Chapter 1 Introduction: The Case for Discrimination Research



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European societies are more ethnically diverse than ever. The increasing migration-related diversity has fostered dramatic changes since the 1950s, among them the rise of striking ethno-racial inequalities in employment, housing, health, and a range of other social domains. The sources of these enduring inequalities have been a subject of controversy for decades. To some scholars, ethno-racial gaps in such outcomes are seen as transitional bumps in the road toward integration, while others view structural racism, ethnic hostility, and subtle forms of outgroup-bias as fundamental causes of persistent ethno-racial inequalities. These ethno-racial disadvantages *can* be understood as evidence of widespread discrimination; however, scholarly debates reflect striking differences in the conceptualization and measurement of discrimination in the social sciences.

What discrimination is, as well as how and why it operates, are differently understood and studied by the various scholarships and scientific fields. A large body of research has been undertaken over the previous three decades, using a variety of methods – qualitative, quantitative, and experimental. These research efforts have improved our knowledge of the dynamics of discrimination in Europe and beyond. It is the ambition of this book to summarize how we frame, study, theorize, and aim at combatting ethno-racial discrimination in Europe.

1.1 Post-War Immigration and the Ethno-racial Diversity Turn

Even though ethnic and racial diversity has existed to some extent in Europe (through the slave trade, transnational merchants, and colonial troops), the scope of migration-related diversity reached an unprecedented level in the period following World War II. This period coincides with broader processes of decolonization and the beginning of mass migration from non-European countries, be it from former

colonies to the former metropoles (from the Caribbean or India and Pakistan to the UK; South-East Asia, North Africa or Sub-Saharan Africa to France) or in the context of labor migration without prior colonial ties (from Turkey to Germany or the Netherlands; Morocco to Belgium or the Netherlands, etc.).

The ethnic and racial diversity in large demographic figures began in the 1960s (Van Mol and de Valk 2016). At this time, most labor migrants were coming from other European countries, but figures of non-European migration were beginning to rise: in 1975, 8% of the population in France and the UK had a migration background, half of which originated from a non-European country. By contrast, in 2014, 9.2% of the population of the EU28 had a migration background from outside of Europe (either foreign born or native-born from foreign-born parent(s)), and this share reached almost 16% in Sweden; 14% in the Netherlands, France, and the UK; and between 10 and 13% in Germany, Belgium, and Austria. The intensification of migration, especially from Asia and Africa, has heightened the visibility of ethnoracial diversity in large European metropolises. Almost 50% of inhabitants in Amsterdam and Rotterdam have a "nonwestern allochthon" background (2014), 40% of Londoners are black or ethnic minorities (2011), while 30% of Berliners (2013) and 43% of Parisians (metropolitan area; 2009) have a migration background. The major facts of this demographic evolution are not only that diversity has reached a point of "super-diversity" (see Vertovec 2007; Crul 2016) in size and origins, but also that descendants of immigrants (i.e., the second generation) today make up a significant demographic group in most European countries, with the exception of Southern Europe where immigration first boomed in the 2000s.

The coming of age of the second generation has challenged the capacity of different models of integration to fulfill promises of equality, while the socio-cultural cohesion of European societies is changing and has to be revised to include ethnic and racial diversity. Native-born descendants of immigrants are socialized in the country of their parents' migration and, in most European countries, share the full citizenship of the country where they live and, consequently, the rights attached to it. However, an increasing number of studies show that even the second generation faces disadvantages in education, employment, and housing that cannot be explained by their lack of skills or social capital (Heath and Cheung 2007). The transmission of penalties from one generation to the other – and in some cases an even higher level of penalty for the second generation than for the first – cannot be explained solely by the deficiencies in human, social, and cultural capital, as could have been the case for low-skilled labor migrants arriving in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, the persistence of ethno-racial disadvantages among citizens who do not differ from others except for their ethnic background, their skin color, or their religious beliefs is a testament to the fact that equality for all is an ambition not yet achieved.

Citizenship status may represent a basis for differential treatment. Undoubtedly, citizenship status is generally considered a legitimate basis for differential treatment, which is therefore not acknowledged as discrimination. Indeed, in many European countries, the divide between nationals and European Union (EU) citizens lost its bearing with the extension of social rights to EU citizens (Koopmans et al. 2012). Yet, in other countries, and for non-EU citizens, foreign citizenship

status creates barriers to access to social subsidies, health care, specific professions, and pensions or exposure to differential treatment in criminal justice. In most countries, voting rights are conditional to citizenship, and the movement to expand the polity to non-citizens is uneven, at least for elections of representatives at the national parliaments. Notably, in countries with restrictive access to naturalization, citizenship status may provide an effective basis for unequal treatment (Hainmueller and Hangartner 2013). The issue of discrimination among nationals, therefore, should not overshadow the enduring citizenship-based inequalities.

