

Chapter 8

Conclusion



This book has provided an overview of the current field of discrimination research, emphasizing how race, ethnicity and minority status shape current opportunities in Europe. It has outlined key concepts, theories, and methods; suggested how discrimination plays out differently in different social domains and how experiences of discrimination impact individuals and groups; and it has provided a brief synthesis of the policies developed to combatting discrimination.

Since its inception as a research field in the US in the 1950s, the study of discrimination has flourished over the last 20–30 years in Europe. This is no coincidence. European countries have, in this time period, gradually turned multicultural and multireligious, where a continuous inflow of immigrants from all over the world, alongside the coming of age of their descendants, has triggered an unprecedented level of migration-related diversity. Today, most European countries are characterized by high levels of ethno-racial inequality, where disparities between groups in education, work, housing, and health are striking. Decades of research have made evident that widespread discrimination plays a role in creating these inequalities, raising the question of whether the previously dominant conceptual frame of integration is insufficient or even inadequate to account for the socio-structural position of ethno-racial minorities over time.

8.1 Pervasive, Perpetuating, and Persistent

As shown by the last Eurobarometer survey on discrimination (European Commission 2019), the awareness of ethnic discrimination is present, as it is perceived as widespread by 59% of respondents in Europe. However, this awareness does not suggest that proactive antidiscrimination policies find large support, nor that prejudices against ethnic, racial, and religious minorities have diminished. Rather, the findings of the impressive breadth of research reveal a worrying picture of enduring discrimination in immigrant-receiving societies across space and time,

suggesting the contour of troubling “three P’s” in contemporary European societies: discrimination appears to be pervasive, perpetuating, and persistent.

8.1.1 Pervasive Presence

First of all, meta-analyses have documented that immigrant-origin groups face significant discrimination in access to employment in nine countries in Europe and North America (Quillian et al. 2019), as well as in the broader OECD area (Zschirnt and Ruedin 2016). Yet the level of discrimination seems to vary considerably across national contexts: In some countries, native-majority job applicants receive close to twice the callbacks of minority applicants, while in others, natives receive about 25% more (Quillian et al. 2019). This cross-national variation suggests that the institutional contexts surrounding discriminatory actions matter.

8.1.2 Perpetuating Configuration

In contrast to predictions in integration and assimilation theories, the level of discrimination facing immigrants and their descendants do not seem to differ substantially. This suggests that ethnicity, and presumably religion, are driving factors for discrimination (Heath and Cheung 2007; Carlsson 2010; Zschirnt and Ruedin 2016; Di Stasio et al. 2019). Moreover, abundant evidence from a range of different studies shows the existence of clear ethnic hierarchies, where European-origin groups experience significantly less discrimination than non-European origin groups. Such group differences in the level of discrimination are documented directly, by the use of field experiments, (Quillian et al. 2019), as well as indirectly, by the use of the residual method (e.g., Heath et al. 2008; Heath and Brinbaum 2014) and various studies of experiences of discrimination (e.g., Beauchemin et al. 2018; Beigang et al. 2017; Andriessen et al. 2014). In sum, these studies suggest that a growing process of racialization is currently taking place in Europe.

8.1.3 Persistent Pattern

A major concern arises from the fact that, in spite of the implementation of antidiscrimination measures, levels of hiring discrimination in the US and the UK remain largely unchanged over time (Quillian et al. 2017; Heath and Di Stasio 2019). It is not clear whether the same is true for other European countries, yet the adoption of antidiscrimination legislation in Europe in the 2000s does not appear to have had an impact on the extent of discrimination (Zschirnt and Ruedin 2016). In many countries, measures to address discrimination have been adopted. Systematic monitoring

of their implementation and of the effectiveness of single measures in various contexts could stimulate a collective learning process aimed at reaching beyond formal also effective equality.

