



Proposal Starter and Incentive Grant (2024)

5 Title of the proposal

Recognition of adolescents' multicultural strengths when entering the labor market: The role of social networks

6 Summary of the proposed research

In the Netherlands, adolescents with a migration background are less likely to find (adequate) occupational internships compared to their peers without a migration background¹⁻². Traditionally, research has focused on how a multicultural background can lead to difficulties in the labor market³⁻⁵. In the current project, we overcome previous work's focus on explanations for this employment gap by examining a novel solution for migrant youth's difficulties in the labor market.

We build on existing strength-based approaches that posit that people growing up in difficult conditions **develop enhanced abilities**, not despite, but precisely because of their challenging experiences⁶⁻⁷. Research suggests that by navigating and negotiating diverse cultural contexts, multicultural individuals can gain rich **knowledge** about diverse perspectives, values, and strategies and develop enhanced creativity, cognitive flexibility, and perspective-taking **abilities**⁸. Yet, we lack understanding of how the recognition of multicultural strengths emerges and to what extent it influences migrant youth's chances on the labor market. We propose that migrant youth's and employers' social networks determine whether multicultural strengths are recognized and how this recognition affects labor market outcomes.

Taken together, the aims of this project are twofold.

1. **Examining how social networks contribute to the recognition of multicultural strengths in a) multicultural youth and b) potential employers.** By using a novel visualized network-data collection tool specifically designed to survey complex personal networks we will be collecting ego-centric network data⁹. This data allows us to explore to what extent a ethnically diverse network¹⁰ contributes to the recognition of own multicultural strengths (among multicultural youth) and to the recognition of the multicultural strengths of potential applicants with multicultural background (among potential employers).
2. **Examining the effect of recognizing multicultural strength among a) multicultural youth and b) potential employers on the labor market integration of multicultural youth.** By applying an experimental design¹¹, we will test if multicultural youth who recognize their multicultural strength report higher levels of motivation and self-efficacy and write stronger motivational letters than multicultural youth who do not recognize their multicultural strength. Using vignette experiments in online surveys, we will test whether employers with a more diverse network evaluate job applications of multicultural youth more positively.

Keywords: Multicultural Strength Recognition, Social Networks, Group Dynamics, Development, Intergroup Relations

Supervisors: Verena Seibel, Sheida Novin, Tobias Stark

References

- ¹Andriessen, I., van Rooijen, M., Day, M., van den Berg, A., Mienis, E., & Verweij, N. (2021). Ongelijke kansen op de stagemarkt. *Onderzoek naar objectief vastgestelde en ervaren stagediscriminatie in het mbo in Utrecht*.
- ²Van Rooijen, M., & de Winter-Koçak, S. (2018). Gelijke kansen op gelijke stages. *Kennisplatform Integratie & Samenleving*.
- ³Kleinepier, T. (2016). Familieleven van migrantenkinderen leidt tot ongelijke kansen. *www.socialevraagstukken.nl*. <http://www.socialevraagstukken.nl/familieleven-van-migrantenkinderen-leidt-tot-ongelijke-kansen/>
- ⁴Bisschop, P., ter Weel, B., & Zwetsloot, J. (2020). Ethnic employment gaps of graduates in the Netherlands. *De Economist*, 168(4), 577-598.
- ⁵Falcke, S., Meng, C., & Nollen, R. (2020). Educational mismatches for second generation migrants. An analysis of applied science graduates in the Netherlands. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(15), 3235-3251.
- ⁶Frankenhuis, W. E., Young, E. S., & Ellis, B. J. (2020). The hidden talents approach: Theoretical and



Proposal Starter and Incentive Grant (2024)

methodological challenges. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 24, 569-581.

⁷Ellis, B. J., Abrams, L. S., Masten, A. S., Tottenham, N., Sternberg, R. J., & Frankenhuys, W. E. (2020). Hidden talents in harsh environments. *Development and Psychopathology*. Advance online publication: doi: [10.1017/S0954579420000887](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579420000887)

⁸Crisp, R. J., & Turner, R. N. (2011). Cognitive adaptation to the experience of social and cultural diversity. *Psychological Bulletin*, 137, 242–266.

⁹ Stark, T. H. & Krosnick, J. A. GENSI: A new graphical tool to collect ego-centered network data. *Soc Networks* 48, 36–45 (2017).

¹⁰Baalbergen, I. & Jaspers, E. Social Capital and Its Returns as an Explanation for Early Labor Market Success of Majority and Minority Members in the Netherlands. *Soc Indic Res* 1–24 (2022)

¹¹Bauer, C. A., Boemelburg, R., & Walton, G. M. (2021). Resourceful actors, not weak victims: Reframing refugees' stigmatized identity enhances long-term academic engagement. *Psychological science*, 32(12), 1896-1906.