The gap between ethnic diversity among the population and scarcity of the representation of this diversity in the economic, political, and cultural elites demonstrate that there are obstacles to minorities entering these positions. This picture varies across countries and social domains. The UK, Belgium, or the Netherlands display a higher proportion of elected politicians with a migration background than France or Germany (Alba and Foner 2015). Some would argue that it is only a matter of time before newcomers will take their rank in the queue and access the close ring of power in one or two generations. Others conclude that there is a glass ceiling for ethno-racial minorities, which will prove as efficient as that for women to prevent them from making their way to the top. The exception that proves the rule can be found in sports, where athletes with minority backgrounds are often well represented in high-level competitions. The question is how to narrow the gap in other domains of social life, and what this gap tells us about the structures of inequalities in European societies.

1.2 Talking About Discrimination in Europe

Discrimination is as old as human society. However, the use of the concept in academic research and policy debates in Europe is fairly recent. In the case of differential treatment of ethnic and racial minorities, the concept was typically related to blatant forms of racism and antisemitism, while the more subtle forms of stigmatization, subordination, and exclusion for a long time did not receive much attention as forms of "everyday racism" (Essed 1991). The turn from explicit racism to more subtle forms of selection and preference based on ethnicity and race paved the way to current research on discrimination. In European societies, where formal equality is a fundamental principle protected by law, discrimination is rarely observed directly. Contrary to overt racism, which is explicit and easily identified, discrimination is typically a hidden part of decisions, selection processes, and choices that are not explicitly based on ethnic or racial characteristics, even though they produce unfair biases. Discrimination does not have to be intentional and it is often not even a conscious part of human action and interaction. While it is clear that discrimination exists, this form of differential treatment is hard to make visible. The major task of research in the field is thus to provide evidence of the processes and magnitude of discrimination. Beyond the variety of approaches in the different disciplines, however, discrimination researchers tend to agree on the starting point: stereotypes

and prejudices are nurturing negative perceptions, more or less explicit, of individuals or groups through processes of ethnicization or racialization, which in turn create biases in decision-making processes and serve as barriers to opportunities for these individuals or groups.

Although the concepts of inequality, discrimination, and racism are sometimes used interchangeably, the concept of discrimination entails specificities in terms of social processes, power relations, and legal frameworks that have opened new perspectives to understand ethnic and racial inequalities. The genealogy of the concept and its diffusion in scientific publications still has to be studied thoroughly, and we searched in major journals to identify broad historical sequences across national contexts. Until the 1980s, the use of the concept of discrimination was not widespread in the media, public opinion, science, or policies. In scientific publications, the dissemination of the concept was already well advanced in the US at the beginning of the twentieth century in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery to describe interracial relations. In Europe, there is a sharp distinction between the UK and continental Europe in this regard. The development of studies referring explicitly to discrimination in the UK has a clear link to the post-colonial migration after World War II and the foundation of ethnic and racial studies in the 1960s. However, the references to discrimination remained quite limited in the scientific literature until the 1990s – even in specialized journals such as Ethnic and Racial Studies, New Community and its follower Journal for Ethnic and Migration Studies, and more recently Ethnicities – when the number of articles containing the term discrimination in their title or keywords increased significantly. In French-speaking journals, references to discrimination were restricted to a small number of feminist journals in the 1970s and became popular in the 1990s and 2000s in mainstream social science journals. The same held true in Germany, with a slight delay in the middle of the 2000s. Since the 2000s, the scientific publications on discrimination have reached new peaks in most European countries.

The year 2000 stands as a turning point in the development of research and public interest in discrimination in continental Europe. This date coincides with the legal recognition of discrimination by the parliament of the EU through a directive "implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin," more commonly called the "Race Equality Directive." This directive put ethnic and racial discrimination on the political agenda of EU countries. This political decision contributed to changing the legal framework of EU countries, which incorporated non-discrimination as a major reference and transposed most of the terms of the Race Equality Directive into their national legislation. The implementation of the directive was also a milestone in the advent of the awareness of discrimination in Europe. In order to think in terms of discrimination, there should be a principle of equal treatment applied to everyone, regardless of their ethnicity or race. This principle of equal treatment is not new, but it has remained quite formal for a long time. The Race Equality Directive represented a turning point toward a more effective and proactive approach to achieve equality and accrued sensitivity to counter discrimination wherever it takes place.

