Belonging and Boundary Work in Majority–Minority Cities: Practices of (In)Exclusion

Edited by Ismintha Waldring, Maurice Crul, and Frans Lelie

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EDITORIAL

Navigating Social Boundaries and Belonging: People Without Migration Background in Majority–Minority Cities

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Abstract

This editorial introduces the articles in this thematic issue, which revolves around the ERC Advanced research project Becoming *a* Minority (B*a*M), carried out between 2018 and 2023. The aim of the project was to understand how people without a migration background think about and live in diversity. Through this aim, the B*a*M project has tried to advance our thinking about the concept of integration.

Keywords

belonging; ethnic diversity; in- and exclusion; majority–minority; social boundaries; symbolic boundaries

1. Introduction

This thematic issue revolves around the ERC Advanced research project Becoming *a* Minority (B*a*M). The B*a*M project was carried out between 2018 and 2023, and focused on people without a migration background living in six majority–minority cities in Europe: Amsterdam, Antwerp, Hamburg, Malmö, Rotterdam, and Vienna. The aim of the project was to understand how people without a migration background think about and live in diversity (Crul et al., 2023). Through this aim, the B*a*M project has tried to advance our thinking about the concept of integration. Whereas integration of people with a migration background has been widely researched within the European context (e.g., Eijberts & Ghorashi, 2017; Pulinx & Van Avermaet, 2015; Sezgin, 2019), far fewer studies have taken it upon themselves to include people without a migration background into research on integration. Yet, there is consensus among migration scholars that integration should be studied as a two-way process (cf. Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016; Martinović, 2013), whereby people without a migration background have a role to play in integration outcomes.

We will empirically expatiate how people without a migration background think about and behave in the majority–minority neighborhoods and cities in which they live. What characterizes these neighborhoods and cities is that they are comprised of only ethnic minority groups, including the group of people without a migration background having become a numerical minority. Specifically, what this issue aims to uncover is the interplay between symbolic and social boundary-making, and feelings of belonging in majority–minority neighborhoods, in order to understand practices of in- and exclusion in majority–minority contexts in Europe.

Through the articles run themes such as how national discourses in Europe resonate on the local, majority–minority level. Another theme in the articles is the function of space and positionality, and how neighborhood spaces—such as shops, schools, parks, and streets—and the formalized roles that residents may play in these spaces can gain a strategic function for neighborhood residents to interact across ethnic boundaries.

2. Conceptual Overview

There's a substantial body of work done on symbolic and social boundaries in relation to identity and ethnic boundary-making (e.g., Alba, 2005; Barth, 1994; Lamont et al., 2015; Wimmer, 2008). Lamont et al. (2015) define symbolic boundaries as "the lines that include and define some people, groups, and things while excluding others" (p. 850). This defining aspect of symbolic boundaries not only pertains to how people identify others, but inherently also to how they self-identify. This process of drawing up symbolic boundaries between self and others is related to attitudes about various social (ethnic) groups in society. And these attitudes can spill over into the drawing up of social boundaries (see for example Edgell et al., 2019), which represent concrete and material consequences, which can amount to in- and exclusionary practices between groups of people in society.

The in- and exclusionary practices between groups of people can affect feelings of belonging. Belonging to a place can be seen as entailing "a profound emotional connection to one's home and neighborhood" (Mohseni et al., 2024) and this emotional connection can be felt with multiple places simultaneously, and at multiple levels, such as feeling a sense of belonging on a national and local level (Pinkster, 2016; Yuval-Davis, 2006). The importance of the local, or neighborhood level, has become more profound due to globalization, which instead of eroding local identities, has added to the importance of the neighborhood with regard to the construction of local identities, attachments, and belonging (Savage et al., 2005, p. 204).

3. Methodology of the B*a*M Project

The B*a*M project focused on people without a migration background, between the age of 25 to 45, living in a majority–minority neighborhood in one of the six European cities. We define people without a migration background as people born in the country of residence, also having two parents who were born in the country of residence. This implies that our respondents have at least for two generations lived in the country. We understand that this definition can capture people who have grandparents from abroad, but as "the administrative data systems in Europe do not make distinctions based on skin color" (Crul & Lelie, 2023, p. 25), neither on country of birth of grandparents, we opted to adhere to the way in which the administrative data has been created (see also Crul & Lelie, 2023; Crul et al., 2023).

The project included a survey and semi-structured interviews. The articles in this issue revolve around the interviews, with the exception of the article by Crul et al. (2024), which departs from the survey data but adds interview excerpts to the analysis. Another exception is the article by Keskiner et al. (2024), which includes additional interviews from Amsterdam and Tilburg, a middle-sized Dutch city.

The qualitative fieldwork amounted to around 20 respondents without a migration background per city. The collection of these semi-structured interviews was done by the B*a*M project PhDs and research assistants in the case of Belgium, Sweden, and the Netherlands. The data was collected in 2019 and 2020. Residents who at first sight seemed to fit the B*a*M profile were approached in the neighborhood, screened if they belonged to our target group, and asked whether they would like to participate in a study about living in a diverse neighborhood.

4. Overview of the Articles

In this issue, there are six empirical articles based on the B*a*M data, and two commentaries. Here we present a short overview of the articles.

The article by Crul et al. (2024) addresses the discrepancies between attitudes and actual behaviors of people without a migration background living in majority–minority neighborhoods. They focus on people with positive attitudes about diversity who hardly engage with diversity in their own social circle, labeling this the "diversity paradox." In looking for an explanation for this commonly found paradox among B*a*M respondents, the authors argue that respondents can experience "belonging uncertainty" in spaces where they are—in an obvious way— the numerical minority. Respondents can overcome this belonging uncertainty by having a clear, formalized, and designated role in a diverse space.

Kraus et al. (2024) further build upon understanding belonging uncertainty by delving deeper into the practices of people without a migration background in Vienna. The authors point to the social boundaries that people experience when becoming aware of their numerical minority position in the neighborhood. Whereas some residents without a migration background decide to avoid these spaces, drawing clear social boundaries for themselves within the neighborhood and self-segregating, other residents who experience belonging uncertainty try to cross boundaries by consciously and repeatedly exposing themselves to spaces in which they form a numerical minority, trying to gain a sense of belonging in the neighborhood.

Knipprath's article (2024) moves away from how individual behaviors contribute to practices of in- and exclusion in majority–minority neighborhoods, to focus more on societal structures. He argues that state policies deliberately attempt to have middle-class residents move into a majority–minority neighborhood in Hamburg under the banner of introducing more social mixing among different groups of people. Yet, the introduction of the middle class in the neighborhood creates a new social divide and drives longer-established low-income residents and people with a migration background to the social margins of the neighborhood.

Lazëri et al. (2024) address both the individual and the state level in understanding how residents experience their position in a majority–minority neighborhood in Malmö. The authors argue that national discourses on ethnic boundaries continue to play a role in how residents without a migration background in a

majority–minority neighborhood define their ethnic identity on both the national and local level. They show how national discourses create symbolic boundaries around Swedishness and belonging in Sweden, and how these symbolic boundaries are maintained by residents without a migration background living in a majority–minority neighborhood. Simultaneously, the majority–minority setting does seem to make residents without a migration background more aware of their whiteness and the privilege around whiteness.

Privilege also features in the article by Schut and Crul (2024), who focus on middle-class parents without a migration background who opted to send their children to a mixed primary school in their majority–minority neighborhood in Amsterdam. The authors describe how this choice for a mixed neighborhood school aligns with the progressive, liberal norms and values that these middle-class parents embrace. These parents value ethnic diversity and aim to be open to difference. Yet, this openness is challenged when it comes to Dutch norms and values around sexuality and sex education in primary schools. Middle-class parents without a migration background are faced with the paradox of wanting to be open to ethnic diversity on the one hand, while simultaneously expecting parents with a migration background—who form the numerical majority within the school setting—to adhere to dominant Dutch progressive norms around sexuality, even when the latter refuse to.

In the article by Keskiner et al. (2024), the authors pose the question of whether to understand the behaviors of parents without a migration background in majority–minority settings in terms of ethnicity or in terms of class background. These authors use a comparative angle in their analysis to show how mothers without a migration background in two majority–minority primary schools reflect and act upon the ethnic diversity within the schools. They show how the attitudes and behaviors of the mothers do not always align, and how the mothers without a migration background who have grown up in diversity manage to avoid drawing social boundaries to engage with ethnic diversity within the school setting.

The commentary by Warikoo (2024) delves deeper into the articles that focus on the school context within majority–minority neighborhoods. Warikoo argues that both articles push further our understanding of the consequences of school choice in relation to diversity and the differences in convictions between parents with and without a migration background that can come to the fore in the profoundly personal context of a primary school. The author calls for a more critical power perspective into further understanding of how parental choices might cascade into larger social changes.

The commentary by Jiménez (2024) also calls for future research to pay attention to how individual-level changes might spill over into societal changes. His commentary focuses specifically on the article by Crul et al. (2024), which includes the analysis of the B*a*M survey data. What Jiménez argues is that the article offers an explanation for the "diversity paradox," but that future research should try to better understand where the paradox originates. Jiménez in his commentary makes a first attempt by bringing together his analyses from the US context and the European data from B*a*M, bringing in political orientation not as a mere "set of attitudes about issues," but rather as a "deeply felt social identity" (Jiménez, 2024, p. 3) allowing for a "critical white racial identity" which is highly appreciative of diversity without necessarily living in or engaging with diversity.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Ismintha Waldring holds a joint PhD in sociology from the VU University Amsterdam and the University of Antwerp and worked as a postdoctoral researcher in the B*a*M project. Her doctoral dissertation traced back the pathways to success and labor-market experiences of highly educated second-generation professionals of Turkish descent in four European countries. She currently works as an assistant professor at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her research interests include boundary strategies, subtle mechanisms of exclusion in organizational settings (the education sector in particular), and the role of education professionals in majority–minority city contexts in Europe.

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ARTICLE

Negotiating the Progressive Paradox: Middle-Class Parents in Majority–Minority Primary Schools in Amsterdam

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Abstract

Across Western Europe, progressive issues take centre stage within integration debates and discourse. This article addresses the paradox middle-class progressives get caught up in when arguing for openness towards diversity, while also expecting adaptation to the progressive "modern" norm on sexuality, especially from Muslim Others. Going beyond existing literature, this article demonstrates the understudied manifestations of this paradox in everyday life, within a diverse majority–minority primary school context in Amsterdam. Taking sex education as a case, the authors reveal three different approaches—confrontational, continued discussion, and compromise—with which middle-class parents without a migration background negotiate difference, each emphasizing different aspects of the paradox. The results show how, despite being a local numerical minority, progressive parents still enact their power position at large arguing for (gradual) adaptation to "modernity." However, some parents provide solutions to difference that move away from consensus and envision a future that allows for multiple norms to exist.

1. Introduction

In Western European societies, sexuality features prominently in public debates and discourses on integration. With the Netherlands portrayed as an especially liberal country on issues of sexuality, citizens are expected to embrace progressive, liberal norms and values—especially regarding gender equality and sexual liberation (Mepschen et al., 2010). These progressive norms and values are considered to be the core of Dutch liberal society. Conformity to these norms is expected from all citizens, but particularly from

people with migration backgrounds, and specifically Muslims, who are deemed to deviate from these liberal norms on sexuality (Duyvendak et al., 2016). They are depicted as "backwards" and in need of modernizing. This aspect of the integration discourse, which is thus entangled with progressive expectations, does not only operate on the public or political level, but can permeate people's practices, emotions, experiences, and can significantly impact interactions in everyday life (Mepschen, 2016). Yet, how the importance of commonly held progressive norms on sexuality in Dutch society exactly plays out in everyday diverse contexts is far less analysed.

This article focuses on the narratives of progressive, liberal middle-class parents without migration background within the everyday context of ethnically diverse primary schools in Amsterdam. Amsterdam was the first of three large Dutch cities to transition into a so-called majority–minority city: a context in which people without migration background now form an ethnic numerical minority (Crul, 2016). Further, this demographic reality characterizes an urban environment in which an increased differentiation exists between ethnic groups, but also within these groups.

Against the backdrop of this city context, we specifically focused on middle-class parents residing in Amsterdam who, additionally, opted for a majority–minority primary school for their children. In the Netherlands, there is to a large extent a free school choice, which in practice means that people without a migration background can avoid schools with a large percentage of children with a migration background (Foli & Boterman, 2022). However, in the last decade, there has been a growing group of parents without migration background who have deliberately chosen a diverse majority–minority school for their child(ren), because they believe that their child(ren) should learn to live with each other (Boterman, 2013).

This local majority–minority school context thus puts parents without migration background who embrace the progressive norm, and who are open towards diversity, in an actual everyday setting in which they are now one of the numerical minorities. As such, progressive middle-class parents find themselves in situations in which they are no longer self-evidently the norm. In this article, we empirically demonstrate how these parents respond to this situation, and how they perceive and negotiate differences regarding norms on sexuality, by exploring their narratives regarding sex education in primary schools. Using sex education as a case, this article aims to answer the following research question:

> How do progressive middle-class parents without migration backgrounds deal with perceived differences relating to progressive norms in a majority–minority primary school setting?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Dutch Context: Progressive Modern Consensus and the Backward Other

In the Netherlands, ideas about progressive values such as secularism, gender equality, and sexual freedom have become widely shared after the transformations of the 1960s, when large segments of the population rapidly distanced themselves, within only one generation, from Christian norms and values and "moral traditionalism" (Mepschen et al., 2010; Van der Veer, 2006). Whereas in the United States, for instance, opinions about progressive issues are sharply divided among its citizens, the Dutch population today seems in high agreement on progressive ideals, especially regarding gender equality and sexuality. The percentage

of Dutch who seem to support gay rights and propositions such as "homosexuality is normal" is among the highest in the world (Gerhards, 2010). The majority of the population rejects propositions such as "women have to have children to be happy" and "a child should respect its parents." However, such a growing "progressive consensus" should not be misconstrued with the idea that there is no diversity at all in this respect, also among the Dutch without migration background. The Bible Belt for example, a large religious Christian group, holds conservative ideas around sexuality. This idea of a consensus on progressive liberal norms regarding sexuality seems most prominent among the Dutch middle class in large cities, especially in the progressive city of Amsterdam (Foner et al., 2014). But what the overall formation of a "progressive consensus" among the middle class primarily indicates is that progressiveness has become a pillar of the Dutch secular, liberal, respectable, modern, and Enlightened self-image (Bartelink & Wiering, 2020; Van den Berg & Schinkel, 2009), and the norm to which all Dutch citizens are expected to adhere. This includes the middle-class expectation that all people should be able to talk openly, freely, and publicly about sexuality, without shame or blushing (Van den Berg, 2013; Wiering, 2020).

While consensus on sexuality is thus expected from all Dutch citizens, certain groups are especially singled out to conform as they are perceived to be stuck in traditional family, authoritarian, and religious values. This includes Christian groups, but also—and most often—Muslims who are deemed sexually "backwards" and deviating from the Dutch modern moral standard (Butler, 2008; Ghorashi, 2003; Uitermark et al., 2014; Wekker, 2016; Wiering, 2020).

The notion that Muslims, most often people with a Moroccan and Turkish migration background, are in need of modernizing has become dominant in Dutch integration discourse, especially within the political right circles, but it can also be found among the progressive left (although in lighter and more subtle forms; Duyvendak et al., 2016; Uitermark et al., 2014). Such discourse is based on an essentialized understanding of "cultures" ("migrant culture" versus "Dutch modern culture") as homogeneous wholes of static, fixed, cultural norms and values (Van den Berg & Schinkel, 2009), dismissing differences within these "cultures" and the possibility that one can be Muslim and support a progressive position on sexuality-related issues (Bartelink & Knibbe, 2022). In addition, this dominant integration discourse carries the self-evident expectation that the "backward Other" should adapt to the "modern" progressive standard (Duyvendak et al., 2016). Not only must they conform to these norms, but they are also expected to internalize the progressive consensus, in emotional terms, as their own moral principles. Hence, this "consensual dismissal" of a different set of norms and practices (Slootman & Duyvendak, 2015, p. 150) leaves little space for difference and the negotiation thereof.

Despite its dominance, the entanglement of progressive issues within the integration discourse puts particularly middle-class progressives, liberals, and anti-racists in a rather difficult stretch: They feel they can only fully show their commitment to progressive values by distancing themselves from Muslims' alleged conservatism, thereby running the risk to partake in exclusionary culturalist rhetoric (Mepschen et al., 2010). The crucial issue here is that part of the "open" liberal ideology, which these progressive people support, is of course that it allows for differences and does not impose an all-encompassing norm. In other words, progressive people are caught in their own paradox when they emphatically argue that all should adapt to progressive liberal norms on sexuality, while they also advocate that we all should accept diversity. However, Duyvendak (2021, p. 4215) argues that, because progressive norms are part of the Dutch liberal self-image that is considered to be at stake, it can fuel "illiberal" positions on issues of accepting diversity. Such positions can, as mentioned, manifest in distinctions made between those who have "arrived in modernity"

by embracing and embodying progressiveness and those who are "lagging behind" somewhere in the past (Van den Berg, 2016).

2.2. Power and "Arriving in Modernity"

The question of "who has arrived in modernity and who has not?" is infused with temporal logic (Butler, 2008, p. 1). Various studies have explored temporal logic (i.e., "uses of the past") in contemporary integration discourse and narratives among people without a migration background (Bertossi et al., 2021; Mepschen et al., 2010). These studies focus, for instance, on the way *evaluations* of the present are translated into a time sequence to give meaning to that present. With such translations, "realities are referred back, away from the present," even though those situations actually exist in the present (Mills, 1969). These temporal evaluations come into being, for example, when perceived differences are expressed in terms of "distance in time" (Fabian, 2014). Such temporal distance is then interpreted as "unequal progress" between those who are stuck in the past and those already in modernity (Fabian, 2014).

Framing progressive "modern" issues as unequal temporal progress is not without consequences as it produces a clear hierarchy. In Butler's view, it is therefore not "cultural difference" that is the problem here, but rather how "hegemonic perceptions of progress define themselves over and against a pre-modern temporality, that they produce for the purpose of their own self-legitimation" (Butler, 2008, p. 1). An important implication is thus that temporal framing can not only function as an *evaluation* of the present, but it can also function as an instrument of *legitimation* and power (Bertossi et al., 2021; Fabian, 2014; Lamont & Thévenot, 2000). Therefore, our aim is to unravel how this temporal logic is enacted in the negotiation of differences and progressive narratives on sexuality.

3. Case: Sex Education in Dutch Primary Schools

This study explores how parents deal with difference in relation to the topic of sexuality by focusing on the case of sex education. Often taken as an example of progressive sex education (Lewis & Knijn, 2002), Dutch primary schools are, since 2012, legally obliged to provide sex education. One of the Dutch government's target goals is to teach children to "respectfully deal with sexuality and diversity within society, including sexual diversity" (Inspectie van Onderwijs, 2016). As for the overall curriculum, the selection of educational materials and methods employed is largely up to the schools and teachers to decide. This includes the decision of whether schools want to provide education throughout the school year or, as many schools in Amsterdam do, during the national week of *Lentekriebels* (spring jitters) created for this purpose. Various education kits have been developed by government institutions and beyond to aid schools in shaping their sex education programme.

While the content of sex education may vary between schools, age groups, and teachers, two programmes will be briefly introduced here since these were most referred to by parents in this study. First is the sex education programme of Rutgers, which is the leading developer of sex education methods in the Netherlands. In Amsterdam, almost half of all primary schools use this programme (Megens et al., 2023). For the last two years of primary school, targeting the age group of 10–12 (the main focus of this study), the programme covers topics such as nudity, the body, relationships, sexual activity, masturbation, reproduction, sexual desire and boundaries, sexual orientation, media, and birth control.

Second is the television show *Dokter Corrie*, which covers similar topics and can be used as a pedagogical tool for sex education in primary school. *Dokter Corrie* features an actress and comedian who portrays the role of a clumsy general practitioner, who educates children about sexuality in a humorous way by using explicit language and visuals (Wiering, 2020). This includes, for instance, inviting Dutch public figures to the show to share personal experiences related to sexuality and showcasing actual naked bodies.

Critical scholars have underlined the normative emphasis on "open speech," promoting sexuality as a normal, shameless, topic of public conversation in these programmes (Wiering, 2020) and in Dutch sex education in general (Bartelink & Wiering, 2020; Van den Berg, 2013). In this article, however, we do not examine sex education programmes themselves, but rather use sex education as a case to demonstrate how middle-class parents without migration background perceive and negotiate difference around progressive issues that particularly matter to them. Importantly, sex education was not the initial focus of this study but emerged as an important theme, as will be further outlined in the next section.

4. Method

4.1. Sample

This research draws on nineteen qualitative interviews conducted between February and December 2021. The interviews were part of a collaborative project of the Verwey Jonker Institute and the Becoming *a Minority* project, bringing together expertise on parenting and dynamics within a majority–minority setting. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, almost all interviews took place online via Zoom, except for two interviews that were conducted in a local cafe chosen by the participants. As mentioned, the participants included middle-class parents *without migration background*: people who were born in the country and whose both parents were born in the country. Of the parents interviewed, 18 identified as female and one identified as male. All parents moved into a majority–minority neighbourhood in Amsterdam West/New West—most of them more than 10 years ago—due to family expansion and to buy affordable housing. More importantly, these parents chose a majority–minority primary school for one or more of their children. The ages of the children of the parents included in the study ranged from 7–13, but most children were in the last two years of primary school (age 10+). As an exception, we also included parents with children who just finished primary school. The focus on parents with children in these last two years of primary school is noteworthy because sex education particularly appears to emerge as a topic during this period. This is likely due to the content covered and the increased attention dedicated to sex education by primary schools during these years.

4.2. School Selection and Recruitment

This article involves parents who were recruited via various majority–minority primary schools (for reasons of anonymity not mentioned). We predominantly recruited parents from three majority–minority schools, two of which had those without a migration background forming a clear numerical minority, and one school that almost reached a mixed (50/50 estimate) composition. Since the exact numbers of children with and without migration background in schools are for privacy reasons not publicly available, we based the ethnic composition of the schools on (prior) fieldwork observations by the first author and other project members. Additionally, during the interviews, parents were asked about their perceived school composition, which

confirmed our majority–minority criteria. For some parents, this composition meant, for instance, that in a class of 24 children, their child was one of the five children without migration background.

As for the recruitment process, we initially employed purposive sampling when we utilized our social and professional network to navigate the constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Through the collaboration with the parenting foundation Stichting Wie Ben Jij Film, a stakeholder of the Vrije Universiteit, we got into contact with the majority of our participants. Additionally, we used the snowball technique to find other parents who met our criteria.

4.3. Interviews and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the first author and took between one to two and a half hours. Given our aim to study the negotiation of difference in a majority–minority primary school setting more broadly, our questionnaire covered the following topics: school choice, connections among parents, and challenges and opportunities of a majority–minority school environment.

For the analysis, all verbatim transcribed interviews were coded using the qualitative analysis software program Atlas.ti. Before putting the transcripts into the software program, they were first carefully reread to gain a sense of the data. During this phase, the issue of sex education, along with related topics such as showering with or without underwear after gym, was identified as a contested issue for the parents in this study. In the second phase, the narratives relating to sex education were coded to gain a better understanding of the subject matter. In this process, attention was paid both to what the participants said and how they said it. This process allowed us to discover three different reactions to difference in relation to sex education among middle-class parents, and to recognize how temporal logic infused these reactions. In the last phase, we re-organized some of the codes under the three reactions/approaches and elevated the codes and themes to a more abstract level by going back and forth between the material and relevant theoretical concepts in the literature.

5. "We Live in Other Worlds and Other Times"

The issue of sex education stood out for many middle-class parents. During the interviews, parents would often indicate some sort of turning point in their experience of difference within the majority–minority school setting. Sex education was an issue whereby living with difference, which was generally positively framed, became particularly challenging and was problematized rather than valued. For some, the issue of sex education "went beyond their boundaries of living together nicely." For others, it was the first moment they felt "out of place":

> I had never experienced an unpleasant feeling with other parents before. But at one point, the week of the *Lentekriebels* [sex education], which is every year, well when you talk about "when do you not feel at home?" Then I believe, yes, that moment has now arrived. (Laurinde)

Relevant to understand in this case is the great importance placed on sex education by middle-class parents without migration background, labelling it a core responsibility of the school. One of the most recurring phrases about sex education at school was: "It cannot be explicit enough for me" (Sandra). Such an explicit programme,

parents explained, aligns with their own ("exceptionally") progressive household: a space where sexuality is discussed openly, directly, and freely (Van den Berg, 2013), to the point of questioning whether "prudishness still has a function in Dutch society." Several parents, for instance, referred to conversations they would have at home, about their support for free bodily expression, nudity, or their dating expectations (explaining that their child can bring home whomever they fall in love with). Other parents cited television shows they support and watch together, such as *Dokter Corrie* in which people share personal experiences related to sexuality. Our point here is that parents connected their progressive ideas and education at home with their pronounced support for an explicit programme of sex education at school—which should involve an open discussion about sex, sexual development, and sexual diversity:

> We are very open about this theme [sex education] at home; everything can be talked about. So, I do advocate for it to be provided in an explicit way by really knowledgeable people who are trained for that, because they see everything on the internet….I also think you should discuss all forms of love [sexual diversity] and sex with each other. But I am also very explicit myself. So I don't know if you know *Dokter Corrie* [comic TV show on sex education], that's very explicit. I think we could also watch *Corrie* in class with everyone. (Joyce)

The strong connection some people place between sex education in their private homes and the semi-public place of school is important in understanding the reactions of some of the parents without migration background. It is expected that schools also adhere to their progressive standard on sexuality. Whereas explicit professional sex education at school was seen by parents as an important way of transferring their progressive norms to their children, this very mission was also considered compromised or at risk due to the schools' diversity. From our participants' perspective, especially parents of Turkish and Moroccan descent, and parents who practice Islam, were deemed to have different norms on sexuality. They would not support an explicit sex education programme at school but rather see it as a private matter:

> The concern of these parents [is that] "then they are going to say that it can be nice also for children to touch certain body parts." And…Muslim parents were like: "Yes, I don't want *that* to be told to my children in the classroom." They say: "We do it, but we want to do that ourselves at home and we want to decide how." They don't think it belongs in school. (Kim)

Some middle-class parents mentioned how a very explicit form of sex education at their school would cause a "large group" of mothers with migration backgrounds to protest in the schoolyard against sex education while keeping their children at home during the week of *Lentekriebels*. These perceived divergent positions on sex education, as another parent argues, have regrettably produced *distance* between her and these mothers:

> The way you deal with men and women, that sort of thing, is sometimes a bit of a problem. The school wants to provide education about this, about sex and sexual development…but there are Moroccan mothers who are very articulate, which is actually a good thing, who said, "we won't put up with this and you have to respect us and we want to do it ourselves." Next to the Dutch parents who were actually kind of educating, like, "no, it's actually very good that this is happening because they see everything online and they have to figure it out for themselves"….This has led to a distance, in values, that for the first time I also felt like, well, this is actually something I don't want to give in on. And that's difficult, we've noticed that now. (Fenna)

The quote illustrates how middle-class parents without a migration background often articulated the perceived difference as "distance in norms and values" (Scholten, 2011). In this constructed dichotomy, parents positioned themselves as the Dutch progressive, secular, modern, advocates of sex education, sometimes in direct opposition to the "non-modern" opposers of sex education—parents of Turkish and Moroccan descent, and in particular Muslims (see also Van den Berg, 2016; Wiering, 2020, p. 70). The narratives thus reveal how parents without migration background often employ an essentialist approach in which ethnicity and religion are seen as decisive characteristics for the views and actions of certain parents, disregarding differences within groups. Of particular relevance to our argument here is that in this othering structure, we found an equation of perceived *distance in norms* with a perceived *distance in time* (Fabian, 2014):

> [During sex education], I thought we had gone back a hundred years in time and suddenly you found yourself in "us" and "them" again. While we had been trying to connect for all those years, it worked remarkably polarizing. (Laurinde)

> We live in other worlds, and in my experience, also in other times….The way this [sex education] is taught fits in our modern society: open and bare. In the past there was a taboo on sexuality and everything happened in secrecy, with many early-age pregnancies as a result. After everything we have fought for as women, I do not want to go back to a situation in which we have to feel shame in talking about sex. Is this the future we want to give our kids with a different sexual preference? No, this is back to the benevolence of the 50s. And that runs counter to how I stand in life as a non-religious, green, and free woman. (Tamara)

This reasoning of "distance in time" invoked above was by no means exceptional. Although most often not as strongly expressed as Tamara did, this temporal logic came up in the narratives of many middle-class parents. As the Other is perceived to be lagging behind in the past, middle-class parents can feel they now too find themselves "back a hundred years in time." Like others, Tamara more specifically refers to the pre-modern 1950s period here (before the Dutch sexual revolution) and a "we" who ostensibly moved beyond gender inequality and sexual oppression, and "they" who are not part of this "historical triumph," and have yet to arrive in the modern present (e.g., Van den Berg, 2016; Van der Veer, 2006). This temporal logic, which manifests in societal discourse at large, thus comes into being in the way parents evaluate situations in everyday life. As middle-class parents associated the different positions on sex education with the Other in their majority–minority school, the very past they felt liberated from came back to them in the present through the school of their child(ren).

6. Three Approaches of Dealing with the Paradox

For middle-class parents, this association of difference as distance in time (Fabian, 2014), and therefore an unexpected journey back in time, brought out a paradox within their own progressive liberal thinking: How do they go about living together in daily life in the "modern" present (and possibly the future) when they position the Other, who they have chosen to live together with, in the past? We found three different approaches to this paradox that have temporality, allowing space for different norms on sexuality, and differentiating between private and semi-public or not, as the core organizing principles. We want to emphasize that the three positions are of course ideal types as some parents changed position or fit somewhere between two positions. What

our middle-class parents shared is that they embraced a progressive norm on sexuality. The difference we found between parents rather lies in how they negotiate (or not) such a position in a context of difference around this topic.