8.2 Discrimination and Integration Revisited

The three P's raise fundamental questions about the long-term prospects of integration, as has been the dominant frame of analyses in the field of migration studies for decades. Of course, integration may occur despite persistent discrimination, as evident in the research on the so-called "integration paradox" (e.g., Schaeffer 2018; Steinmann 2018). Yet, we need to acknowledge that ethnic and racial discrimination is part of the current European reality, despite decades of legal efforts to eliminate the problem. How this affects the life chances and identity of Europe's ethno-racial minority groups, and whether it obscures the prospects of a long-term "mainstream expansion" (cf., Alba and Yrizar Barbosa 2016), are among the most pressing questions of today.

Although theories of integration and discrimination do not necessarily clash, significant contradictions arise when it comes to policies. Where antidiscrimination policies aim at adapting and transforming the structures of societies (institutions, laws, policies, procedures, practices, and representations) to make them fair and accessible to immigrants and minorities, integration policies mainly aim at empowering immigrants and their children by enhancing their human and social capital. Clearly, integration policies are not sufficient for addressing the persistence of discrimination. Much more work is needed to understand what diversity or antidiscrimination policies work in limiting bias and reducing discrimination.

8.3 Avenues for Future Research

The many advancements of discrimination research over the past decades, combined with the growing concern of the consequences of discrimination at both the individual, group, and societal levels, point out a range of future research prospects. Experimental methods have been the key approach to measure the prevalence of discrimination, yet the use of this methodology in Europe has not yet been able to disentangle the effects of racial appearance and religious beliefs on opportunities in labor or housing markets. Due to problems of comparability across research designs, experimental studies of discrimination also have a long way to go in investigating how particularities of institutional contexts shape the level of discrimination.

Apart from quantitative and experimental studies that provide estimates of the prevalence of discrimination in societies committed to equality of opportunity, many qualitative studies have looked closer into the reactions among those exposed to unfair treatment, blatant racism, and micro-aggressions in everyday life. Victims

of discrimination are not without agency to react and counter unfair treatment, even though they might prefer to ignore their negative experiences rather than speak against them. Clearly, reacting to discrimination is preconditioned by a consciousness of its existence. The function of research on discrimination is also to create the conditions for this consciousness to rise among minority groups, public authorities, and civil society. More research is needed to fully understand the costs and consequences of discrimination and how experiences of discrimination shape life chances, identity, and potential withdrawal from mainstream society.

Importantly, studying ethnic and racial discrimination requires having access to reliable and comparable data describing population groups that are categorized in relevant categories (i.e., related to ethnicity and race). Statistics in Europe are mainly based on nationality and place of birth, and in only a handful of countries is the same information available about the parents of domestic-born minorities (the second and later generations). These categories only partly describe groups and individuals that are facing ethnic and racial discrimination. The choice to deem ethnic and racial categories as irrelevant and even dangerous has its historical rationale, but the lack of data makes it complicated to map out and understand the consequences of the ongoing process of racialization in European societies (Simon 2017). The lack of appropriate data not only jeopardizes a detailed knowledge of discrimination processes, but it prevents the implementation of monitoring of procedures and practices meant to enhance diversity in domains such as education, work, and health and thus entails a severe limitation in the development of effective antidiscrimination policies. How to establish categories that enable researchers to identify the barriers facing ethno-racial minorities that are at present not detectable in national statistics will be a question of major importance in the years to come.

Even if we have focused on ethnic and racial discrimination in this book, multiple grounds of discrimination are often present in the experience of unfair treatment. Intersectionality is a conceptual framework that offers heuristic perspectives for research on discrimination, and it should be developed beyond the usual articulation between gender and race or class and ethnicity. The increase of religious discrimination against Muslims in Europe – a phenomenon often referred to as Islamophobia – is changing the conceptual frames of ethnic and racial studies (Taras 2012). As shown by recent research in Europe, prejudices against Muslims are widespread (EUMC 2006; Strabac and Listhaug 2008; FRA 2017), fostering what has been called a “racialization of religion” (Meer 2014). Whether and how religion is replacing ethnicity or race as a marker of identity, and hence as the basis of discrimination, should receive more attention in future studies.