The first step to mobilize against discrimination is to launch awareness-raising campaigns to create a new consciousness of the existence of ethno-racial disadvantages. The denial of discrimination is indeed a paradoxical consequence of the extension of formal equality in post-war democratic regimes. Since racism is morally condemned and legally prohibited, it is expected that discrimination should not occur and, thus, that racism is incidental. Incidentally, an opinion survey conducted in 2000 for the European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (which was replaced in 2003 by the Fundamental Rights Agency [FRA]), showed that only 31% of respondents in the EU15 at the time agreed that discrimination should be outlawed. However, the second Eurobarometer explicitly dedicated to studying discrimination in 2007 found that ethnic discrimination was perceived as the most widespread (very or fairly) type of discrimination by 64% of EU citizens (European Commission 2007), Almost 10 years later, in 2015, the answers were similar for ethnic discrimination but had increased for all other grounds except gender. Yet, there are large discrepancies between countries, with the Netherlands, Sweden, and France showing the highest levels of consciousness of ethnic discrimination (84%, 84%, and 82%, respectively), whereas awareness is much lower in Poland (31%) and Latvia (32%). In Western Europe, Germany (60%) and Austria (58%) stand out with relatively lower marks (European Commission 2015).

These Eurobarometer surveys provide useful information about the knowledge of discrimination and the attitudes of Europeans toward policies against it. However, they focus on the representation of different types of discrimination rather than the personal experience of minority members. To gather statistics on the experience of discrimination is difficult for two reasons: (1) minorities are poorly represented in surveys with relatively small samples in the general population and (2) questions about experiences of discrimination are rarely asked in non-specific surveys. Thanks to the growing interest in discrimination, more surveys are providing direct and indirect variables that are useful in studying the personal experiences of ethno-racial disadvantage.

The European Social Survey, for example, has introduced a question on perceived group discrimination (which is not exactly a personal self-reported experience of discrimination, see Chap. 4). In 2007 and 2015, the FRA conducted a specialized survey on discrimination in the 28 EU countries, the Minorities and Discrimination (EU-MIDIS) survey, to fill the gap in the knowledge of the experience of discrimination of ethnic and racial minorities. The information collected is wide ranging; however, only two minority groups were surveyed in each EU country, and the survey is not representative of the population.

Of course, European-wide surveys are not the main statistical sources on discrimination. Administrative statistics, censuses, and social surveys at the national and local levels in numerous countries bring new knowledge of discrimination, either with direct measures when this is the main topic of data collection or more indirectly when they provide information on gaps in employment or education faced by disadvantaged groups. The key point is to be able to identify the relevant population category in relation to discrimination, as we know that ethno-racial groups do not experience discrimination to the same extent. Analyses of immigrants or the

second generation as a whole might miss the significant differences between – broadly speaking – European and non-European origins. Or, to put it in a different way, between white and non-white or "visible" minorities. Countries where groups with a European background make up most of the migration-related diversity typically show low levels of discrimination, while countries with high proportions of groups with non-European backgrounds, especially Africans (North and Sub-Saharan), Caribbean people, and South Asians, record dramatic levels of discrimination.

1.3 Who Is Discriminated Against? The Problem with Statistics on Ethnicity and Race

Collecting data on discrimination raises the problem of the identification of minority groups. Migration-related diversity has been designed from the beginning of mass migration based on place of birth of the individuals (foreign born) or their citizenship (foreigners). In countries where citizenship acquisition is limited, citizenship or nationality draws the boundary between "us" and "the others" over generations. This is not the case in countries with more open citizenship regimes where native-born children of immigrants acquire by law the nationality of their country of residence and thus cannot be identified by these variables. If most European countries collect data on foreigners and immigrants, a limited number identify the second generation (i.e., the children of immigrants born in the country of immigration). The question is whether the categories of immigrants and the second generation really reflect the population groups exposed to ethno-racial discrimination. As the grounds of discrimination make clear, nationality or country of birth is not the only characteristic generating biases and disadvantages: ethnicity, race, or color are directly involved. However, if it seems straightforward to define country of birth and citizenship, collecting data on ethnicity, race, or color is complex and, in Europe, highly sensitive.