Some parents without a migration background took the approach of protecting "their modern" norm. They distanced themselves from certain parents while making generalizations of a whole ethnic and/or religious group. Others did not want this to cause a breaking point between parents in school. They instead used a temporal argument to continue the discussion on the topic among parents, hoping to convince the Other, in a more subtle way, to move closer to "their progressive modern" norm on sexuality over time. Finally, there were those who felt that the connection they had built together as parents was more important. Here the possibility of not having explicit sex education in school was regretted but was to some extent compensated, as a solution, by having an explicit discussion on the topic at home.

Below we show the three different narratives and subsequent approaches in detail. We have labelled them the confrontational approach, continued discussion approach, and compromise approach. These three approaches thus vary in the expectation of the Other, as well as the space they allow for the negotiation of difference.

6.1. Confrontational Approach

For a few middle-class parents, the very notion of going back in time resulted in a strong resistance and protection of freedom to express and transfer their progressive "modern" norms. Norms they felt they were about to lose or had already lost. Among them was Tamara, who articulated such a "discourse of cultural loss" (Mepschen, 2016) when she explained how, feeling "pressured" by some "Muslim parents," the school had decided, among other things, to no longer watch *Dokter Corrie* in class. This children's TV show, which to her depicts sexual freedom, is now "taken away from [them]." While becoming emotional talking about this, Tamara explained how this perceived wrongfulness relates to her minority position in school, as "those who are among the majority and scream the loudest will eventually get their way." To protect her progressive standard, she decided to "fight back" by confronting the school principal:

> I indeed talked to the principal about this [*Dokter Corrie*], so I'm making work of this. So that she [child] knows…she sees her mother fight back. That I am not going to let them push me around. That I stand up for my own rights.…I mean I think it is too ridiculous that the teacher cannot educate it [sex education] as she already has been doing it for six years, by using educative tools facilitated by the Dutch government. Lessons should be given in freedom, without the interference of certain groups of parents who label facets of sexuality as dirty. (Tamara)

The quote shows how some parents felt entitled to protect "their" "modern" norm, which they believe all people should aspire to. This approach echoes that of Laurine, who also turned to the school principal:

> Mainly, I wanted to address the disturbance the whole thing caused. Even when I'm thinking about it, I get angry.…They are a hundred years back in time, and yet, in my view, their views were listened to too much. While we are here in the Netherlands and this is a public school. I believe they compromised, but compromises are never strong. However, if I'm right, we will have sex education

again next year. So, I am already bracing myself. But you know, at a certain moment you also think: I'll just ride it out. They're about to go to secondary school...there they will hopefully be more among like-minded people. (Laurinde)

The underlying logic is that because "they" are stuck in the past, their voices have less value in the present and should therefore not be listened to too much. This exemplifies Butler's (2008) argument of how a logic of unequal temporal process produces a clear hierarchy, which can legitimize the idea that the Other should adapt to "their" "modern" norm (Van den Berg, 2016). Consequently, this logic can also function as a legitimization for their concrete actions aimed at preserving their norm, by actively seeking intervention from the school principal. This demonstrates that parents who adopt this approach leave no room for difference. Instead, they treat difference regarding sexuality as a non-negotiable subject. This approach does not only impact the connection with certain parents in the present (to the point of not speaking to them); as the narrative of Laurinde shows, some parents also saw little space for the Other anymore in their future.

6.2. Continued Discussion Approach

In contrast to the above, other parents without migration background did not consider the enforcement of the progressive norm a suitable solution to the perceived differences, as it would only increase the very distance they wish to restore. Rather than "pushing through" an explicit version of sex education, some parents employed a more gradual approach. Rob, for example, explained how parents of Turkish and Moroccan descent who, in his view, do not yet conform to the "progressive modern norm" on sexuality, should be allowed some time to catch up in time:

> Sex education, I'm all in, or discussing homosexuality, all in, but I feel like they're really trying to push it through. In the 50s and 60s it may have helped to press these freedoms unto Catholics and Protestants. But I know you can't do that with Turks and Moroccans. They're going to rebel, they're going to an Islamic school. So, I allow them their own development process. Now when you start talking to these ladies, very different from what many Dutch parents think, they say: Sexual education is very important, I used to get it at school. But you have to do it gradually, I say. You know, they come from their culture, their grandparents often still lived in houses without windows in them. And we already have 300 years of enlightenment behind us, so we have to allow them time. (Rob)

Rob's narrative illustrates how some parents were aware of the risk of essentializing difference by ascribing fixed characteristics to an entire group. Yet he gets caught up in it when, through a temporal logic of unequal progress (Fabian, 2014), parents with a migration background were granted some time for "gradual adaptation." Instead of confrontation, a continuous "discussion," "conversation," or "dialogue" about the perceived differences (Van den Berg, 2013) was seen as the solution to, implicitly, bring about this adaptation over time. This approach is also illustrated by Hanna when she promotes continuous conversation as a way of actually addressing and shaping underlying beliefs and norms regarding sexuality:

> You must continue [to] engage in conversation, I think that's the only thing you can do, to find the entrances with people. There are always stories behind people as well, I think that's what you have to find out. And I do understand the emotion sometimes that comes with that. But I also think what we all have to do is to address the structures behind it. Still say, yes listen, if your daughter at ten suddenly

gets her period, it suddenly bleeds, how was that for you? Don't you want it to be different for your daughter? (Hanna)

Notwithstanding parents' good intentions, the approach of "continued discussion" may possibly foster more understanding of differences, but it does not create much room for actual negotiation of differences. The idea of a single progressive norm on sexuality remains unchallenged.

6.3. Compromise Approach

Similar to the continued discussion approach above, parents in this third approach also aimed to restore the perceived distance with parents, yet in a different way. Not confronting or subtly "educating" the Other, but rather seeking compromise would bridge the perceived distance between the parents. Fenna brings in an interesting narrative to further elaborate on this approach. While she recognized her initial tendency to defend her "modern" norm on sex education, she was also aware of the superior position of power she would then take on:

> Sometimes I think, some parents are just so traditional, and that's just 100 years ago by Dutch standards. But am I within my rights to say: No, you adapt, we're just talking about sex and menstruation in class, or am I then ignoring these cultural differences? And do I actually act superior? I certainly do in this case. You know, I do want to continue with them, but do I want to abolish my own values for that, no. So how are we going to do that? In the end, I realized, I want to continue together. So it is also to my benefit that we find a solution. My child can also get the education at home. It's not that if you compromise at one point, women emancipation as a whole will be overthrown. (Fenna)

To continue together, Fenna realized, means accepting difference and allowing space for compromise in the semi-public space, without taking oneself as the norm. Although some form of sex education in primary school is legally required, Fenna, as well as a few other parents, named additional explicit education at home as a solution to allow this space for difference in school. Fenna eventually went as far as to sign a petition to support such a less explicit education programme. By choosing to compromise, parents thus prioritized "friendships and warm connections" they had built up with some parents with a migration background over the years. Unlike the other approaches, it seems this approach created the most opportunity for parents to envision and pursue a shared future together *with* difference.

7. Conclusion and Discussion

We discussed in this article the negotiation by progressive, liberal, middle-class parents of the paradox of being open to differences while expecting that the Muslim Other, in particular, should adhere to their progressive "modern" consensus on sexuality (Mepschen et al., 2010; Uitermark et al., 2014). We have looked at this paradox through the case of sex education in a majority–minority primary school context and demonstrated how progressive parents perceive and respond to a situation of difference. How do they deal with these perceived differences? In the reasoning of some of the progressive middle-class parents, we see that defending progressive liberal norms on this topic comes with overtones of positioning certain groups of parents with a migration background, and particularly Muslims, as sexually "backward" and threatening their core beliefs and norms on this topic. It is one of the topics in which perceived difference was most reified and problematized rather than valued.

We found three ideal types of reactions to the paradox in which parents emphasize different aspects of the paradox. First, some parents gave priority to "their" progressive norms on sexuality even when this meant a breaking point with the Other and giving up the principle of respecting differences. Second, other parents especially used the argument of time to more implicitly advocate for small steps in the direction of the progressive norm. Third, some parents eventually gave priority to accepting differences and, perhaps even more importantly, gave priority to the relationships they have built with parents they did not agree with. They used the alternative route of giving explicit sex education at home and not in the semi-public space of school.

The three positions all give an interesting take on how and to what extent people without a migration background allow space for negotiating difference. The different positions have large consequences for if and how people can live together. The first position will most likely result in enduring conflict, estrangement, and potentially the exit from the majority–minority school. In the second position, people want to stay in conversation with the Other but the outcomes are rather unclear since implicit expectations are that the Other will slowly move towards "their own" progressive stance. In the third position, the solution is found in compromise, offering a more sustainable perspective for living together with differences.

With these positions, we deepen our understanding of how middle-class people without a migration background negotiate difference (or refrain from doing so) within a majority–minority context (Crul, 2016). We found that despite being a local numerical minority, many middle-class progressives still assert their power position in society at large by taking themselves as the "modern" norm. This article has shown different ways in which temporal reasoning is intertwined with this enactment. It functions as an instrument of power, as it is used to justify the expectation of the Other to adapt—now or more gradually in time—to the "progressive modern standard" (Butler, 2008; Van den Berg, 2016).

At the same time, this notion of consensus on progressive norms in the Netherlands (Duyvendak et al., 2016) does not play out similarly in a local majority–minority school context. This situation causes some progressive parents without migration background, perhaps for the first time, to actually feel like a numerical minority and, to a certain extent, also powerless to fully force the outcome to their own way. At least not without jeopardizing their decision and commitment to live together. Truly committing to live together with difference then ultimately means moving away from consensus, and without essentializing difference, coming to an agreement that allows multiple norms to exist.

Conflict of Interests
In this article, editorial decisions were undertaken by Ulf R. Hedetoft (University of Copenhagen, Denmark).

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Being an Ethnic Minority: Belonging Uncertainty of People Without a Migration Background

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Abstract

We delve into the implications of the national ethnic majority being a minority in local settings by examining their daily experiences when they find themselves outnumbered by other ethnic groups in their neighbourhood. Drawing on the theory of "belonging uncertainty," this article explores the variety of ways in which people without a migration background cope with such situations. Belonging uncertainty is the feeling that "people like me do not belong here." Based on in-depth interviews ($n = 20$) conducted in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods in Vienna, we argue that the experience of belonging uncertainty results in two different coping strategies: avoidance of spaces numerically dominated by another ethnic group or learning to overcome belonging uncertainty. Some people without a migration background often perceive spaces where another ethnicity is the numerical majority as exclusionary, even if they are not explicitly excluded, and accordingly, they avoid such contexts. Others develop strategies that allow them to establish a feeling of belonging in spaces where they initially experienced belonging uncertainty. As such, some individuals overcome the feeling of belonging uncertainty.

Keywords

belonging uncertainty; ethnic diversity; inter-ethnic contact; majority–minority; reflexivity; Vienna

1. Introduction

What happens when the national ethnic majority is an ethnic minority in the local context? We explore this question by looking at the daily experiences of people without a migration background, that is, people who were born in the country of residence and have both parents born in the same country, in situations in which

they are a numerical ethnic minority in their neighbourhood. Thus far, little attention has been paid to such encounters and previous studies have neglected such experiences, as it is commonly assumed that "one of the hidden advantages of being a member of a privileged group…is that questions about the standing of one's group, or oneself as a member of a marginalized group, rarely come to mind" (Walton & Brady, 2017, pp. 273–274). As people without a migration background generally belong to the ethnic majority, they may rarely encounter situations in which they question their social belonging in terms of their ethnic identity. Many cities and neighbourhoods in Western Europe, however, have become numerically superdiverse (Vertovec, 2007). Often, however, this numerical diversity is not reflected in neighbourhood spaces. Even though many ethnic groups reside in the same neighbourhood, they co-exist with little interaction (Atkinson, 2006; Blokland & van Eijk, 2010; Butler, 2003; Jackson & Butler, 2015). This potentially leads to the presence of spaces in a neighbourhood where one ethnic group is numerically dominant. Previous research investigating social life in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods often focusses on different ethnic groups living together in one neighbourhood (e.g., Hoekstra & Dahlvik, 2018; Oosterlynck et al., 2017; Peterson, 2017; Wessendorf, 2014a, 2014b, pp. 102–120) but further in-depth attention needs to be paid to the experiences and feelings of people without a migration background in contexts in which they are a numerical ethnic minority while another ethnic group dominates. How do people without a migration background cope with such places? Being an ethnic minority is a meaningful experience that can trigger numerous emotions, one of which is commonly known as "belonging uncertainty" (Walton & Cohen, 2007). Minorities often express the feeling of belonging uncertainty as "people like me do not belong here" (Walton & Cohen, 2007). To investigate how people without a migration background participate in contexts in which they are a numerical minority, we draw on the concept of belonging uncertainty (Walton & Cohen, 2007).

While previous research has focussed on the reactions of White Americans to becoming a future numerical minority on the national level (e.g., Craig & Richeson, 2014a, 2014b; Craig et al., 2018; Outten et al., 2012, 2018) or on understanding the attitudes of people without a migration background living in majority–minority neighbourhoods towards multiculturalism (Kraus, 2023; Kraus & Daenekindt, 2021), there is a lack of in-depth information on how people without a migration background understand and experience places where they are a numerical ethnic minority locally. To fill this gap in the literature, we examine how such situations play out and how people without a migration background participate in neighbourhood contexts in which they form a numerical ethnic minority.

Our contribution is two-fold. On the one hand, identifying the feeling of belonging uncertainty as an explanation for the avoidance of spaces expands our knowledge of the underlying mechanisms of ethnic interactions or the lack thereof in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods from the perspective of people without a migration background. On the other hand, we show how people without a migration background develop feelings of belonging to spaces encountered in their everyday neighbourhood life. As Blokland and Nast (2014) point out, a number of authors (e.g., Good et al., 2012; Savage et al., 2005; Walton & Cohen, 2007, 2011; Watt, 2009) have shown the vast impact a sense of belonging can have, yet little is known about how individuals develop a feeling of belonging through practices. We contribute to closing this gap in the literature by empirically demonstrating how, through reflexivity and the development of strategies, some individuals manage to overcome the feeling of belonging uncertainty.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Participation of People Without a Migration Background

To understand how people without a migration background participate in contexts in which they are an ethnic minority, we find inspiration in theories on acculturation. Acculturation refers to changes in culture and behaviour among people with and without a migration background as a result of inter-ethnic contact (Berry, 1997). The various reactions individuals may have to cultural change are referred to as acculturation strategies (assimilation, integration, marginalization, and separation; Berry, 1997). It is widely acknowledged that migrants culturally influence members of the majority and that members of the majority influence people with a migration background. Most research, however, focusses on the acculturation strategies of people with a migration background or examines the majority members' expectations towards people with a migration background (e.g., Kunst & Sam, 2014; López-Rodríguez et al., 2014; Roblain et al., 2016), while the adjustments that people without a migration background supposedly undergo are often ignored (for an exception see Crul & Lelie, 2021; Jimenez, 2017). Recently, the focus on the migrated population in the study of acculturation strategies has been challenged. Crul and Lelie (2019) argue that majority–minority contexts, i.e., contexts in which the national ethnic majority is a numerical minority at the local level, upend the idea that minorities adapt to the ethnic majority, as no majority exists within such contexts. Instead of focusing on the extent to which the migrated population adapts to the former ethnic majority, Crul and Lelie (2019) rephrase the question: How do people without a migration background adapt to the multi-ethnic city and to what extent do they engage in acculturation processes?

Jimenez (2017) offers one possible answer to this question. In his book *The Other Side of Assimilation*, he argues that assimilation works the same for people without a migration background as for first and second-generation people with a migration background. One of the main findings of Jimenez's research is that people without a migration background and first and second-generation people with a migration background influence each other equally and current acculturation processes are about mutual adjustment. He claims that immigrants have changed the societal climate of the United States, which "forces America's most established individuals to undergo an assimilation of their own" (p. 19). Further, Jimenez (2017) suggests that people without a migration background attribute a certain "normalcy" to living in ethnically diverse contexts and that over time, new groups become more similar to people without a migration background through interactions in their neighbourhood, local schools, or the workplace. The idea of ethnic diversity being something "normal," aligns with the findings of Wessendorf (2013), who developed the notion of "commonplace diversity." Commonplace diversity refers to ethnic diversity being experienced as an ordinary part of social life in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods. Jimenez acknowledges that this normalcy does not come with a limitless feeling of comfort, yet, similar to Alba and Nee (2003), he claims that this process of adapting happens "to people while making other plans" (Jimenez, 2017, p. 80).

Drawing from Jimenez' (2017) research, Crul (2018) proposes that although the people without a migration background in Jimenez's study may respect a plurality of cultural habits and views, they do not adapt their practices to this plurality (Crul, 2018, p. 2261). Crul (2018) observes that the reactions of the people in Jimenez's study are characterized by disengagement rather than adaption. For instance, Jimenez (2017) gives the example of students of Asian descent outperforming White students academically. Instead of trying to compete with these new educational standards, White Americans abnormalize the

accomplishments of students of Asian descent without further engagement. Such inability to react to changing circumstances is what Crul (2018) terms the "paralyzed white identity" (p. 2263).

In sum, there is an agreement in the literature that people with a migration background influence people without a migration background and vice-versa. Yet, when it comes to the participation of people without a migration background in ethnically diverse contexts, there is a debate about the level of their participation. Crul (2018) argues that such participation efforts of people without a migration background often do not go beyond acknowledging the presence of ethnic diversity.

2.2. People Without a Migration Background and the Feeling of Belonging Uncertainty

Understanding concepts such as intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), anxiety about dominance (Pratto & Walker, 2004), and vulnerability (Crenshaw, 1989) is vital for grasping the dynamics of social interaction, particularly in ethnically diverse contexts. These concepts illuminate the intricacies of intergroup relations, revealing the psychological, emotional, and social barriers individuals face when engaging with members of other social groups.

For this research, we focus on the concept of belonging uncertainty (Walton & Brady, 2017) to examine the daily experiences of individuals without a migration background when they find themselves outnumbered by other ethnic groups in their neighbourhood, as it offers insights into the multifaceted nature of identity formation and social integration. While fear, insecurity, anxiety about dominance, and vulnerability focus on specific aspects of individuals' experiences within intergroup contexts, belonging uncertainty acknowledges the nuanced interplay of internal and external factors shaping individuals' perceptions of belongingness. It encompasses not only the fear of rejection or marginalization but also the quest for validation, acceptance, and recognition within diverse communities.

Upon entering a new setting, individuals evaluate their sense of belonging, defined as the alignment between oneself and a social environment (Walton & Brady, 2017). This evaluation relies on personal characteristics and group identities. Previous studies on minority experiences reveal that being a minority can trigger feelings of belonging uncertainty, often expressed as a concern about not fitting in (Walton & Cohen, 2007). If individuals feel that their social identity, like ethnicity, is marginalized, they may feel uncomfortable or avoid the setting altogether (Walton & Cohen, 2007). For example, White residents in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods may withdraw from spaces they perceive as unwelcoming (Wise, 2005).

In general, the sense of belonging of people without a migration background remains largely "beyond question" (Skey, 2011, p. 2). Usually, people without a migration background move around and navigate spaces effortlessly as they are perceived to be the natural occupants of spaces (Puwar, 2004). The internalized sense of power within a social system is a critical aspect of intergroup relations that manifests subtly yet significantly in individual behaviours. Racial and social hierarchies are often internalized, resulting in an embodied understanding of one's place within structures of domination and subordination (Fiske & Berdahl, 2007). This internalization can influence the dynamics of intergroup contact, where dominant group members may exhibit behaviours that reflect their unspoken sense of superiority. Being an ethnic minority challenges this internalized dominance, as they were born into a culture they belong to (DiAngelo, 2019). In spaces where people without a migration background become a numerical minority while another ethnic group dominates, they feel they become "outsiders" (Kraus & Crul, 2022).

There are various ways to transition from an "outsider" to an "insider" position. Valentine (2008) emphasises that sustained intergroup contact enhances understanding and reduces bias, which is essential in the process of becoming an "insider" within a new context (cf. Paolini et al., 2018). Additionally, Leary (2010) suggests that behaviours that encourage others to want to affiliate with one can increase the likelihood of acceptance, a fundamental precursor to the feeling of belonging. To engage in such behaviours, it is necessary for an individual to be both aware and reflexive about their social standing. For individuals without a migration background, finding themselves in a numerical minority may act as a catalyst for reflexivity, particularly as such reflection is frequently spurred by moments of "crisis" (Bourdieu, 1990)—a state induced by a disjunction between one's ingrained dispositions and the demands of a new social context.

In summary, for those with a migration background, being in an ethnic minority position leads to belonging uncertainty and, subsequently, avoidance of spaces where such uncertainty is felt. This concept, typically applied to historically devalued groups, may similarly apply to individuals without a migration background in situations where they are an ethnic minority despite belonging to the dominant group at the national level. Their minority experience may evoke unease and foster reflexivity, allowing some to become "insiders."

3. Method and Data

To explore the participation of individuals without a migration background as a numerical ethnic minority, we utilized data from the Becoming *a* Minority (B*a*M) project. The study involved 20 face-to-face interviews conducted in Vienna by the first author between November 2019 and February 2020. The participants, aged 25 to 54, and their parents were all born in Austria, aligning with the commonly used definition of "without a migration background" (Arends-Tóth & Van De Vijver, 2003; Crul & Lelie, 2021; Martinović, 2013). For an overview of research participants' demographic and occupational information see Table 1.

Focusing on neighbourhood life, social relationships, and inter-ethnic attitudes, the interviews took place in Vienna's ethnically diverse Neulerchenfeld, specifically Yppenviertel and Brunnenviertel. Neulerchenfeld, situated in Ottakring's 16th district, is home to 14,576 inhabitants, 54% of whom have a migration background, mirroring Vienna's average. Noteworthy is the transformation of Neulerchenfeld from a working-class district to a sought-after residential area, anchored by iconic public spaces—Brunnenmarkt and Yppenplatz. Brunnenmarkt, Vienna's second-largest market, dates back to the 18th century, while Yppenplatz plays a central role in observed gentrification processes (Baldauf & Weingartner, 2008). In recent years, Neulerchenfeld has emerged as a lively and multicultural neighbourhood, known for its diverse population and vibrant community life. Urban renewal projects and initiatives have also played a role in Neulerchenfeld's development, aimed at improving infrastructure, public spaces, and amenities.

Recruitment of Neulerchenfeld informants involved the first author's personal network, snowball sampling, and a social media group of local residents. An additional five interviews were conducted in other ethnically diverse Vienna neighbourhoods, targeting individuals who had previously participated in the B*a*M project. All research procedures were conducted in alignment with ethical principles to ensure participants' rights. Participants were explicitly informed of their entitlement to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any repercussions. For the consent process, prior to the interviews, participants were provided with a printed consent form outlining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality measures implemented. In order to ensure the anonymization of respondents, identifying

Table 1. Overview of research participants' demographic and occupational data.

ID	Name	Neighbourhood	Gender	Age	Year moved to neighbourhood	Occupation	Education
1	Johann	Neulerchenfeld	M	33	2014	Administrative lawyer	Master, Magister[1]
2	Thomas	Neulerchenfeld	M	46	1995	House technician	Apprenticeship
3	Hans	Neulerchenfeld	M	38	2004	Educational policy	Magister
4	Manuela	Neulerchenfeld	F	38	2013	Social worker	Bachelor
5	Ursula	Neulerchenfeld	F	54	2020	Retail sales	Apprenticeship
6	Martin	Neulerchenfeld	M	37	2016	Sales manager	Apprenticeship
7	Marcel	Neulerchenfeld	M	49	2014	Sales manager (IT)	Magister
8	Valerie	Neulerchenfeld	F	29	2019	Medical doctor	PhD
9	Hermine	Neulerchenfeld	F	42	1978	Advertising	Matura[2]
10	Jessica	Neulerchenfeld	F	30	2015	Self-employed editor and yoga teacher	Matura
11	Karolin	Neulerchenfeld	F	25	2019	Student (MA)	Bachelor
12	Klara	Neulerchenfeld	F	37	2012	Author children's books	Magister
13	Walter	Neulerchenfeld	M	44	2008	Director of a trade fair	Master, Magister
14	Ellen	Neulerchenfeld	F	43	2014	Management assistant	Matura
15	Claudia	Neulerchenfeld	F	34	2013	Employed at the Chamber of Labour	Magister
16	Alexander	Favoriten	M	31	2009	Sale of telephone subscriptions	Matura
17	Greta	Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus	F	29	2010	Assistant manager	Master
18	Robert	Leopoldstadt	M	47	2008	Corporate lawyer	Magister
19	Maximilian	Brigittenau	M	46	2019	Clerk	Matura/ apprenticeship
20	Josef	Favoriten	M	43	2010	Communication manager	Bachelor

Notes: [1] Former equivalent to today's master's degree; [2] general higher education qualification, which entitles one to study at all Austrian universities.

information such as names, locations, and specific demographic details were removed from the transcripts. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant any potentially identifying information mentioned during the interviews was omitted to maintain confidentiality throughout the analysis process.

All interviews underwent coding and analysis using ATLAS.ti software. The initial analysis employed theory-driven coding based on the concept of belonging uncertainty, serving as the sensitizing concept (Charmaz, 2006). Themes were then clustered into key themes related to the experience of belonging

uncertainty. To understand how individuals without a migration background navigate belonging uncertainty, we employed a data-driven, inductive approach, engaging in an interactive analysis among the authors and incorporating reflections from other researchers in the B*a*M project.

Lastly, we want to mention that we are aware of the reinforcement of ethnic boundaries when distinguishing between individuals with and without migration backgrounds (Dahinden, 2016) and that this binary classification risks oversimplifying social identities and neglecting the diversity within these groups (Vertovec, 2007). Yet, as Klarenbeek (2019) argues, abandoning these terms does not eliminate the underlying relational inequalities. Ethnic categorizations resonate with the social realities and national identities (Brubaker, 2010), and are reflective of the ways our respondents understand their social environment. Thus, employing an ethnic framework is not only methodologically pertinent but also sociologically relevant, despite its limitations in capturing intragroup diversity.

4. Results

4.1. Belonging Uncertainty and the Avoidance of Spaces

Entering spaces where individuals without a migration background become a numerical ethnic minority, while another ethnic group dominates, elicited discomfort and prompted a revaluation of belonging for many informants. Some participants admitted avoiding neighbourhood spaces where another ethnic group is dominant, fearing that their presence might be deemed "inappropriate" or they may not be warmly welcomed. Ursula (54), for example, shared her daily experiences in the neighbourhood, highlighting her sense of being a minority. She specifically mentioned restaurants often associated with Turkish or Serbian migration backgrounds and conveyed her uncertainty about belonging in these spaces:

> I don't go to the restaurants there now, I admit that, yes, I don't go around the corner to these restaurants. I probably would not like to either….I don't necessarily have to go there, [the fact] that I would be the only Austrian sitting there, I don't know….I don't even know how they would react. (Ursula, 54)

Ursula experiences belonging uncertainty and this prevents her from visiting restaurants where she is perceived as an ethnic minority. Her statement prescribes which spaces are seen as being for whom and that crossing this imagined boundary implies going to spaces where she does not belong. Similarly, Robert (47) told a story about an evening out in his neighbourhood with his friends. While walking around, they passed a bar in which they only saw Turkish men sitting and joked: "Well, I don't think they allow us in there."

Many informants shared comparable experiences of belonging uncertainty in situations where their ethnic identity diverged from the norm. Ottakringer Strasse, a specific location in Neulerchenfeld frequently cited as triggering belonging uncertainty, stands out. Positioned in the north end of the neighbourhood, marking the boundary between the 16th and 17th districts, Ottakringer Strasse is often dubbed "Balkan street" (*Balkanstrasse*), associated with individuals of Serbian and Croatian descent. People without a migration background often view the street's bars and cafés as exclusionary to their ethnic group, fearing potential ostracism if they were to visit. This ensuing quote illustrates the discomfort some respondents feel when contemplating a visit to Ottakringer Strasse:

> I have the feeling that Ottakringer Strasse is in our neighbourhood, but I have zero, zero access [to it]. I've never been to a place like this. Um, I don't even know what's stopping us. We keep talking that it would be interesting to go there. I just have the feeling that no Austrians go there. Maybe I'm also a little bit afraid that we will be looked at suspiciously. (Hans, 38)

The quote demonstrates that the informant is uncertain about their belonging in the restaurants and bars on the Ottakringer Strasse. Being "looked at suspiciously" and wondering whether places along the street are "for them" are signs of belonging uncertainty and we can see how this feeling leads to the avoidance of said spaces.

The origin of this feeling of belonging uncertainty is diverse. Beyond a numerical underrepresentation among co-ethnics, participants pointed to various other factors. Disparities in cultural practices related to the interior design of shops, cafés, lighting, and the type of social gathering spot triggered a sense of belonging uncertainty among individuals without a migration background. Language barriers, distinctions in lifestyle and clothing, and cultural preferences, including specific music styles, were also identified as factors contributing to the experience of belonging uncertainty.

In particular, informants mention the experience of a perceived unwelcomeness which is expressed in different shapes and forms. Whereas Thomas (46) said that in "90% of the places [they] entered, [they] were stared at as if they were extra-terrestrials," Greta described how, when she walks into a Serbian restaurant to pick up her takeaway food, "there is a moment of astonishment" on the part of the staff working there. Manuela (38) shares a similar experience as she and her friend once unintendedly visited a Serbian café and thought that others in the café looked at them thinking "ok, what do they want here now?" which caused her noticeable discomfort. This discomfort made her conclude that this café "won't become [her] regular haunt."

