

“This country is also ours”: The bright and dark sides of immigrant minorities’ perceptions of host-country ownership

Aim

To explore the implications of immigrant minorities’ perceptions of host-country ownership in the Netherlands and USA using a multi-actor, multi-disciplinary approach.

Theoretical background

Statements as ‘this country is also ours’ are increasingly used by immigrant-origin minorities to claim ownership of a country. The belief that the country is ‘also ours’ appeals to the notion that, therefore, ‘we’, in this case immigrant-origin minorities, are entitled to claim certain rights but also required to assume responsibilities. This perceived ownership could have a dual nature, contributing to outcomes that undermine harmonious intergroup relations, such as exclusionary attitudes toward newcomers and far-right voting, while also fostering cohesion-enhancing results like civic engagement and a heightened sense of collective responsibility. Hence, immigrant-origin minorities’ perceptions of country ownership can have both a dark and a bright side. While previous research on ownership perceptions has primarily focused on ethnic majority populations, the current project takes a novel approach by examining the perspectives of immigrant-origin minorities.

This project introduces perceived country ownership as a novel and potentially relevant explanation of immigrant-origin minorities’ civic participation and negative intergroup attitudes, with the expectation that ownership matters over and above the existing explanations of civic participation and intergroup attitudes. Multiple immigrant-origin minorities will be considered as well as migration generations in the context of the Netherlands, which is a relatively recent immigration country, and in the USA, a country that was built on immigration. Such a comparative design offers insights into the extent to which the processes are similar across groups and in two different national contexts.

A multifaceted methodology will be employed, including cross-sectional and longitudinal survey data, and survey-embedded experiments. We have secured access to high-quality, nation-wide datasets to examine how country ownership is perceived, whether these perceptions are conducive to higher civic involvement (the bright side) as well as stronger anti-immigration sentiments and far-right voting (the dark side), and what role perceived rights and perceived responsibilities play in these processes among immigrant-origin minorities. There are also funds available to conduct several additional experimental studies.

Literature

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- Nijs, T., Martinovic, B., & Verkuyten, M. (2022). The two routes of collective psychological ownership: Rights and responsibilities explain intentions to exclude outsiders and engage in stewardship behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 50(2), 270-284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672221129757>.

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