Public Lecture Series Fall 2017
Transnationalities in Migration and Mobility Research
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The Persistence of Ethnic and Racial Discrimination: Evidence from Europe and the US
Dr. Arnfinn Midtbøen, Institute for Social Research Oslo

Discussant: Dr. Rosita Fibbi, Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies (SFM), University of Neuchâtel

18:15 – 19:45 h
University of Neuchâtel, Rue Abram-Louis-Breguet 2, Room R.113.

Abstract
Labor market discrimination against racial and ethnic minority groups is present in most countries around the world. Yet, little is established about change over time in the level of discrimination, or how discrimination rates vary across countries and the influence of national conditions on discrimination rates. The first part of the talk addresses this gap by building on cross-national meta-analyses of field experiments. Field experiments of hiring discrimination are experimental studies in which fictionalized candidates from different race or ethnic group apply for jobs. I focus, first, on trends in hiring discrimination over time by presenting results from a meta-analysis of every available field experiment
of hiring discrimination against African Americans or Latinos in the US (n = 28). Together, these studies represent 55,842 applications submitted for 26,326 positions. I focus on trends since 1989 (n = 24 studies), when field experiments became more common and improved methodologically. Second, I show evidence of substantial variation in hiring discrimination across countries, focusing on nine countries with extensive numbers of field experiments: Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the US. The analysis is based on 81 field experiments containing 136 estimates of hiring discrimination against racial or ethnic minority groups. In the second part of the talk I discuss potential theoretical implications of the findings presented, distinguishing between historical, situational, and institutional theories of discrimination. Historical theories view discrimination in the present as a direct result of historical legacies of racial or ethnic oppression in the past. Situational theories emphasize immediate effects of the social context that can produce discrimination between historically established racial and ethnic groups. Institutional theories emphasize the role of institutional practices and legal rules regarding race, ethnicity, and employment. In conclusion, I discuss potential ways forward in studies of racial and ethnic discrimination in Europe and the US.

Curriculum Vitae

Dr. Arnfinn H. Midtbøen is Senior Research Fellow at The Institute for Social Research in Oslo, Norway. He earned his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Oslo in 2013. Midtbøen works on a broad set of research issues related to immigration and integration, such as ethnic discrimination, second generation incorporation, citizenship, and immigrant employment niches. Currently, he is head of two large-scale research projects: on pathways to integration among descendants of immigrants in Norway, and on boundaries of free speech in the Norwegian public sphere. Midtbøen is member of the IMISCOE network’s Board of Directors, and is co-chair (with Rosita Fibbi and Patrick Simon) of the IMISCOE research cluster Discrimination in Cross-National Perspective.

Selected Publications