Based on such perceived reactions of people with a migration background, Ellen (43) explains that she would rather go "to ten other places," where people without a migration background are the dominant ethnic group. The idea that such places will not become their regular haunt because they have other places to choose from is also expressed in Thomas's (46) statement. Thomas talks about Brunnenmarkt, a local marketplace where the stalls are predominantly owned by people with a migration background, and points out that he does not "have to" go to Brunnenmarkt. He is willing to try "three times [and] then say 'that was it'" if he does not feel at ease. Both of these expressions make it clear that, on the one hand, if people without a migration background feel that they do not belong in a particular space in the neighbourhood, they have the option of withdrawing from it. On the other hand, this behaviour hints at the "paralyzed white identity," showing the inability to negotiate such a setting comfortably and thus leads to withdrawal from the space.

The presented quotes reveal that individuals without a migration background often encounter belonging uncertainty in spaces where they constitute a numerical ethnic minority. Despite no explicit exclusion, they perceive such spaces as unwelcoming, highlighting how their ethnic identity stands out in environments dominated by individuals with a different ethnic background. This not only underscores the common experience of belonging uncertainty for this group in such places but also emphasizes their typical sense of welcome, belonging, and inherent dominance in everyday life. Throughout the interview, they did not describe such uncertainties in any other instance. These informants either steer clear of spaces where they are a numerical ethnic minority or try them briefly but refrain from returning. This underscores that some individuals without a migration background are uncomfortable in a numerical ethnic minority position and

possess the privilege of avoiding such spaces, given the availability of other spaces where they belong to the dominant group. A possible coping mechanism for dealing with belonging uncertainty is to avoid spaces where one anticipates encountering this feeling.

4.2. Overcoming Belonging Uncertainty

In the preceding sections, we demonstrated that the anticipation or actual experience of belonging uncertainty might prompt individuals without a migration background to steer clear of spaces in neighbourhoods where they constitute a numerical ethnic minority. Nevertheless, not all informants choose to avoid such contexts, even when experiencing initial discomfort. On the contrary, several informants continue to visit these spaces. Johann (33) provides insight into his reasons for regularly going to the Turkish hairdresser in his neighbourhood:

> Well, because it's the best hairdresser and because it's cheap and because I—[unintelligible], and because I—uhm yes—probably because I want to prove something to myself, too. Because I think it's cool or important that I can do these things in my neighbourhood....Maybe I'll work a little on these success stories even if they don't all work out. But I like to do that, also to support my own worldview. (Johann, 33)

Other informants provided additional reasons for consistently visiting spaces in the neighbourhood that trigger the experience of belonging uncertainty. These motivations can be categorized as moral, curiosity-driven, quality-focused, or economic. For example, some participants patronize restaurants owned by individuals with a migration background due to the quality of the meals or their economic affordability. In other cases, people find value in the experiential aspect. Johann, for instance, describes his visits as a "short journey, [which] brings the world into the neighbourhood." Martin (37), exposed to ethnic diversity from a young age, considers engaging with ethnic minoritized groups as normal, similar to Jessica (30), who grew up in an ethnically diverse district of Vienna and sees interaction as inevitable.

By persistently visiting spaces where they initially felt belonging uncertainty, some respondents have learned to cope with this feeling and no longer avoid spaces where they are a minority. Greta, for example, continues to frequent places where she is a minority, initially feeling "a little out of place," but with repeated visits, she claims to "handle it better" and has become "braver." Notably, two informants managed to overcome the feeling of belonging uncertainty and establish a sense of belonging in a neighbourhood context where they are an ethnic minority.

As the coming paragraphs demonstrate, overcoming feelings of belonging uncertainty can be understood as a process. In order to outline this process, we will delve into two narratives. The first narrative is provided by Johann:

> This is my Turkish hairdresser and—because I'm really the exception there—I believe that few people go there without a Turkish migration background, or even a migration background at all. And the first few times it was a bit like "huh, what do you want? You know where you are, right?" [laughs]...I think I was there once and another guy came in and he got his turn before me, yes. And, of course, I didn't make a fuss because I wasn't sure whether he might have called [to make an appointment

beforehand] or something, but I probably thought to myself: Yes, ok, they are now thinking the *Ösi* [colloquial, sometimes jokingly, sometimes derogatory for "Austrian"] should wait now....But now, I am respected after I've come for a long time. I know the people, that's the way it is, after the fifth time you suddenly get a handshake....The other time, I was the best man and brought the whole wedding party there and now we are just full-on homies, yes. (Johann, 33)

Johann's story demonstrates how the feeling of belonging uncertainty can be overcome after exposing oneself to the same numerical ethnic minority context multiple times. His journey progressed from feeling uncertain about his belonging ("huh what do you want?") based on the marginalization of his ethnic identity ("I'm really the exception there") to an acceptance which, to him, is indicated by a personal greeting he received after entering the hairdresser ("suddenly get a handshake").

A similar story is provided by Martin, who also underwent the process of overcoming belonging uncertainty:

For a while, I went to the hairdresser on Ottakringer Straße....I don't know if it's Serbian or maybe—I don't know—in any case, it seems very Anatolian anyhow—let's put it like that. And you come in...if you walk in there as an Austrian, it's dead silent at first. There really is silence. Yes. Everybody darts a glance at you and if you then say, "*Servus* [traditional, friendly greeting, common among friends and good acquaintances], haircut?"—[they say:] "Haircut. Sit down. Wait." All of the customers are waiting and there is the standard haircut [laughs]....At some point, it was my turn. A few people just walked in, they were acquaintances, and they were helped first [before me]. I didn't say anything about that, that's just how it was. Yes. They came in and had their turn immediately. Yes. Yes, that was a very interesting experience. My advantage was that I earned a certain status there after having waited three times and the fourth or fifth time I also had my turn right away! (Martin, 37)

We were intrigued by the motivations driving these informants to navigate the uncomfortable process of overcoming belonging uncertainty. Generally, people seek acceptance from others because it is linked to positive outcomes, such as positive social relationships that are functionally crucial and come with rewards (Leary, 2010). For Johann and Martin, the rewards of forming social relationships include a sense of belonging in previously perceived inaccessible neighbourhood spaces, which may still be so for other Austrians without a migration background (cf. Kohlbacher et al., 2015). Overcoming belonging uncertainty results in a heightened comfort level in specific neighbourhood spaces, and for Johann, expanding his social network serves another purpose. Johann sees it as "cool or important" that he can engage in these activities in his neighbourhood. Using the relationship with people in the Turkish hairdresser as a demonstration of cultural capital, he invites his friend's wedding party to the hairdresser, showcasing to his friends that he has successfully bridged the gap between ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority. This action can be interpreted as Johann "showing off" his ethnically diverse network and his ability to engage in activities in his neighbourhood that may seem unattainable to other Austrians without a migration background. Johann's capacity to invite the wedding party indicates that he has become an insider in both groups.

4.3. Strategies to Overcome Belonging Uncertainty

While only a few informants in our interviews discussed overcoming belonging uncertainty in neighbourhood contexts, we wish to explore their experiences more deeply. Existing literature on belonging

uncertainty has generally overlooked methods for overcoming this feeling, particularly in demonstrating the process of establishing belonging through practices in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, as noted by Blokland and Nast (2014).

To cultivate a sense of belonging and access associated benefits, Johann and Martin adopt a highly reflexive approach to their social position when interacting with individuals from different ethnic groups. They scrutinize their position in the social structure, are mindful of their appearance, consider the message conveyed by their demeanour, and anticipate how it will be received. For instance, Johann is conscious of not wanting to be perceived as an "ass Austrian" and understands the importance of his appearance in specific environments. By being cognizant of their ethnic identity paired with their appearance, both Johann and Martin employ strategies to secure acceptance from the Other.

Three strategies employed by Johann and Martin in their neighbourhood to establish bonds and increase acceptance are identified. The first strategy involves adopting a pleasant interpersonal stance, with Johann avoiding being perceived as an "ass Austrian" and adapting his behaviour to imitate others in certain contexts. This strategy is evident in their patient waiting at the hairdresser without asserting themselves when observing other customers receiving preferential treatment.

The second strategy focusses on downplaying social status, especially concerning ethnic identity, in contexts where acceptance from the Other is the goal. Both Johann and Martin are aware of the counter-productive nature of displaying status, considering their internalized sense of power and understanding their place within structures of domination. Martin, for example, feels discriminated against when wearing a suit and adjusts his appearance to receive a more informal and friendlier treatment at places like the Turkish bakery.

The third strategy involves the use of cultural capital, specifically employing vocabulary from another language. Martin incorporates a few words from another language with humour to overcome the boundaries of ethnic difference and enhance social acceptance:

> I learned their language—yes, well, not really—not in the sense that I can [speak it fluently] now, but I [am the best at cursing] [laughs] and, yes, that is the point yes. If you pick up on that a bit and play along a bit, then….I can also [say] "thank you," "please," and "give me that," or "hold on," that works!… And that is just this, yes, I'd say, counter-integration, let's call it that, that you also integrate into it all….If you accept that and if you just play along and crack a joke like *Haydi* [Turkish for "let's go!"], "hurry up!"—then he gets it and you are accepted in a different way, I think, yes. (Martin, 37)

To establish a social relationship, Martin employs little jokes which lead to an increase in acceptance (cf. Van Praag et al., 2017). He is well aware that his humour is directly linked to gaining acceptance and he uses it strategically ("if you just play along and crack a joke…you are accepted in a different way").

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This article has offered an in-depth exploration of the experiences of individuals without a migration background who find themselves as a numerical ethnic minority within their neighbourhood (predominantly at restaurants and the barbershop). It uncovers the complexities and nuanced realities of intergroup relations

and the varied manners in which individuals navigate their sense of belonging ethnically in environments in which they are an ethnic minority. The central concept of "belonging uncertainty" has been instrumental in understanding these experiences, providing a novel perspective on the dynamics of social inclusion and community life.

We found that people have different ways of coping with the experience of belonging uncertainty. One coping strategy is to avoid spaces where they experience belonging uncertainty (cf. Good et al., 2012; Wise, 2005). Many of our informants feel uncomfortable in situations in which they are or may be a minority and their reaction is to avoid such situations. Some scholars (Jimenez, 2017; Wessendorf, 2013) have argued that people without a migration background adapt to ethnically diverse environments. But usually, such research refers to contexts that are either highly ethnically diverse or where people without a migration background constitute the largest group. In this article, we investigated the context in which another ethnic group is dominant and in such cases many of our informants decided to disengage from these particular contexts to avoid interaction.

This finding has two implications. Firstly, we demonstrated that feelings of belonging uncertainty are especially prevalent when people are confronted with a situation where another ethnic group is numerically dominant. The experience of belonging uncertainty is thus one potential explanation for why people without a migration background generally have fewer interactions with people with a migration background in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods (Blokland & van Eijk, 2010; Crul et al., 2012). Secondly, the avoidance of such spaces cannot be reconciled with the idea that ethnic diversity is experienced as a normal part of social life (Jimenez, 2017; Wessendorf, 2013). As we have seen in this research, ethnic difference does matter, and frequenting and interacting with people of a different ethnicity in a context numerically dominated by that group may trigger belonging uncertainty (cf. Crul & Lelie, 2019, pp. 193–194). Rather than actively developing a strategy to handle such situations and learn about the cultural repertoire of people of colour with a migration background to advance themselves and their children, they seem to withdraw (cf. the concept of "paralyzed white identity" in Crul, 2018).

At the same time, we find that not all people without a migration background withdraw from spaces in which they are an ethnic minority. Some of our informants overcome the feeling of belonging uncertainty by repeatedly exposing themselves to spaces (cf. Valentine, 2008) where they are a minority and, in some instances, they build social ties with people with a migration background as a result. This demonstrates, on the one hand, how people without a migration background develop feelings of belonging to spaces encountered in their everyday neighbourhood life through their practices and, on the other hand, that there are exceptions to the "paralyzed white identity." Some individuals seem better equipped to adapt to the ethnic difference in their neighbourhoods, engage with people with a migration background, and adjust their behaviour to a particular context accordingly.

The feeling of belonging uncertainty can only be overcome if people without a migration background take the initiative to actively engage with people with a migration background in that context. Limited awareness or information about one's own social standing or people from another ethnic background can hinder or block such engagement. Establishing belonging is a complex process that involves the strategic adaption of people's behaviour and potentially involves uncomfortable situations which they will need to navigate until they reach a feeling of comfort. So while we agree with Jimenez (2017) that some people without a migration background adapt to changing circumstances, we do not agree that this happens to them "while making other plans" (p. 80).

Our data show that participation in such contexts requires people without a migration background to make an effort. This adaption process is complex and requires the employment of social strategies, which means that it does not "simply happen."

We have presented some first answers to the question of why some people are more inclined than others to overcome the feeling of belonging uncertainty. Future research endeavours could benefit from adopting an intersectional perspective to delve deeper into the complexities of belonging uncertainty. While our study focussed primarily on ethnic difference and its association with belonging uncertainty, it is imperative to recognize the intertwined nature of ethnicity with other social markers such as class, religion, and gender. For instance, during the analysis of the interviews we noticed that women experience increased belonging uncertainty when they are confronted with spaces that are dominated by men of a different ethnicity. If we aim to further expand our understanding of on-going social processes in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, future studies should examine such contextual effects.

Conflict of Interests

In this article, editorial decisions were undertaken by Ulf R. Hedetoft (University of Copenhagen, Denmark).

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are not publicly available due to the sensitive nature of the information and the need to protect participant privacy as per confidentiality agreements.

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Defining Swedishness: When Swedes Without a Migration Background Are a Local Numerical Minority

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Abstract

In this study, we examine how people without a migration background living in majority–minority neighbourhoods in Malmö, Sweden, define national identity in daily life. This setting provides a look into the intersection between the dominant position these people occupy in the Swedish national context and the confrontation with ethnic diversity as a result of becoming a local numerical minority. We address articulations of what being Swedish means in interviews with 22 Swedes without a migration background. We find that people mostly reproduce the national identity discourse that is nationally dominant. Most people explicitly articulate an achievable national identity, presenting Swedishness as accessible to everyone, in line with how Swedish integration policy is framed, and the current dominant political discourse. However, when talking about Swedishness as an identity and an attribute, the Swedishness of Swedes without a migration background is taken for granted, which indicates that despite changing local hierarchies, the establishment of the Swede without a migration background as the dominant Swede remains unchallenged. Swedishness might be achievable, but only because the dominant Swede defines it as such. Nonetheless, some respondents engage critically and reflectively with their own position of power as the nationally dominant group. This discourse is mostly expressed by raising the issue of white privilege and acknowledging it as a hindrance to the social positioning of people with a migration background in Swedish society. This reflexivity might be a result of confrontation with diversity and becoming a minority.

Keywords

inclusivity; majority–minority; Swedish national identity; whiteness

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1. Introduction

An increasing body of work examines the demographic phenomenon of majority–minority cities, where there is no majority group (i.e., no group that comprises 50% or more of the residents) and the national majority becomes a local numerical minority. Studies on majority–minority contexts explore aspects such as commonplace diversity (Wessendorf, 2014), inclusion/exclusion in ethnically diverse contexts (Crul & Lelie, 2021), problematisation of diversity at the neighbourhood level (Mepschen & Duyvendak, 2018), and more.

Some criticism has been directed at this work for not engaging enough with the national context where people without a migration background become a local minority (Alba & Duyvendak, 2019). As the nation-state remains the main category of belonging in the modern world (Brubaker, 2010), it becomes important to study how the people who become a local minority but remain nationally dominant define and articulate national identity. As Lundström (2017) argues, the national majority still maintains the power to decide what the nation is. Despite their position as a local numerical minority, people without a migration background living in majority–minority cities remain dominant at the national level. In a previous study (Lazëri & Coenders, 2023) we show that Dutch people without a migration background who are a local numerical minority but remain nationally dominant, still define national identity in the same terms as their counterparts who are not a local numerical minority, indicating that the terms of what the nation is still get defined by the national majority.

Nonetheless, a majority–minority situation constitutes a breach of how self-evident the nation-state is. As Verkuyten (2005, p. 12) puts it: "The multiethnic situation confronts people directly with the question of boundary construction and with the value and meaning of what is considered typical of one's own group." This breach can lure out reflections on national identity and can change how people give form to it through confrontation (Fox, 2017). Majority–minority settings are often also superdiverse ones, where there is not only increased ethnic diversity but increased diversity across various patterns of demographic compositions (Vertovec, 2007). These changes not only confront people with diversity but with new hierarchical and power relations as well (Vertovec, 2019). The increasing diversity in these majority–minority cities might destabilize the image of the nation-state as a homogenous and self-evident entity. Therefore the question arises as to how this population without a migration background defines national identity in daily life majority–minority settings.

In this study, we zoom in on the city of Malmö in Sweden. Sweden presents an interesting case study for the discussion of national identity. Despite the presence of historical ethnic minorities, Sweden has been historically perceived as an ethnically homogenous nation (Hübinette & Lundström, 2014). In the second half of the 20th century, Sweden saw a great increase in the diversity of its population, largely driven by international migration (Hübinette & Lundström, 2014). Malmö is a city that has experienced rapid demographic transformation and is currently seen as a cultural diversity hub, with over half of its population having a migration background (see, for instance, the secondary data analysis we conducted on the demographic development of Malmö showing how the share of inhabitants with a migration background in the city reached 54% by 2017, BaM Project, n.d.). For this study, we have interviewed people without a migration background that live in majority–minority neighbourhoods in Malmö. In these neighbourhoods, daily interactions occur with the potential of creating a situation where diversity is the norm (Crul, 2016; Vertovec, 2007), or at the very least, commonplace (Wessendorf, 2014). However, they also remain

nationally dominant and embedded within available narratives of Swedishness. Therefore, we aim to answer the research question: How do Swedes without a migration background living in majority—minority neighbourhoods in Malmö engage with and reflect on available narratives of national identity?

This article uses a descriptive and administrative definition of the nationally dominant group, namely people without a migration background. People without a migration background are born in their country of residence from parents both born in their country of residence. The literature on this topic uses a broad range of definitions aimed at capturing the dominant group, or the non-migrant group. Our choice to use a descriptive and administrative definition instead of an ethnic definition has been made to reflect the demographic shifts themselves, which are expressed in these descriptive terms. However, ethnic and racial discussions around this concept come into play and are treated especially in the analysis of this article.

This study comes at a time in which we see a rise in the importance attached to the nation-state. Discussions about migrants and their role in host societies increasingly take place within the framework of the nation-state and the national imagination of the model citizen. Studying how people without a migration background relate to the nation-state in situations when it is not as self-evident in daily life can help better address issues of exclusion and inclusion.

Additionally, this article brings a new perspective to the literature on superdiversity. Most of this literature focuses on interactions between different groups, while this article analyses the role played by national-level understandings of and discourse on identity in shaping discourses at the local level.

2. Defining National Identity

"National identity," while somewhat elusive, can be defined in two ways: national identity as identified from within, referencing markers such as characteristics, values, habits, and traditions of the nation-state's members, and national identity as defined from without, by differentiating the ingroup from the outgroup (Triandafyllidou, 1998). This latter perspective is used to define national identity by looking at how it is demarcated through boundaries, namely who is and is not seen as belonging to the national ingroup. Formulating national identity relies on sustaining a narrative about the "nation-state" (Giddens, 1991) and within this perspective, national identity reflects a narrative of what the nation-state is, a narrative of who is a legitimate part of the nation-state and who isn't.

Historically, the nation has been perceived as a homogenous ethnic group, aligning fully with the state as an organisational polity (e.g., Anderson, 2006; Brubaker, 2010). From this perspective, only the homogenous ethnic group is seen as having the ability to legitimately claim belonging to the nation-state and the boundaries around national identity are impermeable by the Other. In contemporary Western nation-states, a more civic understanding of the nation-state prevails, whereby commitment to the political community and its values is seen as more important than ancestry (e.g., Halikiopoulou et al., 2013). The boundaries around national identity are permeable, and anyone can achieve this identity as long as people are willing to commit to civic values associated with the country. This can also include other achievable ways of relating to the country, such as feeling belonging to the country, or learning how to speak the language of the country (Pehrson & Green, 2010). The attributes of belonging to a nation-state imagined via a civic identity lens are attainable, in contrast to the more restrictive and exclusive attributes associated with an ethno-national identity.

Most work on national identity focuses on definitions from without—defining identity by drawing boundaries around it. This is consistent with how people construct their social identities. The sense of belonging to an ingroup is based on self-categorisation in social categories and the distinction between the ingroup and outgroups (Tajfel & Turner, 2004).

The conceptualisation of the nation-state on either an ethnic or a civic basis has implications for the inclusion and exclusion of those who do not fit within the idea of the homogenous nation-state (e.g., immigrants or national minorities). Ethno-national identity correlates with negative attitudes towards migrants (Esses et al., 2005; Pehrson & Green, 2010) and radical right-wing voting (Lubbers & Coenders, 2017). When conceptualizing the world through the lens of the ethnically homogenous nation-state there might not be any place for the ethnic Other. Therefore, the very nature of ethnonational identity and a homogenous nation-state might lead to the exclusion of Others. Furthermore, how the national majority itself draws informal ethnic and national boundaries can make people who are not part of the national majority feel unwelcome (Ghorashi, 2017; Simonsen, 2016).

In Sweden, the public discourse predominantly reflects defining Swedishness from without (e.g., Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019). Both kinds of boundaries around the nation-state—ethnic and civic—are present in public discourse and in the daily articulations of national identity that citizens themselves (re)produce. The current narrative of Swedishness embraced in public discourse reflects particularly non-ethnic values (Agius, 2017). While the definition of Swedishness remains vague, it entails a rejection of nationalism and patriotism and a focus on values associated with the state, rather than the nation. According to Agius (2017, p. 117), Swedishness is about "aspects of institutions and state-individual relations" rather than ethnic identity. Swedish public discourse is mostly concerned with presenting Swedish national identity as achievable—available to everyone who engages with Swedish society. This is especially visible in the colour-blind ideology of the official Swedish integration policy, connected to principles of liberal modernity (Osanami Törngren et al., 2018). At the individual level, Swedes also subscribe more often to a civic understanding of Swedish national identity (Lödén, 2014), reflecting the dominant public discourse.

Nonetheless, a more ethnic understanding of Swedish national identity is also present in a Swedish context, notably in the public discourse constructed and perpetuated by the right-wing populist party Sweden Democrats, which vests Sweden with homogenous ethnic values (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019; Hellström et al., 2012). It is also visible in the discourse on whiteness in Sweden, which can be seen as an element of ethnic identity. For instance, Hübinette and Lundström (2014) argue that Sweden sees itself as a white nation and has continually done so within any framework of nation-building, even ones in which Sweden defines itself as a multicultural country embracing diversity. Lundström (2017) argues that Swedish national space is often seen as uninhabitable for non-white bodies and only white ones can really be at home in Sweden. By signalling this whiteness in daily discourses on the nation-state, one could perpetuate the exclusion of non-white communities within the nation-state. Nonetheless, most public and academic discussions avoid explicit mention of and engagement with whiteness (Osanami Törngren et al., 2018).

In this study, we situate definitions of national identity within a context where the nationally dominant group is a local numerical minority. Living in a majority–minority context can confront people with difference, with potential new (ethnic) hierarchies (Vertovec, 2019), but can also contribute to diversity being found commonplace (Wessendorf, 2014). At the same time, people without a migration background

remain nationally dominant, and as such not only have more access to material resources, but also have more access to defining, redefining, and perpetuating ethnic boundaries (Simonsen, 2022). Do Swedes without a migration background take up the available narratives of national identity, or do they offer alternative constructions of Swedishness situated within a majority–minority context? Do they reflect on and engage with their own enduring dominant position in Sweden, and their power to define national identity in their own terms as a result of living in a majority–minority context?

3. Method

This study has been conducted within the framework of the Becoming a Minority (BaM) project in which we research people without a migration background who are a minority in six European cities. For the qualitative fieldwork in Malmö, we interviewed people from majority–minority neighbourhoods focusing primarily on two neighbourhoods: Södra Sofielund and Lorensborg. Both neighbourhoods are majority–minority, i.e., Swedes without a migration background make up less than 50% of the population. Nonetheless, the neighbourhoods differ from each other in composition, architectural characteristics, and more.

Lorensborg, situated about three kilometres west of the city centre, consists mainly of large and high flat buildings, a mix of rentals and private properties. The Malmö football stadium is located adjacent to Lorensborg. The neighbourhood itself has few meeting places, consisting of a shopping mall containing a supermarket, a sports pub, and a few other businesses, and a small number of businesses elsewhere. Every Saturday morning the mall hosts a local flea market, where residents of Lorensborg and other Malmö residents put up stands. There are green spaces and playgrounds around the neighbourhood, and a lot of the flats have own courtyards that are not accessible to the public. A popular large public park with walking paths and a small lake is located very close to Lorensborg.

Södra Sofielund, located about three kilometres south of the city centre, consists mainly of smaller and lower apartment buildings, and a few streets of free-standing houses. The apartment buildings are mostly rentals and the free-standing houses are mostly private properties. According to respondents as well as experts in the neighbourhood, some rentals are managed by rental companies, but a lot are owned and managed by private landlords, often labelled slumlords by these respondents. The neighbourhood features a small central square with a corner shop, a playground, and a few other businesses. The neighbourhood is situated very close to other neighbourhoods with more bars, restaurants, and stores. Södra Sofielund has been placed on the list of extremely vulnerable areas by the Swedish police, a term that is applied to areas with high crime rates and social exclusion (Polisen, 2019). We were informed by respondents and experts we spoke with that attempts to help decrease social problems in Södra Sofielund—such as forcing private landlords in the area to improve the conditions of their rentals—have been hailed as positive, but have also sparked concerns about gentrification.

The interviews were conducted between November 2019 and February 2020. Most interviews were conducted in English by the first author, sometimes assisted by a research assistant. A number of interviews were conducted in Swedish by the research assistant, who transcribed and translated them into English. The interview language could have influenced the study. On the one hand, interviewees might not have been able to express their thoughts and feelings as fluently in English. On the other hand, by conducting the interviews in another language, interviewees might take more time to explain certain thoughts, traditions, and experiences that might seem self-evident to them from a Swedish perspective.

Respondents were recruited in different ways. Some were respondents to the BaM survey which took place in spring of 2019, that had indicated interest in participating in further BaM research. We also recruited respondents using snowballing, door-to-door flyers, Facebook groups, participation in neighbourhood activities, and contacts via colleagues in Malmö. We encountered difficulties recruiting enough respondents from these two neighbourhoods and also interviewed a few respondents from similar neighborhoods to Södra Sodielund and Lorensborg in composition, socio-economic status, and location within the city. As the discourse on national identity, the focus of this study, was not explicitly linked by the respondents to characteristics of the majority–minority setting they live in, we asked inhabitants of the other majority–minority neighbourhoods for reflections on constructions of Swedishness. Ultimately, we interviewed 22 respondents without a migration background, 13 women and 9 men, aged 26 to 47 at the time of the interview. The majority have either followed a university or a university of applied sciences educational programme.

We conducted semi-structured interviews asking respondents about living in a majority–minority neighbourhood, with questions on interethnic relations in the neighbourhood and the use of neighbourhood space. Additionally, respondents were asked what being Swedish meant to them, if they felt Swedish, if Swedishness is accessible to everyone or not, and how they relate Swedishness to living in a majority–minority context. We did not specify what we meant by identity, therefore people were free to interpret Swedishness from within or without. This analysis focuses on questions about Swedishness and Swedish national identity, and we also look at how people refer to the Swedes and Swedishness throughout the rest of the interview, for instance when discussing the presence of various ethnic groups in the neighbourhood, or when describing the diversity of their social circles. The interviews ranged from 37 minutes to 1 hour and 55 minutes in length.

It is important to consider the position and background of both interviewers for the study results. The first author of this article is an Albanian-origin Netherlands-based researcher temporarily based in Sweden for the duration of this research. As a foreigner in Sweden, she was assumed by respondents to not know much about the habits, customs, and social discourses in Sweden and in Malmö, which proved useful in getting respondents to articulate thoughts that might have otherwise seemed self-evident to them. The research assistant is a Swede without a migration background, belonging to the same group as all the interviewees. On a few occasions, this facilitated the recruitment of respondents.

We conducted content analysis using Atlas.ti, version 9.0. We used the theoretical framework to formulate code groups and codes regarding categories of national identity and the majority–minority context, and we revisited these codes throughout the analysis, adjusting them based on what emerged from the data. See Table 1 for the definitive coding scheme. All respondents are pseudonymised.

4. Results

During the interviews, respondents shared and reflected on their experiences with living in a majority–minority neighbourhood. They spoke about the local context they are embedded in and explained how it is for them to live in diversity. Further on during the interviews, they reflected on what Swedishness means to them, and the boundaries of Swedishness. While the local experiences with being a minority are not the focus of this article, we were interested in the extent to which people relate the local context they are embedded in, to how they

Table 1. Coding scheme.

Defining Swedish national identity	Within	Feasts	
		Quiet personality	
		Love of nature	
	Without	Civic identity	Language
			Participation
			Feeling
		Ethnic identity	Ancestry
Reflecting on categorisations	Whiteness	Own position	
		Position Other	
	Social position ethnic minorities	Lower societal position	
		Discrimination and marginalisation	
	Rejecting Swedish middle class values	Own position	

construct Swedishness. We note that in general, people do not relate local experiences with being a minority to reflections on national identity, bar a few cases (by describing for instance neighbourhood residents in terms of group belonging, see analysis below). While our respondents came from different neighbourhoods in Malmö, with different characteristics, we see few differences between neighbourhoods in how Swedishness is constructed, indicating the limited role of the local context. Critically reflecting on whiteness (see Section 4.2.1) is an exception to this, as most respondents critically engaging with whiteness as a boundary in Swedish society live in Södra Sofielund. However, given both the limited number of people who reflect on whiteness, and the lack of a reflection on how the local and the national connect, the results do not provide clear insight into this relationship.

