

Interview Dr. Frank van Tubergen

On the occasion of Dr. Frank van Tubergen's new appointment to professor, some questions were posed to him and here is the interview:

Congratulations to your new appointment, Prof. van Tubergen. What will you be studying in the coming years? What do you hope to confirm or disprove?

I study the integration of immigrants and their children in the Netherlands and in other Western countries. One of the questions I'm interested in, has to do with interethnic cohesion: to what extent and why are societies horizontally segmented in terms of ethnicity?

Can you give us an example what you mean?

I try to answer this question by examining, for instance, patterns of interethnic marriages. If there are few marriages between members of minority groups and the majority in a society, then this is a strong sign that the society is horizontally segmented in terms of ethnicity. I further study such horizontal cleavages by looking at the ethnic composition of friendship networks, language proficiency and usage of immigrants, ethnic identity and religious participation.

That sounds like a very interesting topic with the current immigrant situation and its impact for the future. Nowadays, there is also much discussion about ethnic inequality. Do you study that as well?

Yes. That's the other main question on integration that guide my research: to what extent and why are societies vertically segmented in terms of ethnicity? I do research on ethnic inequalities in schooling and in the labour market.

For instance: why are the drop-out rates among non-Western immigrants so high? What are the causes of the higher unemployment rate and lower-status jobs occupied by immigrants and their children? Are there cross-national differences in the economic incorporation of immigrants? Do immigrants in traditional immigrant countries like the United States perform better than immigrants in the more recent immigrant-receiving countries in Europe? Are there important differences across immigrant groups in the labour market performance, and how can we explain these group differences? These and other sub-questions on ethnic inequality are addressed in my research.

How do you plan to go about answering these questions?

To answer these questions, I develop and test theories on the role of human capital, social capital, and ethnic discrimination. The questions that guide my research are addressed in various disciplines within the social sciences. Although educated as a sociologist, I make use of theories and empirical insights from labour and population economics, social demography, and social psychology, too.

Is your work more theoretical or descriptive?

I would say that my work can be characterised as theoretically-driven empirical research. By this, I mean that I don't do theoretical work only (without testing), nor that I do only empirical-descriptive research (without theoretical guidance). Instead, I aim at an integration of both: first, systematically constructing theories and deriving hypotheses, and subsequently testing these hypotheses as good as possible. With regards to empirical testing and design, I use different

methodologies, like multilevel analyses, panel studies, event-history techniques, and (quasi) experimental designs -in the laboratory and in the field.

What else do you do besides research?

I am a teacher in two research master programmes: Migration, Ethnic Relations and Multiculturalism (MERM), and Sociology and Social Research (SaSR). I'm also involved in the Summer school, where I give a course on **Migrants, Group Processes and Ethnic Relations**. On top of teaching, I also supervise five PhD students, which is really exciting.

We wish you all the best in your new appointment. Thank you for this interview.

Thank you very much for your time.