Indeed, the controversial point is defining population groups by using the same characteristics by which they are discriminated against. This raises ethical, political, legal, and methodological issues. Ethical because the choice to re-use the very categories that convey stereotypes and prejudices at the heart of discrimination entails significant consequences. Political because European countries have adopted a color-blind strategy since 1945, meaning that their political philosophies consider that racial terminologies are producing racism by themselves and should be strictly avoided (depending on the countries, ethnicities receive the same blame). Legal because most European countries interpret the provisions of the European directive on data protection and their transposition in national laws as a legal prohibition. Methodological because there is no standardized format to collect personal information on ethnicity or race and there are several methodological pitfalls commented in the scientific literature. Data on ethnicity per se are collected in censuses to describe national minorities in Eastern Europe, the UK, and Ireland, which are the

only Western European countries to produce statistics by ethno-racial categories (Simon 2012). The information is collected by self-identification either with an open question about one's ethnicity or by ticking a box (or several in the case of multiple choices) in a list of categories. None of these questions explicitly mention race: for example, the categories in the UK census refer to "White," "black British," or "Asian British" among other items, but the question itself is called the "ethnic group question."

In the rest of Europe, place of birth and nationality of the parents would be used as proxies for ethnicity in a limited number of countries: Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and Belgium to name a few. Data on second generations can be found in France, Germany, and Switzerland among others in specialized surveys with limitations in size and scope. Moreover, the succession of generations since the arrival of the first migrants will fade groups into invisibility by the third generation. This process is already well advanced in the oldest immigration countries, such as France, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. Asking questions about the grandparents and the previous generations is not an option since it would require hard decisions to classify those with mixed ancestry (how many ancestors are needed to belong to one category?), not to mention the problems in memory to retrieve all valuable information about the grandparents. This is one of the reasons why traditional immigration countries (USA, Canada, Australia) collect data on ethnicity through self-identification questions.

The discrepancies between official categories and those exposed to discrimination have fostered debates between state members and International Human Rights Organizations – such as the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) at the Council of Europe, and the EU FRA – which claim that more data are needed on racism and discrimination categorized by ethnicity. The same applies to academia and antiracist NGOs where debates host advocates and opponents to "ethnic statistics." There is no easy solution, but the accuracy of data for the measurement of discrimination is a strategic issue for both research and policies.

1.4 Discrimination and Integration: Commonalities and Contradictions

How does research on discrimination relate to the broader field of research on immigrant assimilation or integration? On one hand, assimilation/integration and discrimination are closely related both in theory and in empirical studies. Discrimination hinders full participation in society, and the persistence of ethnic penalties across generations contradicts long-term assimilation prospects. On the other hand, both assimilation and integration theory tend to assume that the role of discrimination in shaping access to opportunities will decrease over time. Assimilation is often defined as "the decline of ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social

difference" (Alba and Nee 2003, 11), a definition that bears an expectation that migrants and their descendants will over time cease to be viewed as different from the "mainstream population," reach parity in socioeconomic outcomes, and gradually become "one of us." In the canonical definition, integration departs from assimilation by considering incorporation as a two-way process. Migrants and ethnic minorities are expected to become full members of a society by adopting core values, norms, and basic cultural codes (e.g., language) from mainstream society, while mainstream society is transformed in return by the participation of migrants and ethnic minorities (Alba et al. 2012). The main idea is that convergence rather than differentiation should occur to reach social cohesion, and mastering the cultural codes of mainstream society will alleviate the barriers to resource access, such as education, employment, housing, and rights.

Of course, studies of assimilation and integration do not necessarily ignore that migrants and ethnic minorities face penalties in the course of the process of acculturation and incorporation into mainstream society. In the landmark book, *Assimilation in American Life*, Milton Gordon clearly spelled out that the elimination of prejudice and discrimination is a key parameter for assimilation to occur; or to use his own terms, that "attitude receptional" and "behavioral receptional" dimensions of assimilation are crucial to complete the process (Gordon 1964, 81). Yet, ethnic penalties are believed to be mainly determined by human capital and class differences and therefore progressively offset as education level rises, elevating the newcomers to conditions of the natives and reducing the social distance between groups. Stressing the importance of generational progress, assimilation theory thus tends to consider discrimination as merely a short-run phenomenon.

The main blind spots in assimilation and integration theories revolve around two issues: the specific inequalities related to the ethnicization or racialization of non-white minorities and the balance between the responsibilities of the structures of mainstream society and the agencies of migrants and ethnic minorities in the process of incorporation. Along these two dimensions, discrimination research offers a different perspective than what is regularly employed in studies of assimilation and integration.

