BIGSSS | Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences
Research Training Group 2513 "Social Dynamics of the Self"
Description of project line 2: Intergenerational Identity Development

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SELF Project Line 2: Intergenerational Identity Development

Migration studies under the rubric 'social dynamics of the self' encompass elements of cross-cultural psychology (as in the work of Berry, 1997), of the sociology of generations (as found in the seminal work of Eisenstadt, 1956) and of Bourdieu's work on habitus. Moreover, approaches from opinion dynamics (Flache & Macy, 2011; Lahav & Courtemanche, 2012) shed light on actual and possible swings in public belief systems. **Identity development** among migrants is core to analyzing the social dynamics of the self. Young people, in particular, are confronted with a multifaceted process of identity formation. Migrants (both voluntary and involuntary) have to juggle prior experience in their country of upbringing and the requirements of the social context in the receiving country, not forgetting the hardship of migration or flight itself. Often times, they have to do this in presence of their parents, who migrated with them. Parents are then in a way representatives of the old habitus. However, parents at the same time have to acquire new roles themselves, which, to some degree, make them dependents of their children: It is the younger generation that adjusts more rapidly to the new environment, whereas the parent generation often needs more help, including help from their adolescent children (Nauck, 1988; Sime & Fox, 2015). Studying the **identity formation of migrants and their families** means studying social dynamics of the self in a catalyzer, so-to-speak. Not only are there the dynamics of intra-individual development and the dynamics of person-environment interaction, but there are also the dynamics of relocation, i.e., of a social-context change.

Another take at the topic would be addressing **intergenerational differences in family and gender role attitudes** related to migration status and connecting this to the question of social cohesion of the host country. While it is obvious that shared values and at the same time an increasing acceptance of diversity is needed to allow for social solidarity, one important question is how different self-construals (interdependent vs. independent self) are reflected in different values and attitudes not only but also along the lines of migrants and the autochthonous population. The ultimate question then being how these differences can be bridged.

Emerging from this is a focus on the emergence of **hybrid cultural identities**. This can be explored through the formalization of individual processes of identification in an agent-based model where several individuals are assigned heterogeneous demographic characteristics and in particular traits that characterize their cultural background, e.g., nationality or birthplaces of self and parents. The central question is under what conditions cultural/national identities evolve in an exclusive and clearly separated, or hybrid and mixed way. This could be studied for the case of Turkish migrants in Germany. A conceptually related question is if a European identity in individuals evolves at the cost of national identities. Underlying is the question if there is a tendency that local identification tends to concentrate on one local level – regional, national or European – or to what degree it is maintained flexible. The agent-based models will be informed on the micro-level by research results about the psychological mechanisms of identification. On the macro-level, models will be matched against representative survey data on identity. Three members of the application group could supervise migration-related dissertation projects on such issues as value preferences, value change, political orientations, lifestyles, or interpersonal communication.

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***Possible* dissertation projects on intergenerational identity development**:

- Do *their* children become as *we* are? Migration and the intergenerational transmission of lifestyles.

- Intergenerational transmission of family values in the context of migration. How do German core values change due to migration?

- Modeling emergence and stability of cultural identities in diverse societies: Are there cross-cultural differences?

Potential supervisors:

Klaus Boehnke, Mandy Boehnke, Jan Lorenz, Johannes Huinink

References:

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Eisenstadt, S.N. (1956). *From generation to generation*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.

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Nauck, B. (1988). Migration and change in parent-child relationships. The case of Turkish migrants in Germany. *International Migration, 26,* 33-55.

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