References

- Alba, R., & Yrizar Barbosa, G. (2016). Room at the top? Minority mobility and the transition to demographic diversity in the USA. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(6), 917–938. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2015.1081966>.
- Andriessen, I., Fernee, H., & Wittebrood, K. (2014). *Perceived discrimination in the Netherlands*. Den Haag: Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP).
- Beauchemin, C., Hamel, C., & Simon, P. (Eds.). (2018). *Trajectories and origins: Survey on the diversity of the French population* (INED population studies 8). Cham: Springer.
- Beigang, S., Fetz, K., Kalkum, D., & Otto, M. (2017). *Diskriminierungserfahrungen in Deutschland: Ergebnisse einer Repräsentativ- und einer Betroffenenbefragung*. Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Carlsson, M. (2010). Experimental evidence of discrimination in the hiring of first- and second-generation immigrants. *Labour*, 24(3), 263–278. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9914.2010.00482.x>.
- Di Stasio, V., Lancee, B., Veit, S., & Yemane, R. (2019). Muslim by default or religious discrimination? Results from a cross-national field experiment on hiring discrimination. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1622826>.
- European Commission. (2019). *Discrimination in the EU* (Special Eurobarometer 493). Brussels: European Commission.
- European Monitoring Centre on racism and xenophobia (EUMC). (2006). *Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia*. European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Islamophobia.
- FRA. (2017). *Second European Union minorities and discrimination survey: Muslims – Selected findings*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Heath, A., & Brinbaum, Y. (Eds.). (2014). *Unequal attainments. Ethnic educational inequalities in ten Western countries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heath, A. F., & Cheung, S. Y. (Eds.). (2007). *Unequal chances: Ethnic minorities in Western labour markets*. Oxford: British Academy/Oxford University Press.
- Heath, A., & Di Stasio, V. (2019). Racial discrimination in Britain, 1969–2017: A meta-analysis of field experiments on racial discrimination in the British labour market. *British Journal of Sociology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12676>.
- Heath, A. F., Rethon, C., & Kilpi, E. (2008). The second generation in Western Europe: Education, unemployment, and occupational attainment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34, 211–235. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134728>.
- Meer, N. (Ed.). (2014). *Racialization and religion: Race, culture, and difference in the study of antisemitism and Islamophobia*. London: Routledge.
- Quillian, L., Hexel, O., Pager, D., & Midtbøen, A. H. (2017). Meta-analysis of field experiments shows no change in racial discrimination in hiring over time. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in the United States*, 114(41), 10870–10875. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1706255114>.
- Quillian, L., Heath, A., Pager, D., Midtbøen, A. H., Fleischmann, F., & Hexel, O. (2019). Do some countries discriminate more than others? Evidence from 97 field experiments of racial discrimination in hiring. *Sociological Science*, 6, 467–496. <https://doi.org/10.15195/v6.a18>.
- Schaeffer, M. (2018). Social mobility and perceived discrimination: Adding an intergenerational perspective. *European Sociological Review*, 35(1), 65–80. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcy042>.
- Simon, P. (2017). The failure of the importation of ethno-racial statistics in Europe: Debates and controversies. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40(13), 2326–2332. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1344278>.
- Steinmann, J.-P. (2018). The paradox of integration: Why do higher educated new immigrants perceive more discrimination in Germany? *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1480359>.

- Strabac, Z., & Listhaug, O. (2008). Anti-Muslim prejudice in Europe: A multilevel analysis of survey data from 30 countries. *Social Science Research*, 37(1), 268–286. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2007.02.004>.
- Taras, R. (2012). *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Zschirnt, E., & Ruedin, D. (2016). Ethnic discrimination in hiring decisions: A meta-analysis of correspondence tests 1990–2015. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies*, 42(7), 1115–1134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1133279>.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