Discrimination research tends to identify the unfavorable and unfair treatment of individuals or groups based on categorical characteristics and often shows these unfair treatments lie in the activation of stereotypes and prejudices by gatekeepers and the lack of neutrality in processes of selection. In this perspective, what has to be transformed and adapted to change the situation are the structures – the institutions, procedures, bureaucratic routines, etc. – of mainstream society, opening it up to ethnic and racial diversity to enable migrants and ethnic minorities to participate on equal footing with other individuals, independent of their identities. By contrast, in studies of assimilation and integration, explanations of disadvantages are often linked to the lack of human capital and social networks among migrants and ethnic minorities, suggesting that they have to transform themselves to be able to take full part in society. To simplify matters, studies of assimilation and integration often explain persistent disadvantages by pointing to characteristics of migrants and

ethnic minorities, while discrimination research explains disadvantages by characteristics of the social and political system.

Both assimilation and integration theories have gradually opened up for including processes of ethnicization and racialization and the consequences of such processes on assimilation prospects. Most prominently, segmented assimilation theory (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993) shifts the focus away from migrants' adaptation efforts and to the forms of interaction between minority groups – and prominently the second and later generations – and the receiving society. In this variant of assimilation theory, societies are viewed as structurally stratified by class, gender, and race, which powerfully influence the resources and opportunities available to immigrants and their descendants and contribute to shaping alternative paths of incorporation. According to segmented assimilation theory, children of immigrants may end up "ascending into the ranks of a prosperous middle class or join in large numbers the ranks of a racialized, permanently impoverished population at the bottom of society" (Portes et al. 2005, 1004), the latter outcome echoing worries over persistent ethnic and racial disadvantage. Another possible outcome is upward bicultural mobility (selective acculturation) of the children of poorly educated parents, protected by strong community ties.

The major question arising from these related fields of research – the literature on assimilation and integration, on the one hand, and the literature on discrimination, on the other – is whether the gradual diversification of Europe will result in "mainstream expansion," in which migrants and their descendants over time will ascend the ladders into the middle and upper classes of the societies they live in, or whether we are witnessing the formation of a permanent underclass along ethnic and racial lines. This book will not provide the ultimate answer to this question. However, by introducing the main concepts, theories, and methods in the field of discrimination, as well as pointing out key research findings, policies that are enacted to combat discrimination, and avenues for future research, we hope to provide the reader with an overview of the field.

1.5 The Content of the Book

The literature on discrimination is flourishing, and it involves a wide range of concepts, theories, methods, and findings. Chapter 2 provides the key concepts in the field. The chapter distinguishes between direct and indirect discrimination as legal and sociological concepts, between systemic and institutional discrimination, and between discrimination as intentional actions, subtle biases, and what might be referred to as the cumulative effects of past discrimination on the present. Chapter 3 reviews the main theoretical explanations of discrimination from a cross-disciplinary perspective. Mirroring the historical development of the field, it presents and discusses theories seeking the cause of prejudice and discrimination at the individual, organizational, and structural levels.

Of course, our knowledge of discrimination depends on the methods of measurement, since the phenomenon is mainly visible through its quantification. Hence, Chapter 4 offers an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of available methods of measurement, including statistical analysis of administrative data, surveys among potential victims and perpetrators, qualitative in-depth studies, legal cases, and experimental approaches to the study of discrimination (including survey experiments, lab experiments, and field experiments).

Importantly, discrimination does not occur similarly in all domains of social life, and it takes different forms according to the domain in question (e.g., the labor market, education, housing, health services, and public services). Chapter 5 taps into the large body of empirical work that can be grouped under the heading "discrimination research" in order to provide some key findings, while simultaneously highlighting a distinction between systems of differentiation and systems of equality.

What happens when discrimination occurs? Chapter 6 addresses the consequences of unfair treatment for targeted individuals and groups, as well as their reaction to it. These individual and collective responses to discrimination are seconded by policies designed to tackle discrimination. However, antidiscrimination policies vary greatly across countries, and Chapter 7 provides an overview of the different types of policies against discrimination in Europe and beyond, both public policies and schemes implemented by organizations. The chapter also reflects on some of the key political and societal debates about the implementation and the future of these policies. Chapter 8 concludes on the future of discrimination research in Europe, stressing the main challenges ahead for a burgeoning scientific field.

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