4.1. Defining National Identity From Without

When asked to define what Swedish identity is, respondents did not focus their discourse much around Swedishness from *within* (what are characteristics, traditions, behaviours, and habits of those that identify as Swedes). Occasionally respondents did refer specifically to aspects of Swedish identity from within. For instance, some of them see Swedish identity as reflecting particular values such as gender equality. Some respondents also identify a held-back personality and a need to not stick out as a particularly Swedish characteristic, or speak about traditional celebrations such as Midsummer. The discussion mostly revolved around Swedishness from *without*—Swedishness as a collection of conditions that must be fulfilled by those who may claim themselves as Swedes. Therefore, the discussion quickly took the shape of the ethnic/civic distinction—people either spoke of Swedish identity as something only available to those with Swedish ancestry (ethno-national identity) or they spoke of Swedish identity as achievable as long as one puts effort and meets certain conditions (civic national identity).

The prevailing discourse in these interviews is that of a civic construction of Swedish national identity. When explicitly talking about Swedishness, most respondents refer to it as achievable. They highlight the importance

of *feeling Swedish* for being Swedish, an element of civic national identity. For instance, Emma (woman, 29, Lorensborg) said:

> While Swedish identity…it can of course be about whether you feel Swedish or not Swedish. Eh but….I…so Swedish identity—if you are Swedish then you are Swedish! If you have citizenship in Sweden, you are Swedish. And that's that kind of.

Jenny (woman, 26, Södra Sofielund) elaborates further on this take: "I think it [being Swedish] is something that you can become because I think it's something that develops overtime and that it's something they self-identify with, and it's something you can choose to identify with."

While being Swedish is made conditional on feeling Swedish, feeling Swedish is not necessarily made conditional on fulfilling any specific characteristics of Swedishness. Often the respondents leave it up to the other to decide in what way they feel Swedish.

Another element of civic national identity that recurs in how respondents speak about who can be Swedish concerns the importance of *participating in and contributing to society* in some way, usually through work. Ferdinand (man, 33, Södra Sofielund) says in response to the question whether the first author of this article, a foreigner in Sweden living there only for the duration of this fieldwork, could ever become Swedish:

> Of course you could but you have to be invested in the country, and what I mean by that is that you live here full-time, perhaps you work here or have some sort of activity. You're, like, a part of society, and I mean that could be whatever, but I mean as long as you are part of society.

This sentiment is also echoed by Sofie (woman, 29, Lorensborg), who says: "Yeah, citizenship, yeah, and then it's like okay, I'm Swedish, but if you don't want to pay taxes and help us by doing work and stuff like that, then it's hard to see you as Swedish."

Proficiency in Swedish is also seen as important by many. The role of language in national identity is debated in literature (Oakes, 2001), with some seeing it as tied to ethnonational identity (e.g., speaking Swedish defines the ethnic group) and others as civic identity (e.g., Swedish is the lingua franca of Sweden and facilitates participation in society). Most respondents emphasizing the importance of speaking Swedish generally frame it in civic terms, citing its utility for societal participation and life opportunities. For instance, Emma points out that: "Eh maybe some simple language test [would be important for being Swedish]….But I think it would be good to make it easier to adapt, and especially easier to get a chance in a country, if you have the language."

Ferdinand also says: "But I have to say, you have to have sort of a baseline, you know, in society. At least be able to communicate in the language, because that opens so many doors, work, etc., and like communicating with people around you."

The sentiment is echoed by Edward (man, Lorensborg): "I personally think that it's very important to learn the language, I think that's mostly important and I also think that's the thing the society hasn't been able to accomplish."

However, some respondents approach Swedish proficiency as an ethnic element (of nation building) rather than a purely utilitarian lingua franca. Jesper (man, 29, Södra Sofielund) says about defining Swedish culture:

> But....I do believe it [Swedish culture] has a lot of foundation in language of course. That one has a common language. I think that is crucial for the making of a people in some way, that one has a common language one is using.

This sentiment is very rarely echoed among the respondents.

In summary, respondents predominantly adopt and use a dominant and widespread civic discourse on Swedish identity based on civic values and open toward including people from different ethnic groups. However, it is noteworthy that when asked to define Swedish identity, the respondents predominantly engage with Swedishness as a reflection of who the Other is and how they fit within a Swedish identity, rather than a reflection of what makes the Swedish Swedish. The Swedishness of people like the respondents themselves (i.e., Swedes without a migration background) is not only not questioned, but mostly also not described. Furthermore, they take for granted that they have the power to define who is Swedish and do not reflect on their position in making and perpetuating ethnic boundaries. However, while respondents don't reflect on their power to decide what and who is Swedish, they do reflect on the meaning and implications of the categories they talk about, as well as their own dominant position in Swedish society.

4.2. Reflexivity

The reflections people engage in when speaking of national identity occurred rather organically during the conversations. Sometimes this happened when respondents described diversity and the ethnic Other within their neighbourhood or in the city, and other times when they reflected on constructions of Swedishness. Three broad themes emerge from the responses. Some respondents reflect on *whiteness as a boundary marker* in Swedish society, acknowledging their own white privilege and the position of non-white Swedes. Others discuss the *societal positioning of ethnic minorities* as a whole, usually recognizing the marginalised position of ethnic minorities both socio-economically and in terms of discrimination. A third discussion some respondents engage with is *criticism of what they perceive to be the dominant Swedish middle-class culture* and their own positionality therein.

4.2.1. Whiteness

Respondents' reflections on whiteness tend to be centred around identifying whiteness as a boundary in Swedish society and describing the position of those that do not fit in the category of white. For instance, Alice talks about her friends who have non-Swedish Western European backgrounds:

> So, like, one parent is British. One of my best friends, her mother is from Iceland. One with two Swiss parents, you know, they will pass as white and they will be like, more privileged, or like be looked at.

Alice also talks more explicitly about how she relates to this herself: "Maybe I have some, like, white shame. So I tried to, like, compensate because I think people get racist attitudes....and that's also a bit patronizing."

Jenny also describes this sentiment:

> They [her friends] said they lived in the whitest and most Swedish BRF [house owners' association], which they didn't like because it felt, yeah, a bit disgusting, that yeah…
>
> I: Disgusting how?
>
> Jenny: Because a lot of Swedish and white privileged people bought apartments in, like, a poorer area….It's, like, gentrification and stuff. She [her friend] felt like she added, contributed to the gentrification and stuff.

Notably, these respondents not only reflect on how whiteness acts as a boundary in Swedish society, but also on how the privileges granted by virtue of being white give them a sense of shame and discomfort.

Some respondents mention skin colour and whiteness in an attempt to explicitly describe how they are used in Swedish society to differentiate. For example, Alexander (man, 47, Södra Sofielund) tells about a Quran school near his house in his neighbourhood, and describes how the attendants of this school are seen:

> And the people that come there, they are migrants. They fulfil the concept of migrants because they really look like migrants. It's not only about the colour of the skin, it's about how they dress and what colours they can wear.

Alexander reflects on this further when posed the question of whether someone moving to Sweden from abroad can ever become Swedish: "On the other hand, when you speak with an accent or you look foreign, in a lot of people's minds, you would still not be a Swede."

Lilly (woman, 44, Södra Sofielund) talks about her girlfriend, who was adopted as a child by Swedish parents without a migration background, and was raised exclusively with "Swedish culture":

> But she's not in the, in the society, she isn't seen as Swedish.
>
> I: Because she has a different colour?
>
> Lilly: Yeah. Right. She's from India. So she gets the treatment of an immigrant person. But she has the culture and the experience of a Swedish-born person.

Lilly's account of how her girlfriend is seen in society touches upon skin colour and appearance as a major element of boundary-making in Swedish society. According to Lilly's interpretation of Swedish society, being culturally Swedish is not enough for most Swedes to see one as Swedish: One must also *look* Swedish (i.e., be white).

Lilly also reflects on her own positionality within whiteness as a boundary in Swedish society. She gives an example of never being stopped in stores by security personnel, while her partner is: "So no one would like [stop me], I think that's also because I'm like, blonde and white and I speak perfect Swedish."

Sometimes respondents use skin colour themselves to differentiate between the in- and out-group but often problematize this use. For instance, Ferdinand uses whiteness to describe the difference between himself and others in the neighbourhood. He hesitates before explicitly mentioning whiteness, in line with a known trend in Sweden to avoid conversations about race. Ferdinand describes how people hanging out in the neighbourhood sometimes scowl at him when he walks past certain areas at night. When asked why he thinks they scowl at him, he responds:

> I think it is because perhaps sometimes I look like a police officer, so maybe, because….I don't look like them. But sometimes when I wear more like work pants they don't really scowl but they look interested in like if I want to buy something….So depends a little on what I wear and stuff like that.
>
> I: So how do you not look like them? In what way?
>
> Ferdinand: Ummm [laughs]. I don't want to be like that….Because of my whiteness, I suppose.

When Henrik (man, 38, Södra Sofielund) reflects on walking past groups of young people in the neighbourhood, he acknowledges that whiteness as a boundary is problematic, but uses it nonetheless to describe encounters in the neighbourhood and to describe both himself and the Other:

> But it's also my response, if I pass a group that, based on different experiences or aspects, I believe can perform something potentially negative, then maybe they look at me as Swedish because I also look kind of look to them as if they are not Swedes…although they are, they may also have grown up here. Well, it's for them to define I guess…there are, like. The. Yes. Unfortunately, our skin colour creates prejudice.

Thea (woman, 30, Lorensborg) describes her stepdaughter's class by problematizing the use of external characteristics to categorize people, while at the same time employing it herself, like Henrik:

> I know there was a girl in the class—if one is to be very…prejudiced, then there were people of colour and mixed appearance in the class but a lot of Swedish names. So there were a lot who had mixed parents.

4.2.2. Reflecting on the Social Position of Ethnic Minorities

Respondents' reflections on the social position of ethnic minorities can be broadly categorised into two streams. Firstly, some acknowledge and problematize that people with a migration background occupy a lower socio-economic position in Swedish society. Secondly, they recognize that, apart from this positioning, people with a migration background face an additional layer of marginalisation, including ethnic discrimination.

For instance, Alexander reflects on the discrimination and other marginalizing experiences that contribute to the disadvantaged position of these groups. He does this in the context of a discussion on what he defines as a culture of violence rather present in Malmö:

> These are children of migrants. And these victims and perpetrators as far as we know, they are children of migrants. Which may indicate that it [the culture of violence] can have to do with marginalisation, racism, discrimination. Stuff like that.

Ake (man, 38) lives in Heleneholm, a lower income majority–minority neighbourhood. While describing the conditions of the building he lives in, he reflects on the position of people with a migration background in Swedish society, and the actual access they have to rights which on paper belong to them:

> I: Do you think that a lower income neighborhood that has mostly people with a Swedish background would be different?
>
> Ake: Yeah....The situation with the building itself that I live in, quite often the elevators aren't working, quite often the laundry machines aren't working. And there are other issues like this with the building itself. If there were more Swedish people living there, they would find this unacceptable and they would demand their rights with a housing company, for instance, but I think with such a large proportion of the tenants living there being immigrants, they don't know their rights. They don't perhaps know enough Swedish to demand their rights. The expectation is lower. Yeah. Things would work if there would be more Swedish people living there.

Lilly phrases the marginalisation of ethnic minorities in the clearest terms when she reflects on being a numerical minority in her neighbourhood:

> I: So we talked about, when we were talking about the project before the interview, we talked about the whole minority idea. And do you ever feel like a minority?
>
> Lilly: No, I had no idea that it was less than 50%. I mean, when you say it, and I think about it's like, yeah, yeah, that would probably be right. But since I, yeah, no, I don't. And I think that feeling, the feeling of being a minority, I know, it's, it means that you're a smaller group. But since the smaller group in our area, has more, has more privileges and has more power, and has more access to things and has more money, then it's like, yeah, being a minority and having access to nothing, that will make it feel more like you're a minority. I mean, if you're the only one, but you have access to everything. That's not a problem. I mean, it's like, yeah. I'm thinking the problem is not being able to make your voice heard. Because you're fewer people. But that small group has access to everything. Is it a minority? I mean, it is if you go off counting people.

By reflecting on how Swedes without a migration background that are a local minority still maintain a dominant position in society, Lilly highlights the disadvantaged and marginalised position of ethnic minorities in Swedish society.

4.2.3. Rejecting Swedish Middle-Class Values

Thirdly, some respondents identify what can be considered a standard middle-class Swedish environment, in which one has to conform to certain mores, such as a focus on appearance. They explicitly value the diverse neighbourhoods they live in for deviating from this culture, reflecting on their own position within this middle-class culture, and their position in the majority–minority neighbourhood.

Tilde (woman, 32, Lorensborg), has this to say when asked whether she feels more at home in Lorensborg than the neighbourhood where she grew up:

Now I feel a lot more at home here…as a grown-up, I couldn't live in a villa quartier, I feel. It would be weird for me, I think, because I don't have that kind of economy, I don't have the lifestyle. I would probably check what clothes I'd be wearing…even just walking through the quartiers here—because you walk through the villa quartiers when you walk to the ocean—it's like watching…you feel like a tourist almost. So now I feel….It's why I like Lorensborg too, I don't have to think about what I put on when I go out. Now I would never like to live where I grew up.

Lilly talks about the neighbourhood she grew up in, which earlier in the interview she identifies as upper-middle-class white Swedish: "I'm much happier living here [in Södra Sofielund]. Because you don't get judged in the same way."

Cornelia (woman, 26, Lindangen) reflects on what she experiences as a closed-off Swedish way of being, which is not appreciated by all Swedes:

I don't know, I sometimes think about why are we like this? Have we always been like this? And I guess my impression is that, the more you care about superficial things like what car do you have? Do you have a dishwasher? Things like that? The more potential for shame there is. And so maybe it's a sense of, a fear of not being enough?

While critiquing middle-class values, respondents do not engage with their own dominant position and its implications in a diverse society. However, they engage with how they relate to some of the dominant values in Swedish society, highlight their discomfort with such values, and express appreciation for their current neighbourhoods. While this does not necessarily reveal resistance to their dominant position as such, it suggests a fluidity in how the dominant group is perceived and who is considered part of it.

5. Conclusion

This article explores how people without a migration background define Swedish national identity in daily life, focusing on majority–minority neighbourhoods where they become a local numerical minority. We posed the question of how Swedes without a migration background living in majority–minority neighbourhoods in Malmö engage with and reflect on available narratives of national identity. We showed that they (re)produce the dominant discourse on civic Swedish identity, while at the same time taking the dominant position of the Swede without a migration background for granted. However, they critically reflect on some aspects of Swedishness that marginalize Swedes with a migration background.

5.1. Swedish National Identity

Respondents were asked to define Swedish national identity, and while some occasionally define national identity from within, in terms of characteristics or traditions (for instance, they highlight Swedes as a quiet and held-back people who enjoy nature and celebrate feasts like Midsummer) most of the discourse on national identity defines it from without, centering on demarcating who is and isn't a legitimate part of the national ingroup (Triandafyllidou, 1998). This is also reflective of the dominant discourse in Swedish society on what Swedishness is, mostly defined in terms of who is Swedish and who is not (e.g., Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019). Therefore, our respondents mostly reproduce the available dominant narratives of Swedish identity.

The discourse respondents employ follows roughly the dichotomy made in the literature between ethnic and civic identity, i.e., Swedishness as something ascribed that you have to be born with, or Swedishness as something achievable. Most respondents explicitly frame Swedish national identity in an inclusive way, leaning toward Swedish identity as a civic one (e.g., Agius, 2017; Lödén, 2014). People formulate Swedishness as something that can be embodied by everyone, as long as they are willing to take on some civic characteristics. Very few respondents define Swedishness explicitly in ethnic terms. While, to a certain extent, this reflects the current public discourse, a more ethnic discourse of Swedishness is still present in Sweden, partially driven by the right-wing populist party the Sweden Democrats (Hellström et al., 2012). This discourse is mostly missing from our findings, while the party has a very substantial following in Sweden and Malmö. Partially this could be explained by the profile of our respondents, who are in general young and higher educated, a group more positive toward diversity (Manevska & Achterberg, 2013).

Our respondents predominantly focus on defining who the Other is rather than defining the Swede as such. The Swedishness of Swedes without a migration background is not discussed, and the conversation becomes about what the Other must do or be to be able to claim Swedishness. Respondents don't engage with the meaning and consequences of this discourse, possibly implying they take for granted the power to decide what Swedishness is (Simonsen, 2022). However, occasionally they engage critically and reflectively with the categories they talk about within the framework of a Swedish identity, as well as their own dominant position in Swedish society.

5.2. Reflecting on Categorisations and Dominant Position

While our respondents, in general, do not engage with their own dominant position in Sweden, some do reflect on the categories they use, and the categories they identify others as using to speak of and relate to people with different backgrounds. These reflections centre on three themes: whiteness and the colour boundaries drawn in Swedish society, the societal position of ethnic minorities, and what can be broadly seen as a Swedish middle-class culture.

When discussing *whiteness as a boundary*, people often reflect on their own positionality, acknowledging and criticizing white privilege in Swedish society, and showing awareness of how they personally benefit from it. Simultaneously, they note the lack of this privilege in some ethnic minorities and highlight the resulting consequences—exclusion and marginalisation. Respondents connect whiteness explicitly to skin colour, including by discussing how some types of migrants can be Swedish passing by virtue of being white, however, as Lundström (2017) points out, not all whiteness is recognised as white capital, and not all whiteness (i.e., non-Swedish whiteness) can confer privilege. These power intricacies of whiteness are not further discussed by the respondents. Nonetheless, this finding is particularly relevant in the context of colour-blindness in Swedish society (Osanami Törngren et al., 2018). Highlighting whiteness acknowledges colour as an ethnic boundary, and moves away from a discourse centred on colour-blindness that dominates the Swedish discourse on boundaries. Respondents broadly perceive Swedishness to be an open and accessible category to everyone, but some acknowledge the barriers posed by ethnicity and race in how inclusive the category truly is. This might indicate that even in its broadest understanding Swedishness remains tied to ethnicity and race. Notably all respondents who showed insight into colour-based boundaries identified the problem as something perpetrated by others, and not them. They see themselves as observers who note the issue with colour boundaries but do not reflect on how they, themselves, might contribute to this.

Respondents acknowledge ethnicity as a more general boundary in Swedish society by discussing the *position of ethnic minorities*. They emphasise the marginalised position of these minorities by pointing out their structural and socio-economic disadvantage in Swedish society, as well as the ethnic discrimination they face. This indicates an awareness of inequality in the extent to which various groups in society can access Swedish society. Despite our respondents defining Swedish identity in inclusive terms, they still recognize existing boundaries and their exclusionary consequences.

The third theme involves reflections on what can be seen as specific *Swedish middle-class values*. Respondents identify these values, promptly distancing themselves from them while explicitly embracing the diversity in their majority–minority neighbourhoods. Their reflections on this theme focus solely on their own positionality regarding these values and how they relate to the values in majority–minority neighbourhoods.

In summary, some of the Swedes without a migration background we interviewed recognize and critique the marginalised position of ethnic others while recognizing their own privileged and dominant position in Swedish society. However, this awareness doesn't necessarily translate to a reflection on their power to define who is Swedish and their influence on drawing boundaries. The terms used to discuss Swedishness remain reflective of the nationally dominant discourse. However, this critique does indicate more insight into the consequences of various aspects of national identity, which might be a result of confrontation with the edges of the nation-state in a majority–minority context. This might be a more genuine effort at inclusion than an inclusive definition of Swedish identity.

While this study turned its gaze to how national identity construction and negotiation unfolds in majority–minority contexts, we noted few explicit references to the majority–minority context itself. Even though we asked respondents to reflect on experiences of Swedishness within the neighbourhood, the discussion on Swedishness remained focused on the national level. Our previous work, which looks at national identity in majority–minority contexts in the Netherlands, shows that the construction of identity is done similarly in majority–minority as in non-majority–minority contexts. This indicates a reproduction of national-level discourse in the local majority–minority context (Lazëri & Coenders, 2023). A similar mechanism seems to be at play here, especially in light of our findings on how the construction of national identity mirrors the national-level discourse. In the local setting where people live, they are faced with and exposed to diversity, yet this local setting seems to disappear as a consideration when people talk about national identity, although it does remain relevant for more day-to-day interactions (see also Kraus & Crul, 2022). We also note that some respondents value the culture of the majority–minority context they live in as opposed to the middle-class values with which they grew up.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

This research is limited in showing to what extent the engagement with and criticism of the categories used to speak of Swedishness are connected to living in a majority–minority neighbourhood. Partially this could be due to the very broad scope of the interviews, with a variety of questions on the local and national contexts that were not necessarily explicitly coupled. Future research could consider designs that investigate this relationship more explicitly. Future research could also compare Swedes without a migration background living in majority–minority neighbourhoods with those living in non-majority–minority neighbourhoods. This comparison could clarify whether the reflexive engagement of some respondents

results from confrontation with diversity at the local level, or reflects larger societal processes, through which people are more aware of and engaged with issues of (in)equality and ethnic marginalisation.

Further research could also compare different national contexts and investigate whether critical engagement with various aspects of national identity is dependent on dominant national discourses or other specific features of the nation-state.

Lastly, in this research, we did not explicitly engage with intersections of difference. Future research should aim to reach groups with various social and cultural backgrounds, as educational background might influence which dominant narrative people engage with, as well as the language at their disposal for articulating criticism toward these narratives. Future research could also address how ethnicity and migration background intersect with other markers of difference, such as gender or sexual orientation, in affecting how people without a migration background reflect on identity, belonging, and the position of the Other.

5.4. Contribution

We have shown that most respondents subscribe to a nationally dominant civic identity narrative on Swedishness, defining Swedish identity in an inclusive way and making space for the ethnic Other in Swedish national space. Nonetheless, this inclusivity is performed from a place of dominance: Respondents do not reflect on their power to decide and define what national identity is. The inclusivity is therefore limited and bounded by the vision the dominant group—Swedes without a migration background—has on Swedish national identity.

However, respondents reflect on their power and positionality within Swedish society in general, by reflecting on the categories used in the discussion on Swedish national identity. They recognize their own privilege and the marginalisation of Swedes with a migration background. They criticize structural barriers ethnic minorities face, which implies a critique of how Swedish society includes, or fails to include, Swedes with a migration background and other ethnic minorities. In this sense, this can indicate a more genuine effort toward the inclusivity of ethnic minorities.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates a critical engagement with the question of colour boundaries in defining Swedishness. Within a Swedish context, this awareness and engagement is unusual, as the discourse remains centred on colour-blindness, and therefore indicates a shift in the conversation toward acknowledging the role of colour in boundary-making with regards to national identity.

This study offers a better understanding of the way in which people without a migration background who are a local minority engage with the national context in which they remain dominant. We show that their dominant position is still visible in the way they relate to diversity, but they are sometimes aware (and critical) of this position.

Acknowledgments

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ARTICLE

Middle-Class Versus Working-Class White Mothers' Approaches to Diversity in the Netherlands

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Abstract

There is a large body of literature on how white middle-class parents select schools for their children in gentrifying urban contexts. In this study, we aimed to explore the experiences of such parents after enrolling their children in ethnically mixed schools but also how these experiences varied in gentrifying urban contexts and smaller cities. We interviewed mothers without a migration background living in a large city (Amsterdam) or a medium-sized city (Tilburg) who had chosen to send their children to an ethnically mixed school in a majority–minority neighbourhood, asking them to reflect on their neighbourhood choice, school choice, and subsequent experiences. Based on our analysis, we developed a typology of parents' positions towards diversity, whereby they could be described as idealists, pragmatists, and realists. Aligned with previous studies, this article shows that the *idealist* position on diversity was more common among the white middle classes in Amsterdam, who expressed a positive attitude towards diversity but engaged with it to a controlled and limited extent. However, we also identified a group of mothers, mostly working class but also middle class, who did not take an idealized approach to diversity but embraced it as a lived reality. The study underlines the importance of mothers' engagement with diversity during their own childhood and youth as an important factor in shaping parenting behaviour around diversity.

Keywords

Amsterdam; diversity; middle class; mothers; parenting; school choice; working class

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1. Introduction

Increasing ethnic diversity in urban cities has resulted in so-called majority–minority cities and neighbourhoods: places where the demographic makeup means that no group has numerical majority status (Crul & Lelie, 2021). This increased ethnic diversity goes hand-in-hand with gentrification processes, which also leads to the diversification of social class backgrounds among residents as middle-class residents move into neighbourhoods populated by working-class groups. While diversity in urban settings is not limited to ethnicity or social class, these are the most influential dimensions, especially when it comes to understanding social mixing and inter-group relations.

Increased ethnic and social class diversity in urban areas has also had a direct impact on schools in these neighbourhoods, creating various interesting dynamics concerning school choice and relations within and surrounding schools (Keskiner & Waldring, 2023). One popular area of research has been the school choices of white middle-class parents who have moved into gentrifying areas (Hernández, 2019). These studies, however, mainly focus on school choice and rarely delve into how relations between children and parents evolve once parents have decided to send their child to an ethnically mixed school. Although most studies on diversity experience and social mixing are almost exclusively conducted within the context of large cities (Crozier et al., 2008; Raveaud & van Zanten, 2007), ethnic diversity and mixed schools are also to be found in smaller, medium-sized cities. This presents us with an opportunity to understand diversity under different conditions. While large, super-diverse cities are home to people from both higher and lower social classes and various ethnic backgrounds due to the impact of gentrification processes, medium-sized cities may be more homogeneous in terms of social class background while still embodying ethnic diversity and the impact of gentrification, albeit to a lesser extent (Distelbrink et al., 2024).

Comparing the experiences of mothers without a migration background (referred to as white mothers) in Amsterdam versus Tilburg, this study aims to fill the aforementioned gaps in the literature by scrutinizing (a) how white mothers who select ethnically mixed schools engage with diversity and (b) how their experiences vary in gentrifying areas in large cities as opposed to working-class areas in medium-sized cities.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. School Choice in Gentrifying Areas

Middle-class parents who moved into gentrifying areas, which are diverse in terms of the ethnicity and social class backgrounds of their residents, are often faced with a choice when it comes to selecting a school for their children. Once they have entered this new living environment, parents must choose whether to send their children to a diverse neighbourhood school or opt for a school with a larger middle-class composition outside the neighbourhoods. Many white middle-class parents have chosen the latter option (Raveaud & van Zanten, 2007). Scrutinizing the relationship between school choice and living in a gentrifying area using national-level data in the US, Candipan (2020) finds that when nearby school choice options are available, parents in gentrifying neighbourhoods are more likely than those in socioeconomically stable or declining neighbourhoods to avoid ethnically diverse neighbourhood schools, opting instead for schools that match their ethnic and social class background. However, middle-class parents do not form a homogenous group, and a new wave of studies has shown that some middle-class parents in gentrifying areas do select diverse

schools in their neighbourhood (Hernández, 2019). During the selection process, parents pursue a range of strategies such as seeking "the right mix," to ensure their child does not fall into a minority (Byrne, 2006), or bearing a specific "threshold" in mind regarding the composition of the school and the number of children from a specific background (Boterman, 2022). This careful act of controlling diversity in school choice is also coupled with an appreciation of diversity (Tissot, 2014). These parents perceive attending mixed schools or living in diverse neighbourhoods as a crucial component of middle-class identity which will hopefully help their children develop a form of "multi-cultural capital" that will enable them to be comfortable with diversity (Evans, 2021; Underhill, 2019). Hence even when parents do choose ethnically mixed urban schools, they simultaneously display specific ideals and complex motives of altruism and instrumentalism which may not always lead to inclusive or equal school practices (Crozier et al., 2008). We need to go beyond school decision processes to see how these decisions play out in practices and everyday experiences in diverse school settings for middle-class parents who chose ethnically mixed schools. The literature on middle-class parents in gentrifying areas shows that many of these residents are also newcomers to diversity and this may be the first time they have socialized with people from different ethnic and social class backgrounds (Evans, 2021), making their practical experiences more challenging.

2.2. School Choice in Non-Gentrifying Areas and Working-Class Areas

The majority of the literature on gentrifying neighbourhoods focuses on the school choices of middle-class parents. Some studies have focused on how white middle-class parents enrolling their children at diverse schools in gentrifying areas has led to working-class or ethnic minority parents feeling more excluded at these schools (Cucchiara, 2008). Kroeger's (2005) study of middle-class parental involvement at an ethnically and socially diverse school revealed the multiple obstacles that less privileged parents experienced in becoming involved in school events. These studies pointed more to the consequence of parents from different backgrounds mixing in the same school and how their experiences evolved over time. The literature on the school choices of working-class and ethnic minority parents remains rather limited. Bell (2009) compared the selection process of parents from different social classes and ethnic backgrounds in a Midwest city in the US and found that working-class and ethnic minority parents were also concerned with choosing the best academic options for their children. Their choices, however, were constrained by income, as private schools were not an option; by information, as their social networks could only provide useful information to a limited extent; and by proximity, as they were unable to move or travel for a better school. It has been found that working-class and ethnic minority parents living in ethnically diverse areas are more likely to select schools in the same areas compared to middle-class parents (Candipan, 2020). What requires further inquiry is how the experiences of working-class parents without a migration background evolve once they opt for an ethnically diverse school.

2.3. Beyond School Choice: Experiences of Diversity and the Discrepancy Between Ideals and Practices

While there is a large body of literature on the school choices of (mostly middle-class) parents, the ways in which parents engage with their surroundings once they have opted for a diverse school are rather understudied. When asked about school-related decisions, parents often talk about the expectations and ideals they had before selecting a certain school and how these are put to the test when their children actually start attending school. This discrepancy between ideals (attitudes) and practices (behaviour) regarding diversity has also been theorized by Crul and Lelie (2021) using diversity attitudes and practices

impact scales. These scales show that attitudes and behaviour about diversity may align when people are positive about ethnic diversity and also engage with it. They may, however, be at odds with each other when people express positive attitudes towards ethnic diversity without engaging with it. Kraus (2023) has empirically tested the diversity attitudes and practices impact scale using Becoming *a* Minority data. Controlling for social class background, Kraus (2023) showed that although middle-class people expressed enthusiasm about diversity, they didn't really engage with people from different ethnic backgrounds ("segregated enthusiasts"). She also talked about the group of people who are negative about diversity yet more engaged with it ("integrated sceptics"). Both studies underlined the complex nature of diversity experience which showed variance across middle- and working-class residents. Another critical finding of Kraus (2023) is how ideals and practices may start to align if residents live longer in their neighbourhood.

