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Observatoire Science,
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RELIGION, ETHNICITY & ACCESS TO TERTIARY DEGREES IN EUROPE

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INTRODUCTION

Democratic higher education and the measurement of the degree of democracy

- Characterising diversity in HE is a complex issue
- Most used indicators: gender, socio-economic background
- What about the ethno-cultural indicators?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Do religious and ethnic identities weight on the probability to access tertiary degrees in Europe?
- How to build indicators to approach ethnic identities?

METHODOLOGY

- European Social Survey: 30 countries, 181492 respondents (Born between 1930 and 1979)
- Dependant variable: having or not a tertiary education degree
- Independent/control variables:
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Parental level of education (the highest between mother and father)
 - Parental profession (same)

THE BLACK BOX

- Ethnic indicators:
 - Country of birth of the respondents and of his parents,
 - citizenship of the respondent
 - language spoken at home (national language/other),
 - belonging to ethnic minority and/or to a discriminated group
- Religion indicator:
 - “do you consider yourself as belonging to any particular religion or denomination?” “Which one ?
 - 8 categories possible. We excluded “eastern religions” and “other non-Christian religions” (less than 0.3% of the interviewees)
- For each of these independent variables, the category of reference is the largest one

ETHNICITY: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL CATEGORY

- **3 indicators to read ethnicity**: significant in 15/30 countries

→ **The family geographic trajectory** (citizenship, country of birth, father country of birth, mother country of birth):

influence more often positive on the probability to hold a tertiary degree

→ Acknowledging the **belonging to an ethnic minority and/or a discriminated group**:

most of the time, no statistical link

→ **Language spoken at home** (not a national one):

most of the time, a negative link with holding a tertiary degree

THE RESULTS FOR “RELIGION”

- Statistically significant in 11 countries over 30 on the overall period
- General trend: The probability to hold a tertiary degree is globally more important for the respondents who declare themselves “without religion”
- In countries where a majority of the respondents declare a religious belonging, those who declare none more often hold a tertiary degree

- When a majority of the respondents declare themselves “without religion”

➔ higher probability to holds a tertiary degree for

- Catholics in Belgium and Sweden
- Protestants in Sweden
- Jewish's in the UK
- “Other Christians” in Germany

➔ Lower probability for:

Muslims in Belgium, Germany and Switzerland

“Eastern orthodox” in Switzerland

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

- Increase in the number of countries where ethnicity and religion variables have an impact on the probability of obtaining a degree

	Respondents' year of birth			
	1930-49	1950-64	1965-79	Global 1930-79
Language spoken	9	10	10	10
Geographical trajectory	1	3	8	8
Feeling of belonging to a minority	2	5	3	5
Total no. of countries where the ethnic dimension affects probability of holding a degree	11	14	16	11
Religion	5	5	7	11

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

We observe changes over time in the impact of religious belongings

ex: Germany:

Catholics and protestants: less probability to hold a tertiary degree than non religious for those born between 1930 and 1949

1965-1979: stronger probability

WHICH INTEREST FOR THESE VARIABLES?

Religion:

- Grasps the changes linked to the process of secularisation of societies
- Grasps the transformations of the place of different religious community in the social space and
- Questions the link between ethno-cultural belongings and students' relationship with schooling and, more generally, knowledge

Ethnicity:

- multidimensionality: do not weight equally on education trajectories
- Develop an “objectified” approach of ethnicity

CONCLUSION (1)

Intertwinement of different variables:

- Economic, social, ethno cultural
 - Interest to put into light as many indicators as possible :
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- Reveals the complex and hidden processes at play and their evolution in a society
 - The way students learn and perceive schooling is embedded in their multiple belongings

CONCLUSION (2)

- Trends difficult to explain: product of complex and obscure processes

But:

- Provides opportunity to analyse how societal dynamics are intertwined with individual ones in education trajectories
- underlines the interest of not limiting our analysis of inequalities in education to the classical socioeconomic and ethnic background but to enlarge it to the different belongings individuals express as part of their world.

Thank you!

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