *Public and Political Discourses of Migration: International Perspectives*. London; New York: Rowman & Littlefield International.
- Holmes, Janet, and Miriam Meyerhoff. 1999. 'The Community of Practice: Theories and methodologies in language and gender research'. *Language in Society* 28 (2): 173–183. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S004740459900202X>
- Jung, Matthias, Martin Wengeler, Karin Böke, and Fachtagung 'Migrationsdiskurse' (eds.). 1997. *Die Sprache des Migrationsdiskurses: das Reden über 'Ausländer' in Medien, Politik und Alltag*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- KhosraviNik, Majid, Michał Krzyżanowski, and Ruth Wodak. 2012. "Dynamics of Representation in Discourse: Immigrants in the British Press". In *Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Michi Messer, Renée Schroeder, Ruth Wodak, 283–295, Vienna: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-7091-0950-2_26
- Kushner, Tony. 2003. 'Meaning Nothing but Good: Ethics, History and Asylum-Seeker Phobia in Britain'. *Patterns of Prejudice* 37 (3): 257–276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220307593>
- Musolff, Andreas. 2012. "Immigrants and Parasites: The History of a Bio-Social Metaphor". In *Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Michi Messer, Renée Schroeder, Ruth Wodak, 249–258. Vienna: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-7091-0950-2_22
- Selfe, Lauren. 2017. *Representations of Muslim Women in German Popular Culture, 1990–2016*. Berne: P. Lang.
- SZ 2017. "Gauland und die Identität des Entsorgers". *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 30 August 2017.
- Wenger, Etienne. 2008. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wodak, Ruth. 2001. "The Discourse-Historical Approach". In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, edited by Ruth Wodak, and Michael Meyer, 63–94. London: Sage.
- Wodak, Ruth. 2015. *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*. Los Angeles: SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446270073>