In studying the experiences of mothers with varying social class backgrounds in Amsterdam and Tilburg, we will pay attention to school choice but also to how this experience has evolved over time from the perspective of attitudes versus practices. By doing so, we aim to fill a gap in the literature by illustrating the complex nature of expectations and engagement practices and how these may or may not be aligned with each other.

3. Methods

3.1. The Case of the Netherlands: Selection of Neighbourhoods and Schools

In the Netherlands, large cities like Amsterdam are subject to both gentrification and increased ethnic diversity. In Amsterdam, 55 percent of the population has a migration background, making it a majority–minority setting. For this study, we selected our respondents from the gentrifying majority–minority neighbourhoods in West and Nieuw West. Our previous studies have shown that, in gentrifying neighbourhoods, residents without a migration background are usually newcomers who have bought a house and have a high education and income level (Keskiner & Waldring, 2023). This was also the case in our sample.

As a comparison, we selected Tilburg, a medium-sized city in the south of the Netherlands. This decision was primarily informed by the lack of literature on diversity experience in medium-sized cities. The selection of this particular city had a practical nature as one of our team members lived in Tilburg and was familiar with the area. Thirty percent of Tilburg's population has a migration background and, following a desk research of its majority–minority neighbourhoods, we focused on recruiting mothers from ethnically mixed schools located in majority–minority neighbourhoods in Tilburg-North and Tilburg-West. While there are some efforts at urban renewal in the area, the rate of gentrification is not comparable to that of Amsterdam. Hence, compared to the middle-class white mothers we encountered in Amsterdam, the mothers we spoke to here were more often educated to secondary school level and did not have high income levels.

In the Netherlands, parents have the freedom to choose their children's school. Proximity to home, the quality of the education on offer, or a school's special pedagogic/religious affiliation are known to play a prominent role in school choice (Karsten et al., 2006). In Amsterdam, there is also a postcode system where parents make a list of the schools they want their child to attend and are allocated a school at a later date.

In the areas we selected in Amsterdam and Tilburg, we visited two or three schools with an ethnically mixed student population. These schools did not officially participate in the research; instead, we recruited the

mothers in their schoolyard. All of these schools are public institutions where Dutch is the official language of instruction and communication (Distelbrink et al., 2024).

3.2. Interviews and Respondents

In selecting our respondents, we focused on mothers instead of both parents since it was difficult to recruit both parents in a consistent way in both settings. The mothers we spoke to had one or more children between the ages of 4 to 13, enrolled at a school with a mixed student population. The educational level of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

In the Netherlands, working-class or middle-class identities are not saliently acknowledged or communicated concepts (van Eijk, 2011). Instead, education levels serve as a proxy for social class (Bol, 2016). Therefore, we refer to mothers with a higher level of education and income as being middle class while working class is used to denote practically educated mothers with lower income level or living on social benefits. As with social class, people in the Netherlands find it difficult to acknowledge whiteness as well as race, and therefore having a migration background (or not) are commonly used terms (Wekker, 2016). We set out to research white mothers who also did not have a migration background, so we asked them whether they had a migration background during our recruitment process. We do not call these mothers "native," since most mothers with a migration background are also native groups, having been born and raised in the Netherlands. There is an immense body of literature on the school choices of white middle-class parents in gentrifying areas. Our goal was to follow up this line of research by focusing on how white mothers who did not have a migration background experienced sending their children to ethnically mixed schools in gentrifying areas. It is important to mention that during the interviews respondents referred to their own group or their children as white, hence whiteness is to be found in the discourses of people, and schools are even referred to as white schools if they have many pupils without a migration background.

We conducted 28 interviews: 18 in Amsterdam and 10 in Tilburg. Data collection was carried out from February to August 2021. During our recruitment process, we sought ways to effectively navigate the constraints imposed by the corona pandemic. By leveraging our social and professional networks, we were able to identify and reach out to potential participants. Most participants were contacted through a collaboration with Stichting Wie Ben Jij Film, which has a large network of parents in several selected schools. Additionally, we used the snowball technique, asking initial participants to refer other parents who met our criteria of not having a migration background, living in a majority–minority neighbourhood, and sending their children to an ethnically mixed school. Various members of the research team collected data in Amsterdam and Tilburg. The interviews were transcribed and later we devised a codebook using an iterative approach. First, we created deductive codes to analyse data based on the literature, but, along the way, we began to include inductive codes and modified our codebook. For example, prior socialization with diversity

Table 1. Number of respondents per educational level and city.

	Up to vocational secondary education (vmbo)	Senior secondary vocational education (mbo)	Higher professional education (hbo)	University education and above (wo)
Tilburg	5	5		
Amsterdam		1	6	12

was not a deductive code, but something that emerged from our analysis as an important factor at a later stage. As a group of researchers, we have different fixed and subjective positionalities: We all identified as female, but some of us had a migration background while others did not. Being in a team helped us to reflect on each other's positionalities and perspectives, both during data collection and the analysis process.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Towards a Typology of Parents' Approach to Diversity

Our thorough analysis of the data has revealed recurring patterns in parental behaviours concerning neighbourhood selection, school choice, and interactions with diversity. These common patterns informed the development of a typology that encapsulates the multifaceted nature of parents' experiences with diversity. This typology is not intended to delineate ideal types or to assert rigid boundaries between categories; indeed, we can observe overlapping behaviours among the types. In this section, we delineate three positions in relation to specific patterns in neighbourhood choice, school selection, and experiences with diversity.

The first type is the idealist position: parents who display an "idealized approach to diversity." We call this the idealist position because these people have an idealistic definition of diversity and high expectations of diversity or living in diversity which do not always match their expectations. These parents did not grow up in diverse environments, but once they moved to a diverse area, they had very positive expectations about sending their children to a mixed school in line with their ideals about a multicultural society. As we will show, however, these ideals did not always match their practical experiences. This position was mostly seen among middle-class mothers in Amsterdam.

The second type is the pragmatist position: mothers with "mixed feelings" towards diversity. Similar to the idealists, they had not grown up with diversity. Unlike the idealists, they did not view the multicultural society in purely positive and idealistic terms and voiced fears about living in a diverse environment. The reason why we call them pragmatists is because, despite these concerns, they were practical about engaging with diversity. They sent their children to a multi-ethnic school in the neighbourhood and established contacts with various groups. We mainly observed this position among working-class mothers in Tilburg.

The last type is the realist position. Like the idealists, these mothers were positive about diversity. This positivity, however, was not voiced in terms of a societal ideal but as the result of lived experience. These women had become familiar with diversity in childhood as they had either grown up in that neighbourhood or a similar one. What's more, they embraced and accepted the reality of diversity. These mothers were mostly working-class women living in Tilburg, but we also interviewed one middle-class mother in Amsterdam who had adopted a similar position.

Even though we see clear relations between the positions toward diversity and social class background, previous familiarity with diversity emerged as a crucial factor that cut across class lines. Figure 1 provides a further characterization of each type as a guide for reading the coming sections.
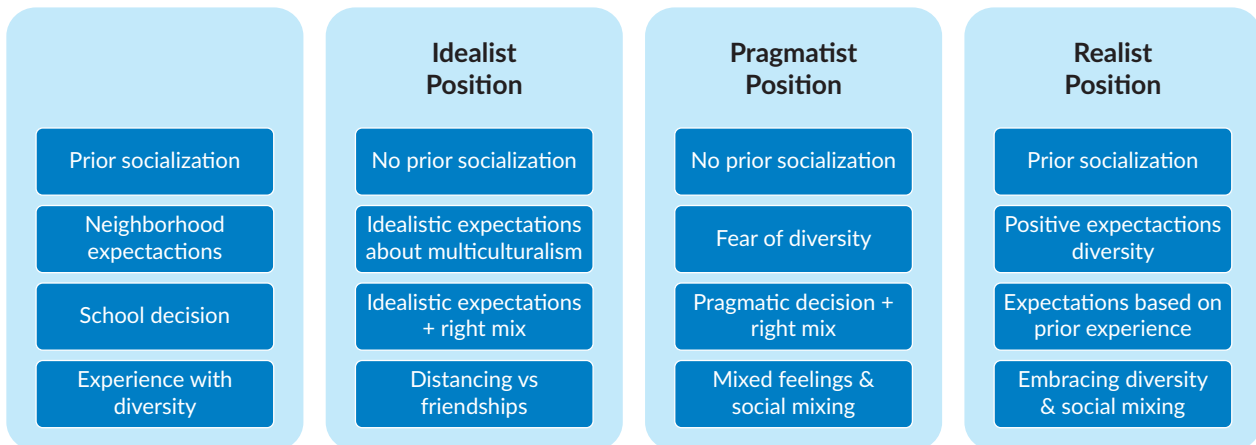
	Idealist Position	**Pragmatist Position**	**Realist Position**
Prior socialization	No prior socialization	No prior socialization	Prior socialization
Neighborhood expectactions	Idealistic expectations about multiculturalism	Fear of diversity	Positive expectations diversity
School decision	Idealistic expectations + right mix	Pragmatic decision + right mix	Expectations based on prior experience
Experience with diversity	Distancing vs friendships	Mixed feelings & social mixing	Embracing diversity & social mixing

Figure 1. Parents' positions regarding diversity.

4.2. Neighbourhood "Choice" and Expectations

Both in Amsterdam and Tilburg, the decision to live in a specific neighbourhood was mainly influenced by financial considerations. In Amsterdam, residents had chosen their neighbourhood because the houses there were more affordable than in other parts of the city, while in Tilburg, the respondents had either been offered social housing or had found affordable houses to purchase in the neighbourhood. No respondents mentioned diversity as a reason for moving to their neighbourhood.

In Amsterdam, many young families were motivated by the need for more space and affordability as their family expanded; "seeking more square meters for less money" as one respondent put it. These neighbourhoods used to be predominantly populated by migrant families, but they are now gradually gentrifying due to new private housing developments. Even though purchasing a private home was their main motivation, many of our respondents had an idealized view of "diversity":

> Look, we also had practical reasons for moving here. We wanted children and we were living in a small rented house and we wanted to buy something and here we could get metres. But I also came here with a kind of *idealistic* idea of: Oh integration and fun, all cultures together and cooking couscous together and I don't know what. But that looks different in practice. (Merel, Amsterdam)

Merel's experience was comparable to that of the other mothers in Amsterdam. While diversity was not their main motivation for moving into the area, this does not mean that they did not have expectations or perceptions regarding the demographic composition of their new neighbourhood. They saw their move as an opportunity to meet new people with a migrant background, and a chance to learn more about other cultural practices. Except for one mother, the respondents from Amsterdam had not grown up in a diverse environment and moving to a diverse one was therefore more of an abstract ideal.

In Tilburg, the main reason why our respondents had moved to their particular neighbourhood was that they had "received a social housing offer." One group of mothers, whom we call pragmatists, expressed concerns about living alongside people from "different cultures," highlighting their unfamiliarity with the neighbourhood and/or diversity. Nevertheless, they accepted the housing offer or purchased affordable

housing. Danielle, for instance, shared her initial hesitations about moving into a culturally diverse area, fearing potential conflicts:

> That was actually a bit the thing I had a lot of trouble with. I used to live in a place where there were no other people from a different culture. It was just kind of a Christian town. I actually had quite a lot of trouble coming here, not because I am racist but purely because of the different cultures and because of how people are. This can lead to conflicts with our own culture. (Danielle, Tilburg)

At the same time, there was another group of mothers in Tilburg who did not experience such initial fear and hesitation, as they had been born and/or raised in this neighbourhood or a similarly mixed one. This familiarity seemed to smoothen their arrival as they had already enjoyed living in such a context:

> I come from The Hague myself. It is much more multicultural than here. And I have absolutely no problem with that [people with a migration background]. We live in Tilburg-Noord. Many different cultures and many children live here. The youngest always plays outside with all the neighbourhood children. One of her friends is a Chinese-Finnish girl. I have lived here for seven years now. (Nanike, Tilburg)

This group, the realists, differ in the sense that their expectations regarding moving to or living in a diverse neighbourhood were based on their actual experiences with diversity, rather than idealistic notions or prior prejudices.

4.3. School Choice

While parents' decision to move to or stay in an ethnically mixed neighbourhood was not informed by "diversity-seeking" behaviour, a school's ethnic composition did play a role in school choice, though in varying ways.

In Amsterdam, mothers with an idealist position wanted to send their children to a nearby school that was ethnically mixed. With this ideal in mind, they distanced themselves from white middle-class parents who sent their children to a school with a predominantly white student population in a different neighbourhood, arguing that schools should be a reflection of the wider diverse society. Considering what society looks like, this ideal translated into avoiding both schools dominated by children without a migration background (referred to by the mother as "snow-white") and schools where almost all of the pupils had a migration background (referred to by the mother as "black" schools) and were therefore not "mixed" enough:

> In the neighbourhood, there are about three schools that I think are 90 percent black schools and then one snow-white school, I don't feel at all at home with that either. (Monique, Amsterdam)

While being positive about diversity, many mothers with an idealist position openly voiced the concern that their children would belong to a small minority or even be the only white pupils in the class. Strategies to "control" this include "parental initiatives" (Mesic et al., 2021) aimed at placing white children in a mixed school along with a group of other white parents to alter the school composition and create "safety in numbers." Some of our respondents were pioneers of a parental initiative, playing an active role in promoting their mixed school

to white middle-class parents as a way to create or maintain the "right mix." Others were followers of such endeavours and had selected a school because it was home to this type of initiative. These efforts to control numbers and create the right mix also reflect an approach to diversity as an ideal rather than an engagement with existing conditions. According to these parents, a properly mixed school can benefit their children by helping them find their place in this diverse society, mirroring the larger society in a way that aligns with their vision and values.

We didn't observe anything similar to the parental initiatives in Amsterdam among the parents who had adopted the pragmatist position. We saw some similarities to the idealist position of "looking for the right mix," but proximity, convenience (being close to grandparents or home), and compatibility with their child's needs took priority:

> The reason [to select this school] was that the schools we saw in the old neighbourhood, there was a school with a lot of disadvantages and a lot of ethnic diversity. We did not feel comfortable sending our child to school there. That school wasn't good for him, we are happy with our school. But our current school is also mixed, I think the majority has a migration background. (Chantal, Tilburg)

This quote shows the nuanced approach to diversity. This mother rejected one school due to disadvantages and a lot of ethnic diversity, yet she chose another ethnically diverse school because she was satisfied with its pedagogy and the quality of education it provided. This was reminiscent of the pragmatist position, whereby parents may have concerns about the ethnic composition of a school and the drawbacks this may entail, but are still willing to settle for a "neighbourhood" school that is convenient and a good fit with their children, even though they will be in a minority position. In that sense, mothers compared different diverse schools in the neighbourhood and selected the one that corresponded to their interests.

Unlike the pragmatists, mothers who fit within the realist position did not voice strong fears or ambiguities about living in diversity or their kids being in a minority at school. Any concerns they may have had were easily resolved and they had a more embracing attitude towards "the reality" of diversity, as exemplified in the quote below:

> In Adam's class, for example, there are only four Dutch children. And there are 21 children in total, so then, of course, there are very few Dutch children. Anyway, it's a very multicultural school. But I have to say that this doesn't bother me too much. There are also Iraqi and Serbian kids from refugee countries in Adam's class. In the beginning, I was a bit apprehensive about this because you hear a lot of stories about refugee children. But they are so nice and you get to experience so much but Adam also gets to experience a lot of different things. And I think that is also positive for a child growing up in a neighbourhood like this because he is not surprised by anything, to him everyone is equal. Whether a child is brown or not or whether or not they can speak Dutch, there is no difference. (Anne-Marie, Tilburg)

Anne-Marie's words were echoed by others with a realist position in Tilburg, who were at ease with the fact that their children were growing up in a predominantly ethnically mixed environment, or that they were the only white children in the classroom. Esther, a middle-class mother from Amsterdam, had sent both of her children to a neighbourhood school:

Well, explicitly because I wanted them to grow up in the neighbourhood and have their life here. You see a lot of parents here with either a Western migration background or no migration background, who cycle an hour to the Jordaan or all the way to Zuid to take their children to school, and I expressly did not consider this a good idea. I think, your school is so important for your social environment. I want them to take root in this neighbourhood and have their social environment here, so they don't have to cycle three kilometres to visit a classmate. I think it is easier to make contact when you just walk down the street and play together in the playground. You just have those contacts more easily, more briefly. (Esther, Amsterdam)

This decision meant that Esther's daughter was the only white girl in her class. It was more important, however, to Esther, for her children to grow up in their neighbourhood and to have friends living close by. This stance does not fit within the idealistic position as instead of trying to set conditions and manage diversity, Esther chose to find her place in the existing conditions.

4.4. Practices of Diversity

In this section, we want to focus on the experiences of the mothers once they sent their children to an ethnically mixed school.

4.4.1. The Idealists: We Were Just Naïve

The majority of the idealist position holders in Amsterdam expected that sending their child to a multi-ethnic school would put them more in touch with diversity. During the first two years of primary school, the children all played together, but gradually they started to group together with children who were more "like them." Not only the children, but the parents also started withdrawing into their own circle. Below, a mother in Amsterdam reflects on her role in this group-forming process:

You are always looking for recognition, also as parents I think, in the schoolyard. You know, birds of a feather flock together, you recognize someone, or your children, so the children start playing together more quickly because you have contact as parents. So you maintain that a bit. (Marit, Amsterdam)

Some respondents considered the contrast between their initial idealistic expectations and their actual experiences with mixing (or lack thereof) as a form of naiveté. They had been naïve in expecting that sending their child to a multi-ethnic school would easily lead to more contact with different groups or being welcomed with open arms by ethnic minority parents. Mothers with the idealist position in Amsterdam had had little experience with diversity, so being in these environments meant learning and adapting. Instead of being something that came about naturally, it required effort on their part, costing them energy. The energy that the idealists had to spend on mixing was also the result of the perceived value differences between groups. Religion, especially Islam, was sometimes experienced as a dividing line. While most of these mothers had no problem with celebrating Islamic holidays, many of them said that they disapproved of Muslim Dutch parents being critical of sex education in school. Once more, we see a form of idealism embedded here: Making space for other cultures is not seen as problematic—as long as they do not clash with one's own norms and values (Schut & Crul, 2024). Merel argues that the differences between groups are due to class differences rather than religion or ethnicity, underlining what she calls "liberal values":

Well, that has nothing to do with religious origins and ethnic origins, because his best friends in class were Dalil and Emir, very Moroccan. But Dalil's mother is a dental assistant, so his mother works and they both speak very good Dutch. Emir is also brought up with…hey, pick up your trash, so [they have] an open mind, and his mother also chose this school even though she lives next to a black school. But she says: "No, I came to this school so that my child can come into contact with all kinds of children." So then you see a like-mindedness. Parents who read books to their children and go to a museum. This is something you can recognize more than the migration background….So I found it so striking that if a child joins the "white" group, so to speak, then it is always someone who is being raised liberally. (Merel, Amsterdam)

Again, this quote and the idealists' experience with diversity reveal that parents with a migration background must meet certain expectations before interaction can take place. If these expectations were not met, mothers with an idealist position deployed different strategies. A larger group of mothers withdrew from engaging with diverse groups. A few mothers went into deeper interactions and managed to form close relationships, which led them to reflect on their positions of privilege and power when judging different norms.

4.4.2. Pragmatists: ``We Are in the Netherlands and They Should Act Accordingly''

The mothers with a pragmatist position had mixed experiences of diversity once their children started school. On the one hand, their children mixed easily with other children from different backgrounds. On the other hand, these mothers voiced difficulties with the diverse environment. They said that their prejudices had been partly confirmed and mentioned being annoyed by migrant mothers speaking to each other in their own language in the schoolyard or demanding translation in meetings for parents:

You see that the mothers with a Turkish or Moroccan background stand together when they pick up the children and also speak Turkish and Moroccan with each other. That is something that can irritate me. This is not allowed at school, it is only allowed to speak Dutch there. I don't think those parents talk about anyone, but I do think: We are just in the Netherlands, if you want to use a different language in your own circle, I think that's okay; but not if you are standing in a schoolyard with 100 parents. (Naomi, Tilburg)

Despite Naomi's expectations, none of the schools in this study forbid speaking another language in or outside school. We observed that diversity in schools and strategies to accommodate it, such as saying winter holidays instead of Christmas holidays, sometimes led to feelings of loss of control. But once again, there were "mixed feelings" whereby both positive and negative emotions were expressed:

I have learned, partly because of Amber's school and because I have been on the parent council for a few years…that people from a different background can also be very social. You learn things about culture and we have a parent room at school where, before corona, we would go to drink coffee once a week. That's the fun side of it. Many of them are very sweet and social. But there is still a negative side. I simply believe that we live here in the Netherlands, and we have our culture and our nostalgia here in the Netherlands. And I really notice, especially at school, that certain things are being gotten rid of a bit….So at school, when I was on the council, I tried to give this a different twist, to cover something from each culture throughout the year. So that we can still keep our Dutch things, but also include Ramadan. (Margrit, Tilburg)

Compared to the idealist position, the pragmatist position entailed much more explicit criticism of diversity, for example in relation to accommodating different languages and religious groups. Yet these pragmatists mixed much more frequently than parents who occupied the idealist position. Initially, these interactions predominantly served practical goals and did not necessarily evolve into deeper friendships. We observed a wide range of experiences within the pragmatist position: Several mothers maintained regular daily contacts, while some even created lucrative networks. For example, Margrit helped a mother with a migrant background whose child plays frequently with her son to secure a job at her workplace.

4.4.3. Realists: Diversity not as an Ideal but as a Reality

In the case of the realist position, it was immediately apparent that interactions were eased by having prior familiarity with diversity. Mothers in this subgroup had less difficulty with arranging playdates, and their children had a very mixed friendship circle and played both in their neighbourhood and at school with other children, as Fleur describes:

> All the children play with each other in the neighbourhood. They mainly play outside. In the summer I have a trampoline in the garden and then they play there together. And then they play outside with others, or they go inside and then they play PlayStation. So basically it all flows in and out for everyone. Also with migrant parents, the contact is not difficult. In the evening we drink coffee together outside and then the children spontaneously go outside and play with each other. That just happens automatically. (Fleur, Tilburg)

These parents also talk about playdates and activities at school in a relaxed way that does not hint at any extra effort or high expectations. Similar to the idealists and the pragmatists, the mothers with a realist position are also quite engaged in school activities or parental boards, but the way they talk about their experience with migrant mothers or other groups is different. They are more inclined to help parents with a migration background get involved with school activities, rather than criticizing their different language usage, which they do not even mention. Below, Annemiek talks about a school festival, showing a contrasting approach to diversity:

> In the beginning, they only had parents who spoke Dutch, because this made it easier to communicate with the children....Then I said, I think all parents should be able to participate because it doesn't matter whether or not you speak Dutch, anyone can blow up a balloon. We organized a carnival just before corona and then everyone was allowed to participate and register with me and then I would explain to them what to do on the day. At the time, I had parents who spoke very little English and they too were to guide one of the games. I explained it to them in very basic Dutch, but I also thought what does it matter, that lady did think up her own rules for that game. In the end, everyone was so proud. So now it really is a combination of communicating, chatting, and laughing with each other. (Annemiek, Tilburg)

While many mothers who had adopted the pragmatist position complained about mothers with a migration background speaking a different language, the realist mothers reflected on what could be done to make these mothers feel more comfortable about communicating and to get them involved. They showed considerable empathy for them and wanted to integrate them into school activities or parental boards. In this group, the

realities of living in such a neighbourhood were experienced without trying to manage them. Esther from Amsterdam talked about the importance of investing in her relationship with other parents:

> I think what really plays a big role here is that you primarily establish contact with mothers. You don't go up to a father to ask, "Can she come to the party to play?" Those are things I have really *unlearned*, I really don't do that. Even with the mother of Maartje's best friend, with whom I have really good contact, I would come inside, have tea, and all that. That contact is really there. But once I ran into her father, whom I always spoke to and it was always normal, but her father was at the playground with other men, and when I said hello to him, I really felt, okay, I shouldn't have done that. That was too much. I think I tried too hard because it doesn't fit into that culture, so it's like, I don't do that anymore. (Esther, Amsterdam)

Esther's words also illustrate the difference between the positions of realist and idealist parents; here she is willing to "unlearn" things that she is used to and establish contact on the terms of other parents and their cultures. This is a different approach than living diversity on one's own terms and conditions; instead, it is about engaging with diversity in line with the reality it presents.

5. Conclusion

In this study, we examined white mothers' approaches to diversity in two different settings: a majority–minority neighbourhood in Tilburg and a gentrifying majority–minority neighbourhood in Amsterdam. Our analysis of the 29 cases resulted in an emic typology of three different positions regarding diversity, dividing respondents into idealists, pragmatists, and realists. To understand these positions, we explored these mothers' expectations when selecting a school for their children and their actual experiences with diversity after their children had started attending a multi-ethnic school in the neighbourhood.

The extensive body of literature on how middle-class white parents in gentrifying neighbourhoods select schools illustrates that although these parents tend to value diversity, they also seek to control its conditions (Tissot, 2014) and are often in search of the "right mix" (Byrne, 2006). They may also have a regulatory attitude towards diversity that is limited to helping their children develop "multicultural capital" in the form of feeling at ease with diversity (Underhill, 2019). Despite equity concerns in theory, practices of middle-class parents do not match their ideals (Merry, 2023). These findings align with our characterization of the idealist position among the white middle-class mothers in our study. These women favoured diversity as an ideal but only under their own conditions. However, by examining actual experiences of engaging with diversity in multi-ethnic schools, we found that these parents' idealized conditions and expectations of diversity were often unmet, leading them to realize, in their own words, that they had been "naïve" in their expectations. This discrepancy between expectations and experience led us to coin the term "idealist position." The point we wish to make here is that idealist parents do not engage in relations on equal terms whereby everyone is entitled to pursue their own values and norms. A subtle hierarchy of values and an insistence on a certain level of "integration" into "liberal values" seem to prevail. In that sense, engaging with diversity often reveals its boundaries in the sense that diversity is considered acceptable when it involves different foods and cultural festivities, but problematic when people speak their own languages in the schoolyard or have different views on how children should receive sex education.

The mothers with a pragmatist position, all of whom were working-class and living in Tilburg in our study, also pursued certain conditions of engagement, such as expecting migrant mothers to refrain from speaking their mother tongue in the schoolyard. However, they did not idealize diversity or have high expectations. On the contrary, they tended to fear living in multicultural spaces or sending their children to multicultural schools. Despite this, they ended up engaging with diversity more often than mothers with an idealist position, who tended to withdraw into their own circles. We termed this the pragmatist position because, despite having prejudices about living in ethnically diverse settings, these parents were pragmatic and practical in their engagements, and they interacted with diversity to a much greater extent.

Both idealist and pragmatist mothers shared a lack of early exposure to diversity, as they had not grown up in diverse neighbourhoods or attended multi-ethnic schools as children. Another crucial contribution this study makes is the identification of the realist position, characterized by mothers to whom diversity came much more naturally and who accepted it as a daily reality. While the majority of these mothers were working-class and living in Tilburg, we also had one middle-class mother with this position in Amsterdam. What distinguished these mothers from the others was that they had been raised in diverse settings as children. They had neither positive ideals nor negative expectations; they were familiar with diversity and had chosen to raise their children in a similar setting. In their engagement statement, we could not identify the (subtle) hierarchies in a comparable way. Interactions seemed to be on more equal terms.

Based on these findings, is it possible to say that social class is the main determinant of one's position? Middle-class respondents seemed more likely to maintain an idealized notion of diversity, whereas working-class mothers' positions were either negative or more realistic about living in diversity. What seems to be the dividing line is that early exposure to diversity influences how one engages with it. Can we then argue that longer exposure to diversity is a condition for respecting and accepting people from different backgrounds? It is difficult to reach a definitive conclusion as many of our respondents with idealist and pragmatist positions had lived in these areas for many years without adopting a realist position. However, we still think that early exposure can be crucial. Due to the nature of the study, we do not know whether there were mothers who did not enjoy growing up in a diverse environment and therefore chose to leave. However, it is important to note that the Amsterdam mother who had adopted a realist position, and whose daughters had had both negative and positive experiences with being the only white children in the classroom at a mixed school, emphasized that diversity had eventually become a reality they internalized and felt at ease. This led her to conclude that she had made the right choices by sending them to mixed schools. Additionally, considering that the white children of all these mothers are growing up in ethnically mixed schools, we think that this may help them to develop more realistic approaches to diversity.

We urge future studies to consider prior socialization as an important factor in understanding experiences with diversity and how they intersect with social class, ethnicity, and also gender if both caregivers can be interviewed. We also think focusing solely on a single school setting can enhance our understanding of the nature of relations and how they evolve.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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The Integration Into Diversity Paradox: Positive Attitudes Towards Diversity While Self-Segregating in Practice

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Abstract

More and more people without a migration background are living in neighborhoods in large Western European cities where they form a numerical minority. This raises a new research question: Are they integrated in such diverse city contexts or do they live a segregated life? We developed the integration into diversity (ID) matrix to distinguish nine "integration into diversity positions" based on people's positive or negative attitudes towards diversity together with the ethnic composition of their friendship groups. Using the data from the recent Becoming *a* Minority (B*a*M) project we found ID positions that are each other's opposites, a number of positions that are in-between, and two seemingly paradoxical positions. In this article, we will concentrate on one of these paradoxical positions: people who display positive attitudes towards diversity but do not have a mixed friendship group. This is one of the largest groups in our sample. Apparently, mixing does not happen by itself. Through quantitative and qualitative data, we explore how this ID paradox can be resolved. We found that for interethnic contact to take place among this group, there needs to be a structured activity in place. This can be a mixed social activity, a mixed sports team, the mixed school of their children, or a mixed working place. What these all have in common is that the mixing is organized and the expectations and rules of engagement are clear.

