

ICS PhD project 10:

Why structurally integrated second-generation immigrants experience more discrimination from ethnic majority members. A two-sided approach to the integration paradox

Aim

To get a better understanding of how actual and perceived prejudice and discrimination shape the integration paradox among second-generation immigrants using a multi-actor, multi-disciplinary approach.

Theoretical background

Immigrant integration has become a central political topic in most European countries. It is widely shared that immigrants' educational level and socioeconomic participation are considered a crucial aspect of integration – often referred to as “structural integration”. However, a new sociological literature on the “integration paradox” suggests that those who are indeed more structurally integrated perceive higher levels of discrimination. The goal of this project is to significantly extend this perspective by studying the relationship between indicators of “immigrant success” and perceptions of exclusion through an innovative, two-sided approach.

On one hand, the integration paradox has mainly been examined from the perspective of first-generation labor and family migrants. There exists to date no large-scale study on the integration paradox among their children –second generation immigrants – long identified as the critical group to study multigenerational integration dynamics in migration societies. The project thus aims to precisely map the integration paradox among the second generation, paying attention to heterogeneity by gender and ethnic origins. On the other hand, we acknowledge that integration – and hence the integration paradox – does not occur in a social vacuum. Instead, it is shaped by the perceptions and behaviors of majority populations without a migration background – i.e. a portion of the population holding significant sway on the integration process. Based on a prominent sociological and social psychological perspective - Intergroup Threat Theory - we argue that upwardly mobile and highly educated members of the second generation may trigger enmity from the majority through competition in saturated labor markets. Perceptions of intergroup threat have been found to play a major role in majority members' prejudice and discrimination toward ethnic minorities, and will shed better light on the causal mechanisms involved in the integration paradox.

Research design

Empirically, the analyses require a large sample of respondents with no migration background as well as immigrant-origin individuals. We have secured access to high-quality, often longitudinal, datasets to examine how the issue of discrimination is perceived, how these perceptions are associated with structural attainment, and whether certain integration strategies are indeed more strongly subject to intergroup threat, prejudice, and discrimination among majority populations. The project is substantively focused on Western Europe and remains open with regards to the national context(s) it would investigate. Suitable datasets coordinated by international partners include the Dutch and German Children of Immigrant Longitudinal Survey ('10-'20; CILS), the Dutch Ervaren Discriminatie Survey ('13 & '18, SCP/CBS), the German Diversity Assent Survey ('20; Max Planck Institute), the Belgian National Election Study ('91-'20; KU Leuven), and the French Trajectoires et Origines surveys ('08 & '22, French National Institute for Demographic Studies).

Project

This project is funded by Utrecht University's Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences Workload Fund. Combining insights from sociology and social psychology this project approaches the study of the integration paradox from a multi-disciplinary perspective.

Literature

- Verkuyten, M. (2016). The integration paradox: Empiric evidence from the Netherlands. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60(5-6), 583-596.
- Geurts, N., Lubbers, M., & Spierings, N. (2020) Structural position and relative deprivation among recent migrants: A longitudinal take on the integration paradox. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(9), 1828-1848.

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Location : Utrecht University