Keywords

belonging; European cities; integration into diversity; majority–minority; segregation

1. Introduction

For over forty years attention in the field of migration and ethnic studies has been focused on the integration or assimilation of people with a migration background; first, second, or by now even third

generation. Theoretical frameworks have been developed to study the integration or assimilation of these groups into society, the "mainstream" or different segments of society (segmented assimilation; Portes & Zhou, 1993). In the 1960s and 1970s, when American and Western European cities saw relatively small groups of migrants arriving, assimilation was a logical concept to describe how new migrant groups adapted to the large majority group (Alba & Nee, 2003). According to Alba and Nee (2003), assimilation means becoming more similar to the majority group in both economic and social terms. The majority group was mainly posed as the norm group to which newcomers adapt. This notion is illustrated by the indicators developed by migration scholars to measure assimilation. The more personal relations people with a migration background had with members from the majority group, the more assimilated they were deemed (Alba & Nee, 2003). Today's ethnically and racially diverse city context poses new challenges regarding assimilation—or integration, as it is mostly framed in Europe. We see two important reasons for this. Today, when arriving in major cities in Europe or North America, newcomers—low-income especially—mostly find housing in neighborhoods characterized by migration-related diversity where the people without a migration background form a numerical minority. The other important reason for the old concept of assimilation or integration to be reconsidered lies in the major change in the situation of the people without a migration background. Nowadays, people without a migration background living in large American and North-Western European cities are often faced with the position of being a numerical minority. Navigating and cultivating a sense of belonging in such environments requires new skills and actions from the old majority group. This situation begs for new research questions that target the integration of both people with and without a migration background into a highly diverse context.

In this article, we are taking on board existing criticism of the concept of integration (Crul, 2018, 2024; Dahinden, 2016; Phillimore, 2021; Spencer & Charsley, 2021). The most fundamental change we propose regarding the traditional idea of assimilation or integration is that becoming assimilated or integrated within the context of a diverse city or neighborhood entails a shift away from the idea of adapting to a presumed norm group towards integration into the diverse context. In our new framework, we shift the focus to also include measuring the integration of people without a migration background into a diverse context. It is not a novel idea that integration is a two-way process, and in theory, this has been emphasized both in academic work and in public policies (see Phillimore, 2021; Schinkel, 2018). Unlike some authors (see, for instance, Spencer & Charsley, 2021), we think it is important to develop an alternative for the measurement of classical integration into the majority group. We propose to measure "integration into diversity" instead, both for people with and without a migration background. We will measure this type of integration based on people's attitudes towards migration-related diversity and people's interethnic contacts. This then allows us to assess the climate regarding migration-related diversity in different neighborhoods and cities based on the relative weight of the different positions people occupy.

In earlier articles, we developed what we first called the "superdiversity matrix." We presented this superdiversity matrix in a chapter of the book *Coming to Terms With Superdiversity: The Case of Rotterdam* (Crul & Lelie, 2019). Our initial matrix had four possible outcomes (a quadrant) placing *diversity attitudes* (respondents' opinions on migration-related diversity) on one axis and *diversity practices* (the social circle of respondents) on the other. The empirical data for this matrix were derived from the Teaching Immigration in European Schools (TIES) project, a large international survey focused on adult children of immigrants which also surveyed an equally large control group of people without a migration background. The third author of this article later nuanced the initial matrix and included one more potential position (Kraus, 2023): that of

the group coined *moderates*, a group that scored in the middle. This new matrix was empirically based on the data of the Becoming *a* Minority (B*a*M) project, which provided a much richer data set, allowing a more precise positioning of respondents. In this article, we elaborate on this matrix and have renamed it the integration into diversity (ID) matrix. The ID matrix allows us to place people in one of nine ID positions. We included four more positions to allow for positions that score in the middle on one axis but on one of the extreme ends on the other. The new ID matrix enables more precise descriptions of the ID positions of people in a diverse neighborhood or city (Crul, 2024). This then allows us to compare the ID climate in different neighborhoods and cities based on the relative weight of the nine positions present. It also allows us to analyze the underlying mechanisms that explain the differences between these positions.

The empirical data used in this article come from the B*a*M survey, executed in six majority–minority cities among people without a migration background who are all living in majority–minority neighborhoods (Crul, 2024; Crul & Lelie, 2023). We will especially focus on the paradoxical position of people who are positive about migration-related diversity, but live a self-segregated life.

2. Key Concepts and a Short Overview of the Literature

In this article, we use the concept of people without a migration background both in the conceptual ID matrix as well as in the empirical analysis and define this group as people who, along with both of their parents, were born in the country of survey. In the US and the UK, race is an important category used next to ethnicity. This means that race often also appears as a category in administrative data. In continental Europe, race is, for various reasons, hardly used by statistical and administrative offices. Therefore, to identify people for a representative quantitative cross-country research based on administrative data, the category of race cannot be used to select respondents, even if this would otherwise be the preferred option. In continental Europe, the fallback option for identifying people for large-scale research on the topic of diversity and integration is ethnicity or nationality. As nationality does not cover the groups targeted in integration research and policies over the last decade, the concept of people with a migration background has become increasingly common across continental Europe. As with all concepts, this concept also has shortcomings. Most importantly, it categorizes everyone born abroad or of whom one or both parents were born abroad into the category of people with a migration background. This category therefore, for instance, contains both people who are phenotypically white and people who are non-white. The mirror group of the people with a migration background consists of people *without* a migration background, who were born in the country and whose both parents were born in the country. The defining characteristic of this group is that they have a family history of at least two generations of being established in the country. This category also includes people who have a history of migration in their family in the generation of their grandparents or longer ago and it also includes people who are phenotypically white and non-white. The respondents of the B*a*M survey in one of the survey questions could self-identify as non-white or as having a migration background. A relatively small group (6%) identified as such. Although it is beyond the scope of this article, this group did present a different ID position (see Crul & Lelie, 2023).

The B*a*M survey asked respondents both about their *attitudes* towards living in a diverse city and neighborhood context, as well as about their friendships and interactions in *practice* with people with a migration background. We are aware that people will have different images of who belongs to the category "people with a migration background." Analysis based on the so-called "temperature question" for different

groups shows that the B*a*M respondents indeed make a differentiation between different groups of people with a migration background, for example from Western Europe, Eastern Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East. The general trend (Knipprath, 2023) is that those respondents who deem diversity to be "threatening" make more differentiation between groups, and essentialize groups more often, while people who see diversity as "enriching" essentialize groups to a much lesser extent and judge people more based on characteristics other than ethnicity, religion, or skin color. In this article, we will primarily focus on people who see migration-related diversity as enriching.

Integration is a key concept in the field of migration and ethnic studies. Differently from how most researchers in general use the term integration, in this article we will use it in its original meaning: referring to parts (or groups) that in their interaction change and adjust towards each other. In most integration and assimilation research, the concept of integration is only empirically studied from one side—that of people with a migration background. However, we argue that with more and more cities turning into majority–minority contexts, it is becoming more urgent to investigate the question of how people without a migration background integrate into a diverse context. Following up on Schinkel's (2018) call we should not give this group a "dispensation of integration." This approach also changes our perspective on the goal of integration. Our interpretation of "being integrated" is whether or not an individual is integrated into the diverse city context they live in. This approach looks at their acceptance or rejection of diversity, rather than their adjustment to the norms or values of the national majority group. It also questions individuals' social integration. Other than in most integration and assimilation studies, we do not merely research contact with people without a migration background as the yardstick of integration or assimilation; rather, we measure the level of interethnic friendships as a sign of being integrated into the diverse city context.

Are the challenges and processes of integration for people *without* a migration background similar to or different from those faced by people with a migration background? A major difference, we assume, is that people without a migration background are used to the privilege of being the norm group to which all other groups should adapt. While cities have become increasingly diverse, people without a migration background have, as a rule, not been asked to adapt to this new reality. For people without a migration background, adapting to the increasingly diverse context in which they live probably asks for a much larger psychological shift, especially if they still see themselves as being the norm.

Also, in relation to establishing meaningful relations beyond their own group, the situation of people without a migration background is probably different from that of people with a migration background. Even though people without a migration background may be a numerical minority in majority–minority cities, they still usually form the largest ethnic group. It seems easier for them to remain living in their own ethnic bubble than it is for members of other (far) smaller ethnic groups.

There is a growing literature on the reactions of people without a migration background to living in ethnically diverse neighborhoods (Noble, 2009; Wessendorf, 2014). In the literature, especially the reactions of working-class people living in ethnically diverse neighborhoods have been addressed (see, for instance, Gest, 2016; Hochschild, 2018; Lamont, 2002; Mepschen, 2016). Authors like Lamont (2002) and Hochschild (2018) have scrutinized the causes of potential negative reactions to increased ethnic diversity among working and middle-class white people based on extensive qualitative fieldwork. Both "dignity" and "resentment" are keywords in the work of Lamont and Hochschild respectively. Hochschild (2018) shows

how some respondents feel resentment about other ethnic groups supposedly "cutting the line" and receiving an unjust advantage. Lamont (2002) shows the importance of ethnic and racial ordering of groups. In her research, Anglo-Saxon whites tend to consider people who have made it as people they envy, while looking down on the "undeserving" poor and/or people of color. In the literature about the economic domain, there has been ample attention paid to potential economic competition between migrants and people of native descent in the labor market (Burns & Gimpel, 2000; Espenshade & Hempstead, 1996; Hjerm & Nagayoshi, 2011; Polavieja, 2016). In this type of literature, competition is often related to the lower echelons of the labor market. The overview of the literature shows us that when addressing this topic, we should pay attention to class and education. Often, in research, a negative attitude towards diversity is related to lower levels of education and a lower position in the labor market. There is also, however, criticism of both the supposedly strong correlation and overemphasis on conflict related to the lower educated and, at the same time, the absence of attention to negative attitudes among higher-educated groups (see, for instance, Gest, 2016).

3. Introducing the ID Matrix

Building on our focus on people without a migration background and taking the diverse context as the unit of analysis, we constructed the ID matrix (see Table 1) as part of a broader attempt to develop an ID theory (Crul, 2024). The ID matrix is composed of the outcomes for two main factors: people's diversity attitudes and people's diversity practices. We assess whether people state that increased ethnic diversity is enriching or threatening and we also assess their diversity practices in terms of having an ethnically diverse friendship group (for the relationship between the two see Crul & Lelie, 2023; Savelkout et al., 2017). People who display positive attitudes towards migration-related diversity and have an ethnically mixed friendship group are labeled as being integrated into the diverse context in which they live. On the other end of the spectrum, we find people who find the increased ethnic diversity threatening and who, accordingly, primarily engage with their own ethnic group: This is the group least integrated into the ethnically diverse context in which they live. Using the ID matrix, we assess and analyze different pathways of integration into an ethnically diverse context. In total, we distinguish nine integration positions.

Table 1. ID matrix: Diversity attitudes and diversity practices.

	Negative attitudes towards migration-related diversity	Neutral	Positive attitudes towards migration-related diversity
Half or more friends or acquaintances with a migration background	Position 1	Position 2	Position 3
Some friends or acquaintances with a migration background	Position 4	Position 5	Position 6
No or almost no friends or acquaintances with a migration background	Position 7	Position 8	Position 9

Source: B*a*M Survey (2024).

The item "Would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?" was used to measure *attitudes* towards ethnic diversity. Respondents could indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements on a scale from 0 (*undermined*) to 10 (*enriched*). In the matrix, 0–4 is negative, 5 is neutral, and above 5 is positive.

The *practice* of people without a migration background was measured by the amount of meaningful contact the respondents had with people with a migration background. Here, the question of how many of their friends and acquaintances have a migration background, ranging from 1 (*no or almost no*), 2 (*some*), 3 (*about half*), 4 (*the majority*) to 5 (*almost all*), was used.

The aim of the ID matrix is to gain insights into what characterizes the nine positions and to analyze which variables could move respondents from one position to another to reach an understanding of the underlying mechanisms of ID.

The most opposing positions are:

Position 3: Positive attitudes and an ethnically mixed friendship group—integrated and feeling enriched.

Position 7: Negative attitudes and no ethnically mixed friendship group—segregated and feeling threatened.

Then there are people who score in between. People who show a neutral score when it comes to their diversity attitudes and either have an ethnically mixed, a somewhat mixed, or a non-mixed friendship group (respectively positions 2, 5, and 8) and people who score in the middle when it comes to their social circle, who have some friends with a migration background and are in one of the three possible diversity attitudes positions (positions 4, 5, and 6).

Finally, we see two seemingly paradoxical positions: respondents who see diversity as threatening while having a mixed friendship group, and respondents who see diversity as enriching but still do not have a mixed social circle:

Position 1: Negative attitudes, but an ethnically mixed friendship group—integrated but feeling threatened.

Position 9: Positive attitudes, but no ethnically mixed friendship group—segregated but feeling enriched.

There is some limited research on ID position 9. Blokland and van Eijk (2010) have labeled people who choose to live in a diverse neighborhood because they find its diversity attractive as "diversity seekers." Blokland and van Eijk's study shows that it is important to approach their diversity practices empirically, rather than assuming that their diversity practices are in alignment with their diversity attitudes. This research has shown that a large group of people without a migration background are happy to live in diverse neighborhoods, but, when it comes to their circle of friends, they mostly engage with people from their own ethnic group

(see also Wessendorf, 2014). Other studies have also shown that people without a migration background have relatively little or even no meaningful contact with people with a migration background, while living in ethnically diverse neighborhoods (Butler, 2003; Jackson & Benson, 2014; van Beckhoven & van Kempen, 2003). This pattern applies not only to themselves but also to their children: When it comes to choosing a school for their children, parents without a migration background living in a diverse neighborhood and who are positive about diversity still often choose a school outside of their neighborhood that is less mixed (see Crul & Lelie, 2023). Apparently, proximity in a neighborhood context does not automatically lead to more contact and more interethnic social networks.

4. Methodology

To empirically examine the ID positions of people without a migration background in majority–minority contexts, we used survey data from the BaM project. BaM survey data was collected in 2019 and 2020 in six different European cities: Amsterdam, Antwerp, Hamburg, Malmö, Rotterdam, and Vienna. In total, 3,089 responses from people without a migration background, defined as being born in and having both parents born in the surveyed country, were collected in 226 majority–minority neighborhoods. The respondents of the BaM survey are between the ages of 25 and 45 ($M = 34.11$, $SD = 5.92$), and 52.3% of the sample identify as female, 47.2% as male, and 0.5% as other. We chose this age group because in this phase of their life people have to make important decisions on where to live, often find a partner, and part of this group already has children. The outcomes of our analysis apply to this age group and only to people living in majority–minority neighborhoods and cannot be generalized to all people without a migration background living in the researched cities. For the ID matrix, we make use of the two variables already mentioned in the BaM survey.

The item "Would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?" was used to measure *attitudes* towards ethnic diversity ($M = 7.33$, $SD = 2.86$). Respondents could indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements on a scale from 0 (*undermined*) to 10 (*enriched*).

The *behavior* of people without a migration background was measured by the amount of contact the respondents had with friends with a migration background. Here, the question of how many of their friends and acquaintances have a migration background, ranging from 1 (*no or almost no*), 2 (*some*), 3 (*about half*), 4 (*the majority*) to 5 (*almost all*), was used ($M = 1.87$, $SD = .85$).

We selected one majority–minority neighborhood in each of the six cities of the BaM project in which to conduct qualitative in-depth interviews with people without a migration background in the same age cohort as the respondents of the BaM survey. These respondents were partly recruited by following up on the survey if people had indicated that they were open to being approached again, partly through network contacts and neighborhood activities, and partly through the snowball method. For this article, we selected respondents in ID position 9. These people see diversity as being enriching but have different outcomes in terms of their circle of friends and acquaintances. We used the interviews of respondents who see diversity as enriching from the qualitative fieldwork from all of the BaM cities. We especially selected material that discusses the social interactions with people with a migration background. The empirical material illustrates both the struggles that some people experience with making contact—or not—with people with a migration

background, as well as the struggles experienced by those who have regular contact with people with a migration background.

5. The ID Matrix: Nine ID Positions

In the literature section, we already discussed the presumed importance of class and education in relation to potential reactions toward living in an increasingly ethnically diverse context (see Gest, 2016; Hochschild, 2018; Lamont, 2002; Mepschen, 2016). The literature puts great emphasis on people's socio-economic position in relation to differences in reactions to migration and ethnic diversity. Although we also found a relation between these factors in the B*a*M data, we found a much stronger positive correlation for education than for income in relation to the attitude variable in the ID matrix. We then looked at what is the most important cut-off point for education. The most decisive difference is found between the higher educated (BA or MA diploma) and the lower educated (no BA or MA diploma). We will therefore present the results in the ID matrix for lower-educated respondents and higher-educated respondents separately.

Let's first look at the size of the different ID positions. ID position 3 harbors the group that could be considered the most integrated into the ethnically diverse city context. It represents 13% of the respondents among the lower educated and 10% among the higher educated. The size of the group in ID position 7 is much larger (15%) among the lower educated than among the higher educated (7%). In terms of having a friendship group in which half or more of one's friends or acquaintances have a migration background, lower-educated people (total 25%) outpace higher-educated people (total 14%) in their social integration into a diverse context. The literature pays less attention to practices than to attitudes. Our outcomes show that to obtain a more complete picture it is important to also include practices.

Among the higher educated, see Table 3, the group that is positive about diversity, but socializes primarily with people without a migration background (ID position 9) is very large. The group of people in ID position 1 in Tables 2 and 3 is much smaller, which would be expected given that this is the group that has a mixed group of friends but, in apparent contradiction to this, expresses negative attitudes towards diversity.

Table 2. ID matrix: Diversity attitudes and diversity practices of lower-educated respondents (no BA or MA) in six majority–minority cities.

	Negative attitudes towards ethnic diversity	Neutral	Positive attitudes towards ethnic diversity	Total
Half or more friends or acquaintances with a migration background	7% (position 1)	5% (position 2)	13% (position 3)	25%
Some friends or acquaintances with a migration background	14% (position 4)	6% (position 5)	20% (position 6)	40%
No friends or acquaintances with a migration background	15% (position 7)	8% (position 8)	12% (position 9)	35%
Total	36%	19%	45%	100%

Source: B*a*M Survey (2024).

Table 3. ID matrix: Diversity attitudes and diversity practices of higher-educated respondents (BA or MA diploma) in six majority–minority cities.

	Negative attitudes towards ethnic diversity	Neutral	Positive attitudes towards ethnic diversity	Total
Half or more friends or acquaintances with a migration background	2% (position 1)	2% (position 2)	10% (position 3)	14%
Some friends or acquaintances with a migration background	6% (position 4)	5% (position 5)	37% (position 6)	48%
No friends or acquaintances with a migration background	7% (position 7)	5% (position 8)	26% (position 9)	38%
Total	15%	12%	73%	100%

Source: BaM Survey (2024).

6. Characterizing the Paradoxical ID Position 9

We will now take a closer look at the paradoxical ID position 9 in the matrix: the people who are *positive* about diversity and who do *not* live an integrated life. This position contains many more higher-educated people, making educational level one of the most important predictors for this position. We found in the BaM survey that many higher-educated people, more so than lower-educated people, had not grown up in the city, but had moved there to study or for work (see also Crul & Lelie, 2023). Only a quarter of the higher-educated respondents had been born in the city, compared to about half of the lower-educated respondents. Forty percent of the higher educated had only moved to the city in the last 10 years. Most of them had not grown up in an ethnically diverse setting. If we only look at the higher educated in the paradoxical position 9, more than half (58%) had attended a primary school that had no or almost no peers with a migration background and 34% had only some. Only 8% attended a school with a population comparable to their current neighborhood composition. As a logical consequence, many of their childhood and young adolescent friends did not have a migration background.

It is a bit different when it comes to their present life. Among the lower educated in ID position 9, no less than a quarter work in a place where at least half of their colleagues have a migration background. The picture for the higher educated is different. Their working environment is much less diverse. Only 9% work in a place where at least half of their colleagues have a migration background. More than a third have no or almost no colleagues with a migration background. When we zoom in on the respondents in ID position 9, they share characteristics we also find among the respondents in ID positions 3 and 6 that are also positive about diversity. A vast majority see themselves as a "world citizen": 78% among the lower educated and 79% among the higher educated. The people in ID position 9 largely identify as left-wing voters: 65% among the lower educated and 73% among the higher educated, as is the case with people in ID positions 3 and 6.

Based on our qualitative BaM interviews (see also Kraus, 2022), we describe that people in this group may experience "belonging uncertainty" (Walton & Cohen, 2007) in places where their own ethnic group is no longer dominant. This sometimes causes them to avoid certain places (bars, restaurants, or shops) or even

whole areas of the neighborhood. The qualitative interviews show that people feel uneasy about making contact because they don't know the codes of conduct and are afraid of making mistakes when approaching people with a migration background. They also express that they are not sure whether the people in these contexts would welcome them in these contexts and engage with them. A male B*a*M respondent from Malmö explained his discomfort:

> Respondent: If I walk past people and they look up, I may smile at them or even say hello, but I will not often stop to talk to them.
>
> Interviewer: Why not?
>
> Respondent: Hmmm...I think that I am more...careful with what I say, because I am not always sure how they will react, because we, maybe...because we have different backgrounds. Different...now I forget the word I was looking for. As if we have different values.

Originating in studies concerning ethnic minorities, belonging uncertainty can be described as "people like me do not belong here" (Walton & Cohen, 2007). In a new social environment, people base the decision of belonging on personal characteristics and group identities. If people have the feeling that one of their social identities, in this case, their ethnic identity, is marginalized, they may feel uncomfortable in this setting or avoid it altogether (Walton & Cohen, 2007).

In addition to the experience of belonging uncertainty, it is also possible that people without a migration background have never learnt how to negotiate difference. For many, this was not necessary while growing up. Unlike migrant children who had to survive in often unfamiliar and highly diverse environments where they had to figure out different codes, children without a migration background mostly grew up in places where they more or less understood the codes and knew what was expected of them in interactions. Often, this lack of diversity competencies among people without a migration background only becomes apparent when they are confronted with situations in which their group is not the numerical majority. A female respondent from Antwerp explained what happens in playgrounds:

> Respondent: Also in the playgrounds, there's Moroccan mums with their children there. But it's all separate from each other. You really see that the white mums are standing chatting with each other and that the Moroccan mums are sitting in a different place.
>
> Interviewer: And what do you think of that?
>
> Respondent: Uhm...hmmm....I always think that it is a pity, because, on the one hand, I would like to know more people and to get more involved. But it does not seem to be a natural given.

Crul (2018) has described the reaction of many people without a migration background in such situations as being "paralyzed." Experiencing both a loss of control and power in a majority–minority situation seems problematic for people who are used to being the norm group that dictates the rules of conduct. It can create feelings of being uncomfortable and not knowing the codes to be used. A male B*a*M respondent from Rotterdam also mentioned that he lacks the right vocabulary, does not know the codes, and is afraid of offending people by saying the wrong things:

Respondent: Yes, I'm not at all schooled in that. I also find it very difficult to choose my words, like, what should I call something, you know.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Respondent: Yes, with people with a migration background. I feel that I have to walk on eggshells, so that I don't use a word that may not be nice. Yes, I find this pretty uncomfortable. But that is also because I'm not used to it. Yes, because you don't want to be unjust to anyone with your choice of words or to hurt anyone's feelings because of the words you choose.

7. Overcoming the Diversity Paradox

How can people in ID position 9 overcome the diversity paradox? We will explore how people with positive attitudes towards diversity can resolve the diversity paradox. In practice, this means looking at the differences between respondents in ID positions 3, 6, and 9 (all of whom have a positive attitude towards diversity).

One of the clearest and most robust indicators in the B*a*M Survey is romantic relationships: people who are in a mixed union with a partner with a migration background. In our B*a*M survey, one in four people without a migration background in a relationship is in such a relationship. As we see in Table 4, having a partner with a migration background shows a strong correlation with having a mixed friendship group. This might be because their partner has a mixed circle of friends, which would add to their common friendship group (see Crul & Lelie, 2023). It is also possible that the partners got to know each other because the friendship group of the person without a migration background was already more mixed to begin with. It is a bit of a chicken and egg question. In the first case, the context of meeting other people with a migration background might be less awkward and contain fewer of the typical elements seen in belonging uncertainty. Being the partner makes it more natural to be in a mixed setting and their partner's friends are probably interested in meeting and getting to know the person without a migration background.

The second variable that is correlated to having a more mixed friendship group is sending your child to a mixed school, see Table 5. Here the impact is more indirect. Parents often meet up and get to know other parents through their children's friends and school activities that involve parents. Once again, one can imagine that this type of interaction creates less anxiety because everyone involved has the role of being a parent/caretaker, and relationships develop in an organized and formalized school environment and through the children.

Table 4. People without a migration background in all six B*a*M cities: Having a partner with a migration background and having friends with a migration background.

	No or almost no friends with a migration background	Some friends with a migration background	Half or more friends with a migration background
Partner with a migration background	27%	26%	47%
Partner without a migration background	43%	47%	10%

Source: B*a*M Survey (2024).

Table 5. People without a migration background in all six B*a*M cities: Ethnic school composition of oldest child and having friends with a migration background.

	No or almost no friends with a migration background	Some friends with a migration background	Half or more friends with a migration background
No or almost no pupils with a migration background	63%	19%	18%
Some pupils with a migration background	48%	37%	15%
Half of the pupils with a migration background	28%	55%	17%
Majority of the pupils have a migration background	27%	44%	29%
Almost all pupils have a migration background	22%	41%	37%

Source: B*a*M Survey (2024).

A female B*a*M respondent from Antwerp reflected on the importance of her child going to a mixed school and her contact with the other parents:

> Respondent: I have known my friends for a long time. Real friends, you know, the people from way back. But new people too, you know, via the children's school. Because they go to school in Borgerhout [a highly diverse neighborhood]. And so I know people, of course, also people with a migration background.
>
> Interviewer: What exactly is this interaction like?
>
> Respondent: Actually, just the same as with the other parents.

The third variable, shown in Table 6, concerns people engaged in social activities. More precisely, people who participate in activities that attract an ethnically mixed group of people. This could be a team sport or a cultural or religious organization in which people interact because of their shared interests in this activity. Most of these activities are, again, organized and formalized with a clear role for members which gives, again, fewer reasons for belonging uncertainty.

Table 6. People without a migration background in all six B*a*M cities: Taking part in a mixed activity and having friends with a migration background.

	No or almost no friends with a migration background	Some friends with a migration background	Half or more friends with a migration background
No mixed activity	37%	49%	14%
Mixed activity	24%	53%	23%

Source: B*a*M Survey (2024).

A male B*a*M respondent from Antwerp explained how participating in a mixed soccer team has brought him into contact with boys he would not meet in other settings:

> Respondent: Yes, I used to play football and that is a more diverse environment. I was in a team in which I was a minority.
>
> Interviewer: How was that for you?
>
> Respondent: Yes, well....Those boys had a very different life. Much less protected in that way. As far as that goes, football is quite easy....Easy to get a group feeling in any case. I never had the idea that you were being excluded or anything, absolutely not. But it was an interesting sensation. Normally you are used to being in the majority.

The fourth important variable is having colleagues with a migration background, see Table 7. The workplace setting is, next to the neighborhood setting, the other context where B*a*M respondents often interact with people with a migration background. Again, it is an organized and formalized sort of contact: that of colleagues working towards a common goal in an organization or business.

What all these variables have in common is that they involve bringing people together from different ethnic backgrounds without making people feel out of place. Partly, these activities are the result of deliberate choices made by the respondent (a partner with a migration background or their child's school), but partly they are the result of being in places where there is a mixed group of people (workplace and activities). What seems most important is that there is an unambiguous reason that makes you (in one of your identities) belong in the space.

Table 7. People without a migration background in all six B*a*M cities: Having colleagues with a migration background and having friends with a migration background.

	No or almost no friends with a migration background	Some friends with a migration background	Half or more friends with a migration background
No or almost no colleagues with a migration background	49%	41%	10%
Some colleagues with a migration background	33%	53%	14%
Half of the colleagues with a migration background	18%	55%	27%
Majority of colleagues have a migration background	19%	39%	42%
Almost everybody has a migration background	13%	49%	38%

Source: B*a*M Survey (2024).

8. Conclusion and Debate

We started this article by proposing a different approach to assimilation and integration, arguing that in contemporary cities marked by migration-related diversity, assimilation and integration can no longer be approached primarily as a one-way process in which migrants and their descendants assimilate or integrate into the majority group. In the old paradigm, the majority group was mainly posed as the norm group to which newcomers adapt. Though in theory integration was thought to be a two-way process, in practice the indicators developed by migration scholars to measure assimilation and integration were solely aimed at people with a migration background. In cities and neighborhoods where ethnic and racial diversity is now the norm, we need a new framework to understand the processes involved in addressing the challenges for people both with and without a migration background who have to participate and belong in such a diverse city context. Throughout different stages of our research, we developed a new research instrument that captures different ID positions. Taking the diverse context as our unit of analysis, we have constructed the ID matrix, composed of the outcomes for two main factors: diversity attitudes and diversity practices. The ID matrix allows us to distinguish nine ID positions that capture different reactions to living in a diverse context. The outcomes enable us to also make an indication of the ID climate in a neighborhood. In contrast to most instruments that measure assimilation or integration processes, the ID matrix can be used for both people with and without a migration background.

In this article, making use of the ID matrix, we have analyzed the reactions of people without a migration background to living in majority–minority neighborhoods. We have shown that people without a migration background show very different reactions to living in an ethnically diverse context—this is by no means a homogeneous group. Among the higher educated, there is a particularly large group that is positive about diversity while at the same time hardly interacting with people with a migration background. We coined this position a "diversity paradox" because it seems that their practices show a different pattern than their positive attitudes towards diversity would presume.

We found that to resolve the paradox of having positive attitudes towards diversity in theory, while living in a segregated social circle in practice, it is necessary for people in this position to overcome "belonging uncertainty." They often feel reluctant and uncertain about interacting in ethnically diverse places and with people from a different ethnic background. In the BaM survey data, we found four variables that seem helpful for overcoming that uncertainty. The variables point in the direction of activities that are formalized and organized, such as taking part in social, cultural, religious, or sports activities in which there is a mix of people from different ethnic backgrounds. Such spaces lower anxieties about interactions and potential mistakes as the people in them all have a designated role and a common goal and are expected to work together. Being employed in a mixed workplace or attending a mixed school has a similar effect. A crucial takeaway from our analysis is that meaningful interethnic contact does not often come about spontaneously. People can live in a majority–minority neighborhood while not engaging with people with a migration background, even though they have a positive attitude towards migration-related diversity. This has important consequences for potential policies aimed at integration. Our study shows that beyond living in the same context, and seeing each other in public spaces, something extra is needed to establish meaningful interethnic contact.

The outcomes presented in this article show that reframing the classical idea of integration into the new idea of "integration into diversity" opens up new avenues for research. Here, we especially focused on the people

without a migration background living in a diverse context, the often-overlooked group in the process of assimilation and integration. As they still form the most powerful group in this process, it is urgent to analyze the different ID positions they occupy and the mechanisms underlying their attitudes and behavior.

An ambitious aim for further research will be to develop an ID theoretical framework (see Crul, 2024) to further the understanding of the mechanisms underlying different ID positions. This will enable us to identify which specific neighborhood and city characteristics and which interventions can influence the ID positions that people adopt. By going beyond the traditional assimilation and integration theories, such a more full-fleshed ID theory would make an important contribution to understanding the processes at work in present-day diverse cities.

Conflict of Interests

In this article, editorial decisions were taken by Ismintha Waldring (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands).

Data Availability

DataverseNL, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2024: https://doi.org/10.34894/9EPVXF

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ARTICLE

Inclusive Neoliberalism in Wilhelmsburg: The Role of the State and the Middle-Class in Hamburg's Majority–Minority District

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Abstract

The article examines the aftermath of the "Leap Over the River Elbe" urban development project in Wilhelmsburg, a majority–minority district located in the south of Hamburg, Germany. The project introduced several housing and development initiatives aimed at transforming Wilhelmsburg into an economically vibrant yet socially inclusive mixed district. The article draws on the literature of neoliberal urbanism, racial capitalism, and governmentality to critically examine why the urban development project in Wilhelmsburg failed to achieve genuine social inclusion. The article argues that this failure is not primarily due to the exclusionary behaviors of middle-class residents, as is often proposed in the literature, but rather the result of the urban planning by capitalist state and its market alliances. The empirical part of the article draws on interviews with 20 Wilhelmsburg residents. The study finds that middle-class residents without a migration background play an ambivalent role. They extend state control into local neighborhoods and migrant communities while simultaneously also challenging this control. Long-established residents without a migration background welcomed some aspects of the project, as they believed it countered the downward spiral of the district and them becoming a minority. For new incoming middle-class residents from other parts of the city, the project offered various incentives that made moving to Wilhelmsburg appealing. However, increasing marginalization has led many long-established residents and newcomers to voice their critiques of the project. This forced local authorities to rethink their approach to social inclusion.

Keywords

governmentality; majority–minority; neoliberal urbanism; racial capitalism; resistance; social exclusion; social inclusion

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1. Introduction

Majority–minority urban districts in Western European cities, where residents without migration backgrounds are just one of several minority groups, have long experienced socioeconomic marginalization and segregation (Crul & Leslie, 2023; Sassen, 1991). To counter segregation, cities increasingly seek to include marginalized majority–minority districts into the broader urban economy through targeted investments and social mix initiatives (Uitermark, 2014). Such social mix initiatives tend to incentivize affluent middle-class residents to move into these districts (Chamberlain, 2022; De Koning, 2015; Mayer, 2016).

Yet, numerous scholars have noted that discussions about purportedly inclusive mixed urban districts tend to conceal structural and exclusionary power mechanisms on the ground (Blokland & Savage, 2016). Scholars have been particularly critical of newly incoming middle-class residents (Blokland & Nast, 2014). While these residents often express a certain appreciation for diversity (Tissot, 2014), research shows that they tend to isolate themselves from low-income neighbors (Jackson & Benson, 2014). Moreover, they use city boards and voluntary nonprofit associations to exclude others from positions of power (Tissot, 2014), favor policies that protect their property values (Holm, 2010), and shape the neighborhood in their own image, contributing to gentrification (De Koning, 2015).

This article takes a slightly different approach. It suggests that scholars of social mix tend to focus too much on the inclusionary and exclusionary attitudes and behaviors of the middle class. The argument presented here is that exclusion and displacement are not primarily driven by the affluent middle class but rather by the capitalist state and its market alliances.

The article focuses on the urban renewal plan "Leap Over the River Elbe" (Sprung über die Elbe), introduced in 2013 in the majority–minority district of Wilhelmsburg (Birke, 2013a). The district is located on the Elbe islands south of Hamburg, the second largest city in Germany. Wilhelmsburg is characterized by a mix of port, industrial, and residential areas. The district was described as "disadvantaged" due to decades of disinvestment and its high share of low-income, migrant, and working-class residents (Birke, 2010). The project promised to fundamentally transform Wilhelmsburg into an economically vibrant district (Arbeitskreis Umstrukturierung Wilhelmsburg [AKU], 2013). Under the rhetoric of inclusive social mixing, the "Leap Over the River Elbe" project introduced several housing and development initiatives to incentivize a more affluent German middle class to move to the district (Birke, 2013b).

The article investigates how state power has manifested in the everyday life of Wilhelmsburg residents. It examines how the state facilitates or inhibits inclusion and exclusion and explores the role of the middle class without a migration background. The article draws on the literature on neoliberal urbanism, racial capitalism, and governmentality to critically assess the interplay between the state, markets, and civil society. The central argument is that the social inclusion initiatives of the "Leap Over the River Elbe" project represent a state-led effort to make the district conducive to new forms of capital accumulation. Middle class without a migration background plays a more ambivalent role than typically noted in the literature on social mix. They extend state control into local neighborhoods and migrant communities while simultaneously also challenging this control.

The empirical part of this article draws on qualitative interviews conducted in 2020 with 20 Wilhelmsburg residents as part of the larger Becoming *a* Minority (B*a*M) project. The article contributes to the literature on social inclusion by examining the interplay between the state and civil society in producing forms of inclusion and exclusion in everyday life. The article concludes with recommendations for policymakers and urban planners aiming to understand and mitigate the unintended consequences of urban renewal projects on marginalized populations.

2. Neoliberal Urbanism, Racialization, and the State

The role of the state under neoliberal urbanism can be understood through two distinct phases: roll-back neoliberalism and roll-out neoliberalism (Peck & Tickell, 2017). Roll-back neoliberalism refers to the first phase of neoliberal policy implementation, which primarily occurred during the 1980s and early 1990s. This phase was characterized by the dismantling of the welfare state and the "Fordist" or "Keynesian" urban model (Brenner & Theodore, 2005; Mayer, 2017). The period emphasized market liberalization, privatization of public infrastructure, and a reduction in public investments in social housing (De Koning, 2015). According to Harvey (2007), this phase of neoliberalism was fundamentally about the reassertion of class power. The elite, consisting of wealthy individuals, corporate interests, and financial institutions, worked to dismantle the regulatory frameworks and welfare state provisions that had constrained their power under Keynesianism.

The reassertion of class power means that urban spaces are increasingly shaped by the interests of the elite, further marginalizing low-income residents and deepening spatial inequality (Uitermark, 2014). When public housing is disinvested, remaining affordable housing tends to be concentrated in poorer areas. These areas often become pockets of poverty, with limited access to quality services, education, and employment opportunities. With fewer affordable housing options available, residents have limited mobility to move to areas with better opportunities and amenities. This situation traps them in segregated neighborhoods, creating social boundaries (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). Wacquant (2010) describes this as "punitive containment," offering relief not to the poor but from the poor. Disinvested areas often experience an increase in policing and surveillance. The capitalist state allocates resources not to improve living conditions but to prevent the spread of disorder to more affluent parts of the city.

Scholars of racial capitalism (Melamed, 2015; Robinson, 2020) have argued that capitalism is not solely about class power but also involves racial differentiation and exploitation that exist independently of class relations. Historically, the capitalist state and its market alliances have produced and maintained racialized residential segregation through practices such as exclusionary zoning, redlining, and blockbusting (Rothstein, 2017; Trounstine, 2018).

Under roll-back neoliberalism, racialized residential segregation facilitates the accumulation of capital through a process known as environmental racism (Pulido, 2017). Property values in peripheral urban districts with a high proportion of racial minorities are allowed to deteriorate, making these areas more affordable for undesirable city functions like waste incineration plants, junkyards, highways, sewage facilities, and power plants (Gosine & Teelucksingh, 2008). This situation saves businesses and municipalities money on land and operational costs. Consequently, environmental risks are externalized to racialized communities while the property values of more affluent neighborhoods are maintained (Bullard, 2018).

However, as urban districts degenerate into zones of relegation, the state's authority is increasingly challenged (Uitermark, 2014). The dominant narrative is often about racial minorities isolating themselves into so-called "parallel societies" over which the state has lost control (Hinze, 2013). Non-racialized middle-class residents who live in or adjacent to segregated neighborhoods have protested against the placement of unwanted city functions and demanded more state support for their neighborhoods. Others have moved out ("white flight") or protested against immigration policies (Andersen, 2017; Seamster & Purifoy, 2021).

"Roll-out neoliberalism" describes the second phase of neoliberal policy, which emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This phase involves the state taking an active role in constructing new institutions and frameworks to support and regulate the neoliberal agenda (Peck & Tickell, 2017). During this period, states aimed to make neoliberalism more sustainable by becoming more involved in addressing inequality, social exclusion, and economic instability. Craig and Porter (2005) describe this roll-out phase of neoliberalism as a shift towards "inclusive" neoliberalism. Local governments embraced new institutions and modes of delivery for social services, such as integrated area development, public–private partnerships, and social mixing (see Davies, 2011; Rhodes, 1996). These approaches often incorporate social policies that aim to include marginalized populations and their neighborhoods in the market economy within a neoliberal framework. From the perspective of racial capitalism, local authorities target ethnic enclaves for redevelopment because these culturally rich but economically poor areas hold potential for significant profit once integrated into the broader urban economy (Dantzler, 2021).

Governmentality research provides a useful lens through which to understand the shift in strategy from the containment of marginalized groups through segregation to a more active management of racialized urban districts through inclusion. Governmentality, a concept developed by Foucault (2007), refers to the various ways in which the state exercises power and governance over populations through a range of techniques, institutions, and strategies (see Bevir, 2011). In particular, Foucault's notion of biopolitics highlights how governmental power operates through the management and regulation of a population's bodies and lives. Strategies aimed at social inclusion can be seen as part of broader efforts to manage and optimize the productivity of the population in line with neoliberal objectives. Social mixing and the creation of mixed neighborhoods exemplify this approach (Uitermark, 2014).

Social mix is based on the idea that high concentrations of marginalized and/or racialized residents reduce overall social capital, limit access to diverse role models, and hinder social mobility (Blokland & Nast, 2014). The logical counterpoint to the concentration of low-income and racialized people has been the movement of higher-income earners and educated middle-class residents into these areas (Chamberlain, 2020; De Koning, 2015). The result is not so much the immediate displacement of low-income and minority communities but a gradual shift in favor of a wealthier, often whiter population, under the rhetoric of social inclusion.

To detect demographic concentration in urban districts, states and local authorities are increasingly engaging in social monitoring and the systematic collection and analysis of neighborhood data (Pohlan & Strote, 2017). The state then controls the direction of urban development projects by setting regulatory frameworks, funding mechanisms, and oversight practices (Davies, 2011). Through these mechanisms, the state shapes the priorities of local authorities. These local authorities then orchestrate private investment through public-private partnerships, zoning laws, and housing policies to facilitate upscale development and social mix (Brenner & Theodore, 2005). These policies often involve the conversion of part of the social housing

stock into owner-occupied or luxury rental housing. Typically, they incentivize affluent middle-class residents to move into underdeveloped city districts with a high share of people with a migration background (Chamberlain, 2020).

3. The Role of the Middle Class Without Migration Background

Governance in neighborhoods requires the presence of a civil society that acts in alignment with, rather than against, the state. States, therefore, focus on cultivating local populations that possess the appropriate skills, values, and capital needed to become good and responsible citizens (Fraser, 2020). Middle-class households are particularly important, as they often embody respect for the state and can extend their influence into the local neighborhood (Uitermark, 2014).

By relocating affluent, typically white middle-class citizens into poorer migrant neighborhoods, the state and local municipalities attempt to reconfigure the neighborhood composition in a way that becomes more governable (Fraser, 2020). Drawing on Foucault, Uitermark (2014) highlights how middle-class residents act as agents, unknowingly disseminating dominant societal norms and values into local communities. Residents engage in a constant process of monitoring each other during daily interactions and routine encounters. The concept of the "panopticon" illuminates how this form of mutual surveillance leads, according to Foucault (2007), to self-regulation and the internalization of societal norms. The everyday practices and behaviors of middle-class residents can set standards that are subtly codified into local norms. They introduce work ethics, educational aspirations, consumer habits, and health-conscious lifestyles into migrant communities. In doing so, they help make the neighborhood more attractive to potential property market and real estate investors, as well as visitors and well-resourced residents (Uitermark, 2014).

The state might also form partnerships with existing local middle-class neighborhood associations to garner support for state-led urban renewal programs (Arampatzi & Nicholls, 2012). Long-established middle-class households often desire cleaner and safer neighborhoods and tend to have an interest in protecting their property values (Holm, 2010).

Yet, the middle class's role in reinforcing state norms and governance within local neighborhoods is ambivalent due to the contradictory nature of neoliberal urbanism itself (Harvey, 2007). Neoliberal urbanism increasingly leaves significant portions of the middle class behind (Mayer, 2016). The reduction of social housing, rising rents, and tenant evictions impact not only traditionally marginalized groups but also increasingly affect sections of the middle class that do not own homes (Mayer, 2017).

Various movements have sprung up over the years to protest against rent increases and cutbacks in public infrastructure, services, schools, and universities (Arampatzi & Nicholls, 2012). Some protest movements, especially those advocating for moderate reforms within the system, have been co-opted by the state (Mayer, 2016). Financial dependence and state surveillance have had the effect of disciplining urban grassroots-level associations and limiting the autonomy of community initiatives. The state employs numerous surveillance techniques, including yearly funding applications, self-evaluations, audits, and random site visits, to ensure local neighborhood associations conform with the normative and programmatic aims of the state (Arampatzi & Nicholls, 2012). Moreover, by co-opting the language of social justice, inclusive neoliberalism aims to neutralize potential resistance and garner broader public support for neoliberal

reforms. It adapts to and absorbs critiques to present market-driven solutions as the only pathway to a fairer and more inclusive society (Mayer, 2016). Other middle-class movements have remained outside the state's direct control. Various leftist organizations have challenged the fundamental inequalities perpetuated by neoliberal policies, advocating for systemic change rather than superficial inclusion (Birke, 2010).

4. Research Site and Methods

Alongside Berlin and Bremen, Hamburg is one of Germany's three federal city-states, and thus has the same political and juridical rights as other federal states. This means that the state's policies are always urban policies and vice versa. Hamburg frequently ranks among Germany's most segregated cities and exhibits stark socioeconomic disparities in income and demographic composition between its affluent northern part and its underdeveloped southern Elbe Island (Güntner, 2013). The Elbe Island is Europe's largest river island and is home to approximately 55,000 residents. The Elbe Island has an unemployment rate of 10.8 percent, compared to the city average of 5.7 percent (Statistisches Amt für Hamburg und Schleswig-Holstein, 2022). Historically and geographically, the Elbe Island is a collection of numerous islands, intersected by highways and train tracks.

The empirical part of this research focuses on Wilhelmsburg, the largest and most populated island with 47,600 residents. Wilhelmsburg is one of Hamburg's most deprived areas, characterized by its industrial past, poorly maintained housing, and working-class population (see Figure 1). In 2022, 23 percent of Wilhelmsburg residents received social transfers (Statistisches Amt für Hamburg und Schleswig-Holstein, 2022).

More than 60 percent of adults and almost 80 percent of youths in Wilhelmsburg have a migrant background. Around 32 percent did not hold a German passport in 2022. The demographic breakdown reveals a multifaceted community: 43 percent of residents are without a migration background, followed by significant Turkish (33.4 percent), Polish (5.9 percent), and Afghan (3.9 percent) communities. Other groups include those with Macedonian, Bulgarian, Serbian/Montenegrin, Portuguese, and Ghanaian backgrounds. Additionally, Wilhelmsburg has been a longstanding home to a significant Sinti community (Statistisches Amt für Hamburg und Schleswig-Holstein, 2022).

Wilhelmsburg has historically been a place where racialized groups, particularly Polish and Turkish workers, were exploited to do dangerous, precarious, and low-paid work at the port (Chamberlain, 2020). However, starting in the 1980s, Wilhelmsburg was increasingly exposed to the structural transformation of roll-back neoliberalism. This period was characterized by job losses due to deindustrialization, shipyard closures, and a lack of investment in public and social infrastructure. The housing stock was neglected, and the area's socioeconomic situation was marked by social segregation (Zukunft Elbinsel Wilhelmsburg, 2012; Zukunftskonferenz Wilhelmsburg, 2002). The city attempted to locate several undesirable functions there, such as a highway and an incineration facility (see Zukunft Elbinsel Wilhelmsburg, 2012). Concerns about the perceived out-movement of middle-class families also frequently arose. Young families with children, in particular, decided to leave rather than send their children to Wilhelmsburg schools (Birke, 2013b). The local media portrayed Wilhelmsburg as dirty, noisy, and dangerous (Birke, 2013a).

The roll-out phase of neoliberalism began in 2002 when the Hamburg Senate introduced the "Metropolis Hamburg–Growing City" strategy (AKU, 2013). Developed in collaboration with McKinsey's consultancy, the
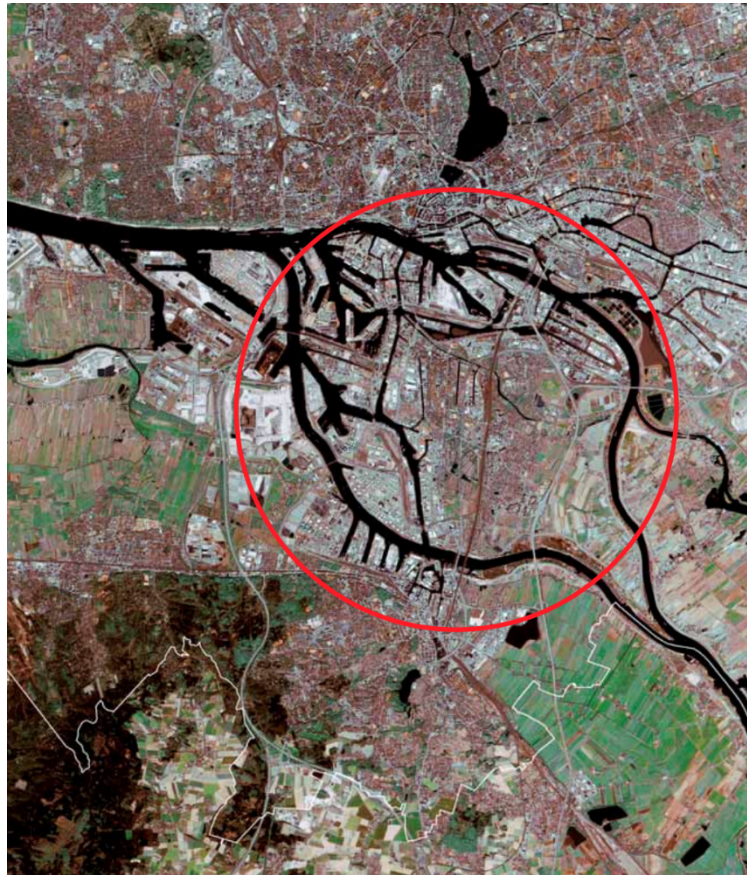
Figure 1. Hamburg's Elbe Islands (Wilhelmsburg is the largest Island).

strategy aimed to position Hamburg as an internationally recognized metropolis (Birke, 2013b). Its focus was on fostering urban expansion and economic growth. As part of this overarching development strategy, the "Leap Over the River Elbe" initiative was launched to expand the city southwards. This initiative aimed to revitalize the deindustrialized districts of Wilhelmsburg. The project sought to develop new concepts for socially inclusive, mixed-use, and sustainable green buildings to significantly enhance the district's image.

The "Leap Over the River Elbe" initiative included major projects like the Hamburg International Building Exhibition (IBA Hamburg) and the International Garden Show (IGS). The IBA and IGS were either entirely or mostly city-owned but operated like private companies with their own budgets, enjoying relative independence from parliamentary political decision-making (Birke, 2013a). The IBA Hamburg, initiated by the city's chief planning director and spanning from 2006 to 2013, was managed by a public-private partnership that included 140 influential private and public entities, as well as unions, chambers, institutions, and individuals. The IBA was provided with 120 million euros in public funding, supplemented by nearly 1 billion euros of private investment. These projects included significant construction efforts, housing renewal, educational investments such as improvements to district schools, and upgrades to local infrastructure, like park renovations (Birke, 2013b).

The empirical data collection process for this article was part of a broader BAM research project, focusing on residents without a migration background living in majority–minority districts. In 2020, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with Wilhelmsburg residents. In total, 15 residents without a

migration background and 5 residents with a migration background, aged between 24 and 65, were interviewed. The primary sampling method was based on random walks through the district. Residents were approached mostly in public spaces around the Reiherstiegviertel, where most newcomers have moved in. Additionally, local pubs, cafes, and the university campus were visited to reach long-established residents and students. Snowball sampling was also employed to reach a wider range of individuals. The interview guide aimed to capture a wide array of themes related to the larger BAM projects. Each interview was divided into several sections focusing on various attitudes and behaviors related to ethnic diversity, interethnic contacts in urban spaces, perceptions of national identity, and personal experiences during teenage years. The data was then analyzed and coded using thematic analysis.

5. Findings

5.1. The Long-Established

Residents describe Wilhelmsburg as a welcoming community with close-knit social network structures. Due to its island character, Wilhelmsburg provides a sense of belonging for many residents. There are several local pubs where long-established residents without a migration background have been gathering for decades. Angelika (54), who was born in Wilhelmsburg and works in a local pub, describes it like this:

> If an older regular guest, for example, doesn't show up for three days, even though he usually comes every day, then it's a red alert. So we follow up, we ask questions to make sure he's not rotting away in his apartment. We have the phone number and we all exchange it. It's taken care of. I think that's very nice about Wilhelmsburg.

There are also forms of convivial togetherness between long-established residents with and without a migration background that have emerged since the 1960s. The concept of conviviality, which Gilroy (2004) describes as the everyday coexistence and interaction that normalize diversity, has naturally evolved in Wilhelmsburg over time. This is also related to notions of public familiarity, where people's sense of recognizing and being recognized in local spaces affects their sense of belonging to a particular place (Blokland & Nast, 2014):

> If you want you can get to know people here very quickly because it has just this village character....It has become quite natural, there are days when things feel very mixed. This happens especially when people who know each other...families [with migration background] from the area, come with their entire circle of friends, or when schoolmates who grew up together meet. (Stephan)

However, opportunities for diverse social interactions are shaped by housing disparities and deep-seated structural and racial biases. Wilhelmsburg is still highly segregated across various groups. Differences in housing situations largely depend on when groups arrived in Wilhelmsburg and the specific housing policies in place at the time. This has often pitted many groups against each other. Stephan (57), from the local left party, puts it like this:

> The problem is that somehow most people from Eastern Europe live squeezed and are exploited. So the groups here stay relatively private. There are always people who build the bridges, but many

communities are limited to themselves. You just get together when there are celebrations or any kind of events. But that people say: "I go there or there"—that does not really exist. I don't know why this is so, but certain groups tend to stay together. There are of course nice people with whom you would like to drink [at a] cafe, but the groups mix rather rarely....Then I also deal with racism that comes from migrants. They say shit fascists, but in the same sentence they also say "gypsies" and other insults against Kurds and sometimes to black Africans. So every ethnic group here cultivates its own racism.

Wilhelmsburg has historically been a Social Democratic (SPD) stronghold (AKU, 2013). Long-established middle and working-class residents without a migration background generally vote for the Social Democrats or the Left party. Yet, in the 2001 Hamburg elections, the anti-immigrant right-wing Schill Party won 34.9 percent of the vote in Wilhelmsburg and 19.4 percent of the vote Hamburg-wide (Zukunftskonferenz Wilhelmsburg, 2002). As noted by Chamberlain (2020), the high vote count was partially due to the fact that residents without a German passport are not allowed to vote in Germany. The shift to the political right occurred during the roll-back phase of neoliberalism when the island suffered from deindustrialization and disinvestment in public infrastructure and housing. During this phase, Wilhelmsburg experienced increased out-migration of German middle- and working-class families. Susane (59), a long-established resident and local bartender, explains how this out-migration of Germans without a migration background has affected the local economy to this day:

It is very difficult. Politicians also have to take more care of the district. I don't think it should always be approved that the shops are not German but foreign. We have four greengrocers and six mobile phone shops on the corner and that just doesn't work....There is no butcher anymore. The only German snack bar is closing now. There is no shoemaker anymore. All the small businesses that used to be German are all gone. They are only taken up by mobile phone shops or quite a lot of cultural associations. And I don't think that's a good mix. That is my personal opinion. And what can you do about it? Yes, what should you do if the people, the German people, simply don't have the money anymore. Well, it used to be a port district. All the port workers who brought the money in are gone. I don't know what can be done. Other people who are paid properly for this should think about it.

During a community event in the 2000s, several social workers, doctors, teachers, and politicians demanded intervention by the city-state (Zukunftskonferenz Wilhelmsburg, 2002). Long-established middle-class residents were fed up with the political neglect of the district and the city's continuing attempts to locate undesirable functions there. The "Leap Over the River Elbe" urban development program, launched from 2006 to 2013, was consequently welcomed by many long-established middle-class residents.

One of the underpinning ideas of the project was the notion of social mix. The idea was that the arrival of higher-income earners and educated middle-class German households would improve Wilhelmsburg (Bayer et al., 2014). Michael Sachs, the former housing coordinator of the Hamburg Ministry of Urban Development and Environment, explains in a volume on social mix practice in Germany:

Essentially, it's about choosing socially-competent renters who are able to pay the rent, and who have the recognizable skills for neighborly life. If one understands these competencies as middle-class virtues, then it's about bringing middle-class elements into difficult neighborhoods. (Sachs, 2012, p. 409, as cited in Chamberlain, 2020).

Hamburg utilizes social monitoring and neighborhood statistics to identify urban districts that require social mix interventions (Pohlan & Strote, 2017). Beginning in 2005, Hamburg implemented a policy of social mix in publicly owned rental housing in Wilhelmsburg. Adanali (2013) notes that a significant portion of Muslim residents and nearly half of those with Turkish origins reside in publicly owned rental housing. The distribution of social housing in Wilhelmsburg, although not detailed statistically, correlates highly with areas where migrants are predominantly located, such as Reiherstieg and the high-rise neighborhood Kirchdorf-Süd (shown in Figure 2; Güntner, 2013).

Adanali's (2013) research found that public housing corporations in Wilhelmsburg favored families without migrant-sounding names. This approach aimed to diversify the neighborhood's social makeup. Despite anti-discrimination laws in Germany, an exception exists in housing based on ethnic background, allowing for differential treatment to foster a socially and culturally diverse environment. According to Adanali (2013), rather than following clear, formal criteria, housing workers could subjectively judge whether new applicants for an apartment would risk contributing to segregated or "ghettoized" areas in Wilhelmsburg due to their ethnic background. Ironically, as Chamberlain (2022) points out, districts like Wilhelmsburg have historically been ethnically diverse, in contrast to the much more homogeneous "whiter" neighborhoods in the north of Hamburg.

5.2. The Newcomers

One of the earliest social mix interventions to counteract concentration was a subsidy program to attract students to Wilhelmsburg. This program offered students below-market rents for new rentals in specific areas. The state provided landlords with additional compensation and security guarantees. The program applied to apartments with more than two bedrooms, promoting shared student housing (Birke et al., 2015).

Figure 2. Kirchdorf-Sued.

The encouragement of students to occupy apartments that could house families is linked to exclusionary displacement, wherein people lose access to the types of units they would have previously been able to rent (Hohenstatt & Rinn, 2013). Moreover, landlords, keen on maximizing their returns, often favor students sharing flats over families. Flat sharing enables students to pay higher rents, which are often unaffordable for low-income families (Miessner, 2021). Sebastian (32), a student who came to Wilhelmsburg a few years ago to live in the Reiherstiegviertel, explains:

> I mostly moved here because it was much cheaper. I live in a nice old building. I didn't know Wilhelmsburg before, I just heard about it and everyone always advised against Wilhelmsburg...it's such a dangerous place and all that....More and more students moved here, it was also pushed by the city, as housing offers were made especially for students so that they could live very cheaply.

Convivial togetherness between newly incoming students and long-established residents with migration backgrounds can be observed along Veringstrasse in the Reiherstiegviertel (shown in Figure 3). This street has one of the highest concentrations of student-shared housing in Hamburg while also offering a thriving local economy with street markets run by many people with migration backgrounds (Chamberlain, 2020). The street is characterized by its blend of traditional and contemporary establishments, from Turkish bridal shops and betting offices to a bicycle manufacturer and an organic burger restaurant. Through their daily interactions, students and middle-class residents may adopt certain cultural practices, cuisines, and traditions from migrant communities, reflecting a form of cultural exchange and mutual influence (Hannerz, 1990). Anna (24), who moved to Wilhelmsburg for her studies, puts it like this:

> There are these moments, you know, when you try something new, something that someone from a completely different culture suggests to you, and it's just great. It's like, you get new perspectives, you see the world a little bit differently. And the food is a big thing too, so many different tastes, it's really enriching.

The "Leap Over the River Elbe" initiative utilized a festival format to promote and transform the Wilhelmsburg district into a "creative quarter" (Birke, 2013a). This approach involved leveraging the power
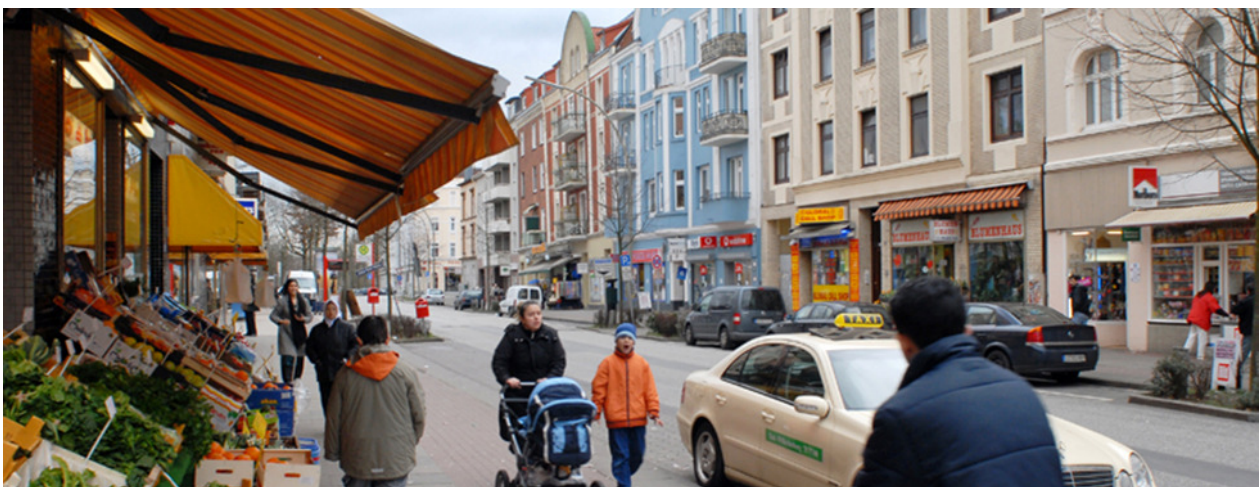

Figure 3. Veringstrasse, Reiherstiegviertel.

of cultural and artistic events to foster urban regeneration. Laura (31), who works as an event manager for a local Wilhelmsburg festival, puts it like this:

> Things are going well during the festivals and people get along with each other, but then it doesn't last any longer. It's such a wishful thought that you can bring the neighbors together in such a way that it lasts somehow permanently.

It has been pointed out that this form of cosmopolitan engagement often remains selective, focusing on aspects of a culture deemed interesting or enriching, such as food, music, art, and fashion, without confronting or addressing the inequalities or conflicts that may exist between cultures (Birke, 2013a). Thus, while there is a degree of cultural mixing, it does not fundamentally alter the power dynamics or racial hierarchies that underpin the broader structure of neoliberal urbanism.

In a process called studentification, students and young academics often contribute to an early-stage gentrification process (Nakazawa, 2017). They introduce new consumer tastes and lifestyles into the neighborhood, often catered to by trendy bars and cafes. As social spaces of privilege, these establishments often covertly marginalize and prevent individuals without the necessary resources from accessing them. Sarah (36) points out:

> I could say where people with a migrant background are less likely to be found. That is in those new, chic cafes in Wilhelmsburg because they are more expensive. I wouldn't go there if I wanted to meet someone.

When asked about his contacts with residents with migration background, Sebastian (32), a student, reflects on the difficulty of forming lasting contacts across difference:

> I think it has a lot to do with class. I come from the middle class. Mostly not migrant and mostly white. The University is also mostly not migrant. I think that's particularly common in the middle class. That you somehow don't get in touch because you simply have a different lifestyle. People who live differently talk differently, have different hobbies. And of course you go to different parties, especially in Wilhelmsburg.

Yet, despite the lack of sustained contacts, residents are in a constant process of monitoring each other during daily interactions and routine encounters. In line with Foucault's concept of biopolitics, middle-class residents introduce educational aspirations, consumer habits, and health-conscious lifestyles into migrant communities, thereby stabilizing the dominant social order. Mo (32), a migrant from Egypt who arrived in Wilhelmsburg in 2014, observes the different way of life that many German middle-class residents follow:

> The German lifestyle is quite different from that of foreigners. I appreciate it because they care a lot about their health, sleep, and maintaining routines, even on holidays.

The IBA Hamburg and the IGS were launched in 2006 and culminated in 2013. The initiatives primarily targeted affluent newcomers. As noted by Chamberlain (2020), the numerous publications related to these events reflected a "quasi-colonial gaze that treated the Elbe Island as a blank spot on the map of Hamburg, which is now a matter of discovering."

The IBA presented various construction projects, including the modernization and partial rebuilding of a set of 1930s buildings. The IGS transformed 85 hectares in Wilhelmsburg into a landscaped park, intended to attract visitors and reintroduce the area as part of Hamburg. Both projects reflected deliberate attempts to make the district more appealing to ecologically conscious middle classes and outside visitors (Birke, 2013a). Andreas (47), who recently moved to Wilhelmsburg, expressed it this way:

> My first impression was that of a great neighborhood. You know, beforehand...well, Wilhelmsburg always had the reputation that it was the very last district. And it's actually shedding that reputation now....So, nobody wanted to move to Wilhelmsburg 20 years ago, or even ten years ago. And now....I was pleasantly surprised. It's a very beautiful green island, nature-wise. There are many beautiful hidden spots where you can spend a great time. And also, regarding the foreigners....I didn't notice them at all at the beginning.

5.3. The Marginalized

Various non-homeowning middle-class residents and residents with migration backgrounds have expressed concerns about rising rents due to the renewal project (AKU, 2013). While the IBA provided a forum for citizen participation to allow people to express their opinions, a major local critique was that the forum was more about state co-optation and the production of social acceptance than actual participation. The IBA used its community participation forum, attended by local associations and organizations, to legitimize its prestigious building projects rather than genuinely addressing the residents' concerns (Birke, 2013b).

The superficial engagement with residents weakened local resistance by draining community members' time and resources without addressing their real concerns. Additionally, the IBA was perceived as shielding political bodies from accountability, as criticisms were often redirected away from the true political nature of residents' grievances (Chamberlain, 2020). Many longtime residents felt alienated from a political process that appeared predetermined and biased toward the interests of the wealthy and powerful, who had closer ties to political decision-makers (Birke, 2013b).

A significant protest movement outside of direct state influence was organized by leftist activists from the AKU (2013). The AKU is a politically diverse, non-state-funded association organized by a dozen university-educated activists. The network collaborated with several different groups in the district, such as the local church community, the Tenants Help Association, a social advice center, as well as several local artists and groups within the autonomous spectrum (Birke, 2013b). The AKU was part of the larger international and Hamburg-wide Right to the City network, consisting of over seventy different associations and organizations. Inspired by the philosophy of Lefebvre (1996), the Right to the City network is particularly known for its stand against gentrification and its advocacy for radical democratic reforms centered around the creation of urban spaces for self-governance. The AKU aimed to broaden the scope and themes of the Right to the City network to incorporate issues faced by the residents of Wilhelmsburg, a region often overlooked due to its remote location.

Birke et al. (2015), activist-researchers, describe the difficulty in mobilizing a broad coalition of marginalized middle-class and more traditionally marginalized residents. Substantial divisions among local residents in Wilhelmsburg reflect the hierarchies of visibility of different groups. Racialization and access to resources

position people quite differently. While the network is generally inclusive of people with migration backgrounds, these groups have rarely played active roles so far. Many local activists regard this as a strategic problem, complicating collective actions (Birke, 2013b). Many activists, frequently students or academics, self-critically recognize that their approach is sometimes considered highly theoretical and abstract, lacking practical, application-focused ideas for a broader audience. Additionally, differences in resources available for participation in self-organized networks contribute to the lack of widespread participation among residents without migration backgrounds. Sarah (36), who moved to Wilhelmsburg for her studies and then stayed as a social worker, points out:

> I once organized a group session for refugee women and non-refugee women and you noticed that the German women were there more consistently. The other women simply have a different cultural background and probably have different priorities. But that was a different target group and women in other cultures simply have completely different priorities and cannot move around quite as freely.

Moreover, racialized groups who challenge their exclusion often encounter indifference or intensified repression from the authorities (Mayer, 2016). This contrasts sharply with the experience of those involved in alternative and countercultural movements, who, because of their potentially marketable contributions to the city's cultural image, may receive concessions or offers of integration from city authorities (Birke, 2010). Nevertheless, the persistent critique from the AKU compelled city officials to refine their social inclusion criteria. The network forced local authorities to rethink their approach to social inclusion. As a result, the IBA adopted the motto "improvement without displacement," directly reflecting these pressures. The IBA did signal that housing should be viewed as a social good and offered extended periods of low rent. However, the changes brought by the IBA were limited. While they reintroduced a minimum of respect for vulnerable residents by preventing immediate displacement, the IBA's strategies inadvertently allowed for gradual, property-led displacement (AKU, 2013).

6. Conclusion and Discussion

This article argues that displacement is primarily driven by the capitalist state and its market alliances. The distinction between roll-back and roll-out neoliberalism highlights the constant reconfiguration of state power under capitalism. Under roll-back neoliberal policies, the state's role as a provider of public services diminishes. The primary strategy for dealing with marginalized groups becomes confinement through residential segregation and exploitation through the placement of unwanted city functions. However, this strategy has led to significant public backlash from both the wider media and long-established middle-class residents in Wilhelmsburg without migration backgrounds.

Under roll-out neoliberalism, the state finds itself compelled to correct these market failures by intervening more in social and economic life than neoliberal theory would traditionally prescribe. The ""Leap Over the River Elbe"" mega-project exemplifies the rollout of an "inclusive" neoliberalism in Wilhelmsburg. The project aimed to reshape local demographics through social mix initiatives designed to incentivize middle-class citizens to move in. This was achieved through student housing subsidies, social mixing in public housing, and the creation of privatized housing and commercialized green spaces in Wilhelmsburg.

Research on social inclusion can benefit from integrating frameworks on neoliberal urbanism, racial capitalism, and governmentality. These frameworks provide a critical lens for understanding why inclusive neoliberalism often fails to achieve genuine social inclusion. The notion of "inclusive neoliberalism," particularly in the context of privatized infrastructure is oxymoronic because the foundational goals and mechanisms of neoliberalism often run counter to the principles of social inclusion. The privatization of previously public spaces in the neoliberal city contributes to the exclusion of marginalized and racialized communities from these spaces as they demand certain economic capacity to gain access and to belong (Mele et al., 2015). In essence, inclusive neoliberalism attempts to create a facade of inclusivity and fairness while maintaining the fundamental market-driven principles of neoliberalism. As such, it helps to stabilize and legitimize the neoliberal project while masking the underlying power dynamics and economic inequalities.

The insights from Wilhelmsburg highlight the need for more equitable and participatory approaches to urban governance, challenging the efficacy of social inclusion strategies under neoliberalism. Policymakers need to recognize the failure of inclusive neoliberalism and consider an alternative pathway. A paradigm based on public and social infrastructure emphasizing universal access to essential services could serve as a counter-project against neoliberalism. Housing, healthcare, education, utilities, and food supply are the drivers of welfare (Russell et al., 2022). By treating these services as public goods rather than commodities, and combining this with localized ownership and control, it can be better ensured that all individuals, particularly marginalized or racialized minorities, have access to the opportunities and resources necessary for their integration into the societal fabric.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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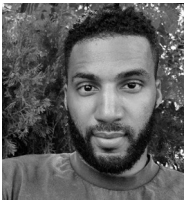
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COMMENTARY

A Step and a Push in Understanding People Without an Immigrant Background: An Analysis of Crul et al. (2024)

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Abstract

This commentary offers an analysis of the article "The Integration Into Diversity Paradox: Positive Attitudes Towards Diversity While Self-Segregating in Practice" by Maurice Crul, Lisa-Marie Kraus, and Frans Lelie, published in this thematic issue of *Social Inclusion* (Crul et al., 2024). I argue that the article is a step and a potential push forward in research on people without an immigrant background. The step forward is their findings that people without an immigrant background tend to have more positive attitudes about ethnic diversity, and yet, an important segment of these people have little to no contact with people with an immigrant background. Their findings may be part of burgeoning evidence suggesting that the emergence of "critical white racial identity," defined by a heightened awareness critique of the privileges of whiteness, is steeped in a liberal political orientation that values diversity and racial equity learned in and reinforced by politically homophilous social networks, educational institutions, and professional organizations, and characterized by high socioeconomic status, insulating individuals against a status threat perceived by poorer whites.

Keywords

diversity; Europe; immigration; intergroup attitudes; intergroup relations; racial identity; United States; whiteness

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Questions of immigrant integration/assimilation/incorporation have been central to social science research for over a century. Although some early scholarship defined assimilation to include the possibility of change among the long-established populations that immigrants encountered after they arrived (Park & Burgess, 1921), research and theorizing have overwhelmingly focused on change among immigrants and their

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descendants. It was not until Richard Alba and Victor Nee oriented scholars to think about assimilation as a process involving change among established populations (Alba & Nee, 2003), or "people without an immigrant background," in the parlance of Crul et al. (2024, defined as people whose ancestry dates back at least two generations in a country) that social scientists began seriously considering what change might look like. I took up that topic in my work, using ethnographic methods to show how an ethnoracial and social class spectrum of people without an immigrant background in California's Silicon Valley experience and make sense of immigration-driven change happening in their neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and interpersonal networks (Jiménez, 2017). I found that assimilation is a relational process: a back-and-forth volley of change and response between people with and without an immigrant background that, over time, can result in dramatically changed understandings of race, ethnicity, and the nation.

The ability of a group to influence that relational process depends on population size, group status, and institutional arrangements that put groups in a position to determine their fate. While Alba and Nee (2003) use historical data from earlier waves of immigrants to provide a conceptual and theoretical account of how immigration changes the mainstream, my work attempted to examine the here-and-now experience of people without an immigrant background who are on the "other side" of the assimilation equation. The Becoming *a* Minority project is, to my knowledge, the first attempt to examine people without an immigrant background using large-scale survey and interview data in multiple sites. This larger project is a leap forward in testing and advancing theories of integration/assimilation/incorporation. Published in this thematic issue of *Social Inclusion*, the article "The Integration Into Diversity Paradox: Positive Attitudes Towards Diversity While Self-Segregating in Practice" is a step and a potential push forward in research on people without an immigrant background (Crul et al., 2024). The article uses a Becoming *a* Minority survey from six European cities to establish further the theoretical importance of treating immigrants and people without an immigrant background as central actors in the integration/ assimilation/incorporation process, providing a typology of network composition and attitudinal orientations and bringing to light theoretically important dimensions of that typology. First, the step forward. The findings inspire greater confidence in the core tenets of the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), which posits a positive relationship between intergroup interaction and attitudes. Early formulations of the hypothesis postulated that intergroup attitudes become more positive when individuals of different groups are of equal status, have a common goal or task that they work toward cooperatively, and have support from authority figures. Decades of research bear out the hypothesis' predictions, even when relaxing the conditions in the original formulation (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Crul, Kraus, and Lelie's findings support the hypothesis, showing a positive correlation between more diverse interpersonal networks and the attitudes of non-immigrant populations (Crul et al., 2024, Table 1, positions 3 and 6).

A second contribution comes from how the article pushes thinking forward in considering the paradox that the authors uncover about contemporary immigration attitudes and intergroup relations. Their analysis of the integration into diversity matrix shows that 12% of respondents have no friends or acquaintances with a migration background and still have positive attitudes towards ethnic diversity (position 9). Critically, the share jumps to 26% among respondents with a BA or MA. Respondents in position 9 might seem to contradict the contact hypothesis or potentially support the notion that attitudes precede contact (perhaps individuals in position 9 are just waiting to find the contact with immigrants that their attitudes would presumably make them prone to seek). The authors turned to their in-depth interviews to make sense of the paradox, showing that some respondents with positive attitudes are hesitant to interact with migrant

populations because they "[do] not know the codes [of conduct], and [are] afraid of offending people by saying the wrong things" (Crul et al., 2024, p. 10). The authors then turn to resolving the paradox, implicitly turning to the core tenets of the contact hypothesis. They show that respondents hold more positive attitudes when their interpersonal networks are more diversified, have a partner from a migration background, their oldest child attends a school with individuals from a migration background, engage in activities with a mixed population, and work alongside people from a migration background. My research in Silicon Valley, California (Jiménez, 2017) suggests that these are indeed important variables. I found that children, through intermarriage and their interpersonal networks and schools, thrust parents and even grandparents into social milieus with individuals from other ethnoracial groups, softening the attitudes of older cohorts. Blue- and white-collar workplaces have become more diversified in ways that expose people without an immigrant background to individuals with a migration background, their culture, and even their migration histories. Research conducted on two continents in multiple cities should give us confidence in the importance of the variables Crul and colleagues show to be important to the diversification of interpersonal networks and the attitudes that follow.

If the authors attempt to resolve the paradox by showing how respondents can make their attitudes reflect their networks, what remains unresolved is how the paradox comes to exist. If, for people in position 9, pro-diversity attitudes appear to be unconnected to real-life interactions with the people about whom they have such positive attitudes, where do those attitudes come from? That there are inconsistencies between attitudes and behavior (Fazio & Zanna, 1981), or support for principles of racial equality but not the policies that realize the principles (Schuman et al., 1997), is well known. However, Crul and colleagues may have tapped into something more. The respondents in position 9, and especially those with a college degree or more in the authors' integration into diversity matrix, are part of a larger set of college-educated individuals in the US and Europe who profess liberal attitudes about immigration and race, but who by virtue of their class standing may not have significant or meaningful contact with non-whites and people with a migration background. These findings suggest that it is not only class background but political orientation that correlates with such attitudes. Eric Kaufmann has shown that white liberals in the US and England have among the most positive attitudes about immigrants and diversity and the most liberal attitudes about race (Kaufmann, 2018, 2019). Kaufmann also shows that white Democratic voters in the US are the only group that has less favorable attitudes about their own group than they do toward other groups (Kaufmann, 2019). Other researchers have revealed similar patterns. Where immigration is concerned, partisan attitudes on the left are driving attitudinal polarization. In the last decade, Democrats' attitudes have become dramatically more positive, a trend that is especially pronounced among white Democrats (Ollerenshaw & Jardina, 2023; Wright & Levy, 2020). My research with Deborah Schildkraut, Yuen Ho, and John Dovidio in the US states of Arizona and New Mexico shows that white Democrats report being nearly as positively affected by welcoming immigration policies as foreign-born Latinos (Jiménez et al., 2021).

Combined, the emerging findings about race, political polarization, attitudes, and intergroup contact suggest the emergence of new forms of white racial identity that might explain the paradox of individuals in position 9 in the integration into diversity index. This new form of white racial identity comes into more focus, considering that it emerges in a larger context of political polarization taking place in the US and Europe. Scholars have argued that polarization is affective, rooted in a sense of political orientation as a deeply felt social identity rather than merely a set of attitudes about issues (Iyengar et al., 2019). Affective political polarization bisects ethnoracial groups rather than envelopes them. This new form of white racial identity,

what we might call "critical white racial identity," is defined by a heightened awareness and critique of the privileges of whiteness (in contrast to whiteness as an unstated or "unmarked" standard; see Frankenberg, 1993). Critical white racial identity is steeped in a liberal political orientation that values diversity and racial equity learned in and reinforced by politically homophilous social networks, educational institutions, and professional organizations. Critical white racial identity is also characterized by high socioeconomic status, insulating individuals against a status threat perceived by poorer whites (Craig et al., 2018). Individuals who embody critical white racial identity largely navigate residential and professional contexts that offer little peer contact with ethnoracial minorities, especially the poorest among them. Indeed, critical white racial identity may capture the individuals in position 9: They have progressive attitudes about race and ethnicity but little contact with individuals from the groups about whom they have such a favorable view.

This rough sketch of critical white racial identity emerges from piecing together a growing body of evidence about the opinions and attitudes of white liberals in the US and, to a lesser degree, Europe. Crul, Kraus, and Lelie's findings about the relationship between intergroup contact and attitudes are another potential building block. I hope the accumulated evidence and the rough sketch I provide encourage scholars to examine this and other possible new forms of white racial identity in a politically polarized world.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Cogitatio

COMMENTARY

Considering Power and Institutional Change in the Study of Migration's Impact on Non-Migrants: Commentary on Schut & Crul (2024) and Keskiner et al. (2024)

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Abstract

Schut and Crul (2024) and Keskiner et al. (2024) bring much-needed attention to migration's impact on host societies. They investigate Dutch non-migrant parents' responses to migration-related issues that arise in their children's schooling, highlighting the diversity of those responses. Future analyses should move beyond individual analyses to understand broader social changes, how group-level status shapes institutional responses to migration, and the role that systemic racism or Islamophobia may play in shaping individual and institutional responses to migration. This requires empirical analyses that incorporate participant observation in specific institutions (for example, schools), and attention to organizational decision-making.

Keywords

assimilation; critical race theory; education; Europe; international migration; parenting

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Global migration raises a fundamental question: How do people and societies change as a result of human movement across international borders? Scholars of migration have spent considerable energy considering how migrants themselves change as a result of living in new places. The resulting studies have identified myriad factors that shape those changes: the new home's welfare state provisions (see, for example, Fox, 2012), immigration and citizenship policies (for example, see Menjívar & Abrego, 2012), racial systems (for example, see Haney-López, 1996), and education systems (for example, see Warikoo, 2011); a migrant's level of education (for example, see Lan, 2018), knowledge of the dominant language, and co-ethnic community resources (for example, see Portes & Rumbaut 2001); and more. While early models of immigrant integration assumed a cohesive "mainstream" society into which migrants would assimilate, scholars have long discarded that simplistic framing. Portes and Zhou (1993) acknowledged the different "segments" of American society

into which migrants assimilate (see also Gans, 1992). But acknowledging diversity in society is not sufficient to understand migration-related social changes, because non-migrants and society itself also change as a result of migration. As such, this volume makes a critical contribution, particularly given the ubiquity of international migration in the world today: Approximately 280 million people live in a country other than the one in which they were born (Natarajan et al., 2022).

Two scholarly developments have pushed the discussion of migration's impact beyond migrant communities themselves: neo-assimilation, and critical race scholarship. In the neo-assimilation tradition, Richard Alba and Victor Nee have encouraged scholars to conceptualize migration-related change as two-way (Alba & Nee, 1997). They define assimilation as "the decline, and at its endpoint the disappearance, of an ethnic/racial distinction and the cultural and social differences that express it" (p. 863). Alba and Nee (1997) empirically study assimilation by examining the extent to which differences between immigrant groups, their children, and non-migrant groups persist or decline over generations. Tomás Jiménez furthers our understanding of neo-assimilation by investigating the impact of migration on non-migrants in his study of three communities in California. He finds that both migrants and non-migrants change over time, and describes a process of "relational assimilation": "back-and-forth adjustments in daily life by both newcomers and established individuals as they come into contact with one another" (Jiménez, 2017, p. 11). Jiménez shows that relational assimilation happens in diverse types of communities, cutting across class and race.

The articles in this thematic issue (Waldring et al., 2024) lie within the neo-assimilation tradition, emphasizing, like Jiménez, the side of assimilation that has received relatively scant attention: how non-migrants change. They consider what non-migrants do when faced with difference. Do they feel a sense of group threat? Do they seek ways to adapt in response to group differences? Under what conditions do they accept and even embrace diversity? Crul et al. (2024) outline four factors that shape non-migrants' responses to "becoming a minority": (a) attending a mixed school; (b) having an immigrant partner; (c) participating in activities that involve both migrants and non-migrants; and (d) having a child who attends a diverse school. The articles by Schut and Crul (2024) and Keskiner et al. (2024) take a deep dive into the fourth factor to understand what happens when cultural differences arise in the deeply personal domain of children's schooling in the eyes of non-migrant parents. In doing so, both articles go beyond studies that analyze the choices families make about where to live and send their children to school, to understand the *consequences* of where children live and attend school. Together they show variation in responses to diversity, even among adults of the same social class living in the same city. While some show signs of assimilation, others push back.

Schut and Crul (2024) discuss progressive middle-class non-migrant parents who made a deliberate choice to send their children to Amsterdam schools in which they are a racial minority. While the parents value the diversity of their children's schools, sex education emerges as an issue that divided the non-migrant and (Muslim) immigrant communities of their schools. Some parents responded with "confrontation," using their social position to push for their desired form of sex education to continue in their children's schools despite opposition from migrant families. One of these parents insisted she would "stand up for my own rights." Others expressed beliefs that over time their fellow parents would "catch up" to their modern perspective. Like the confrontational parents, they are clear-eyed in their view that theirs is the superior perspective, but they take a patient, collaborative approach to getting their fellow parents to their perspective rather than a confrontational one. Finally, a third group of parents simply advocated a "compromise" approach by moving some aspects of sex education to their homes, out of the schools, to maintain community cohesion.

Keskiner et al. (2024) analyze interviews with a broader set of parents—middle-class parents in Amsterdam and working-class parents in Tilburg, a medium-sized city, asking similar questions about responses to diversity in their children's schools. The authors find that while most parents do not report diversity to be the main factor determining where they live (indeed, many of the working-class parents were living in social housing assigned to them), it does play a minor role in school choice. Some middle-class parents distanced themselves from neighbors who seemed to prefer sending their children to more distant schools so they could be in a setting with more non-migrant families. Those with less interaction with migrants, both in childhood and as parents, took an "idealist" position, embracing diversity with less interaction, and sometimes rethinking their perspectives when confronted with forms of difference, such as in native language usage among fellow parents. "Pragmatists," on the other hand, experienced more diversity in their quotidian lives but critiqued what they viewed as a lack of migrants' assimilation related to language usage and religion. These were working-class parents in Tilburg. Finally, other working-class parents took a "realist" position, seeing diversity as a lived reality without judgement. Their lower-status class position along with growing up in diverse communities may have facilitated a stance that treats migrants on more equal footing compared to other parents' stances.

Schut and Crul (2024) and Keskiner et al. (2024) both find that middle-class non-migrant progressives in Amsterdam feel empowered to decide how community relations should and will emerge. That finding resonates with my own study an ocean away, in a well-off suburban community on the east coast of the United States (Warikoo, 2022). In that study I found that white non-migrant parents embraced the concept of "diversity" in their community while simultaneously using their status position to advocate for school policies that protect their children's status position over that of their Asian American peers. This included de-emphasizing academic competition by eliminating class rank when Asian American children were outperforming white students academically and were rapidly growing in number in the school district.

Going forward, scholars of migration would do well to heed these scholars' attention to the impact of migration on non-migrants. In addition, I want to suggest pushing this move further, to understanding not only individual-level change, but also broader social changes that happen through migration (for an example of this see Foner, 2022). For example, do status hierarchies shift when migrant-background children outperform non-migrants in school, or do non-migrants find ways to maintain their position at the top of the status hierarchy (see Jiménez, 2017; Warikoo, 2022)?

In my own study described above, I found that white non-migrant parents much more frequently had their desires for school changes enacted, in part because they shared a cultural perspective with school leaders, most of whom were white middle class; at the same time, many Asian migrant parents felt ill-equipped to advocate for their positions, and those who did advocate generally were not successful in their campaigns (Warikoo, 2022). I conclude that social institutions such as schools can reinforce the racial order, thereby maintaining white privilege, by responding positively to the cultural repertoires of non-migrant families over those of migrant families. Similarly, after reading the two articles in this thematic issue, I was left with questions about structural change. Did the schools in Schut and Crul's (2024) study eventually adapt their sex education curriculum, or not? What factors might shape that adaptation (or lack of it)? In Keskiner et al.'s (2024) study, given some parents' frustrations with non-dominant languages being spoken in the community, did schools respond by providing translation, providing Dutch language classes, encouraging the dominant language only, or something else entirely? These inquiries will go even further in helping us understand the

impact of migration on society at large, not just on individuals of migrant and non-migrant backgrounds. They require deep inquiry into school communities, beyond individual interviews with parents.

Overall, scholars of neo-assimilation would also benefit from incorporating more ideas from critical race studies. Critical scholars have questioned the basic frameworks of assimilation theory (both old and new) that, they suggest, take for granted extractive foreign policies that propel international migration, an unequal racial order that migrants encounter when they arrive (Jung, 2009; Romero, 2008), and, more broadly, international borders that disadvantage residents of the global south (Agarwala, 2022; Favell, 2022). They also question the assumption that agency for assimilation lies predominantly with migrants themselves (Treitler, 2015). As Kim (2023) describes it with respect to Asian Americans and the US racial order, we must understand Asian Americans in an "anti-Black" social context. Scholars in this tradition ask us to take seriously how policymaking, the social construction of racial meanings, unequal power relations, and more together shape international migration and its impact. Taking inspiration from this scholarship, the studies in this thematic issue might further ask: How is "Dutch sex education" defined, and what assumptions about Muslim migrant communities shaped the development of that curriculum? Drawing from scholars like Abu-Lughod (2002) they might also question the assumption that Islam drives "non-modern" ideas about sex education, and further unpack the sticking points non-migrant parents identified in the two papers. And, stepping beyond non-migrant parents' perspectives, they might critically examine whose voices are heard and acted upon by school leaders and policymakers in those communities and beyond. These analyses would nicely round out the papers by placing parent perspectives into further context.

More broadly, scholars of migration should consider how migration-related social processes are changing, especially given the rise of nationalism around the world and increasing climate change-driven migration. What do global political movements and climate change portend for how migrants, non-migrants, and community cultures, institutions, and policies respond to and change as a result of migration? The next generation of immigration scholars should address these urgent questions that are shaping our shared world.

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The author declares no conflict of interests.

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