

RAISE



Funded by
the European Union

Grant Agreement Number: 101094684

Project name: RECOGNITION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INJUSTICE TO STRENGTHEN EQUALITY

Project acronym: RAISE

Call: HORIZON-CL2-2022-TRANSFORMATIONS-01

Topic: HORIZON-CL2-2022-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-08

Type of action: HORIZON Research and Innovation Actions Granting authority: European Research Executive Agency

Project starting date: fixed date: 1 May 2023

Project end date: 30 April 2027

Project duration: 48 months

Report on narratives

Deliverable 7.1

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Dissemination Level: Public

Revision History Log

Revision	Date of release	Author	Summary of changes
0.1 - draft	30-11-2023	ECB, ML	Initial draft

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Vignettes for WP7 – merge ethnicity and class

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Since the launch of the *Recognition and Acknowledgement of Injustice to Strengthen Equality* (RAISE) project, the work package 7 (WP7) team has focused on the development and refinement of narratives that encompass shared interests and the creation and/or reinforcement of a superordinate identity among groups that are often framed to oppose one another. The first scientific paper of WP7 centers in the Dutch context, in which these opposing groups are operationalized as Dutch working class citizens with and without a migration background. The development of these narratives was achieved by utilizing literature from different academic fields such as social psychology, sociology and political science. This report is structured as the following: a) academic literature and government reports, b) vignettes formulated and their theoretical anatomy and c) possible development of future vignettes.

Academic Literature

The concept of the superordinate identity played a key role in the development of the political narratives at this phase of the project. A superordinate identity is when two or more different groups, for instance “us” versus “them” becomes “we”; an identity that embraces shared and psychological experiences (Batalha & Reynolds, 2012; Thomas et al., 2022). In our study, the “us” versus “them” is operationalized as Dutch working class citizens with and without a migration background, then the becoming of the “we” is an inclusive working class identity. Research based on superordinate experiments have revealed that this overarching identification can serve as a tool to improve interethnic relations.

From a somewhat different theoretical perspective, from goal-framing theory, not only a shared identity as such, but in particular a shared, overarching goal (Lindenberg, 2023) should matter. An important tenet of this theory asserts that when an overarching goal is made salient, it directs people's attention to what matters and what they may overlook. In the context of the development of the vignettes for the WP7, where both an overarching goal (increasing the incomes of the working class) and a superordinate identity (working class) are made salient, it is possible that information pertaining to ethnic differences and conflicts may be disregarded or weakened, thereby specifying the mechanism for breaking boundaries.

Last but not least, the development of the narratives for this project has profited for the work in the *Merge Left* book (2019). It lays out a large body of empirical evidence that showed the effectiveness of political narratives that merged class and race on the U.S. electorate. We found inspiration from this book

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to refine the vignettes we constructed and adapted to the Dutch context. For example, we did not use race as in the U.S. and instead we used ethnicity which was operationalized as migration background.

Vignettes formulated and their theoretical anatomy

We formulated the following three narratives to address both a salient group identity and a common goal:

i. General Class Narrative

A recent report showed that the Netherlands has strong income disparities between the upper-middle class and the working class. According to the report, people in the working class disproportionately face financial insecurities due to low incomes. Some political parties call for action to improve the incomes of the working class.

ii. Class and Ethnicity Merged Narrative

A recent report showed that the Netherlands has strong income disparities between the upper-middle class and the working class. According to the report, the working class, that is very diverse and consists of people with and without a migration background, disproportionately face financial insecurities due to low incomes. Some political parties call for action to improve the incomes of the working class, such that both people with and without a migration background profit.

iii. Welfare Chauvinism Narrative

A recent report showed that the Netherlands has strong income disparities between the upper-middle class and the working class. According to the report, the working class, that is very diverse and consists of people with and without a migration background, disproportionately face financial insecurities due to low incomes. Some political parties call for action to first improve the incomes of working class members without a migration background.

The vignettes are expected to make salient different group demarcations. In the second narrative, the inclusive class and ethnicity narrative is expected to reduce the boundary on ethnicity in the working class, following findings from López (2019) and to affect a positive response. Although the work from López mainly focused on whether people positively respond to the narrative, we also study whether the narratives affect both the willingness to support the goal (improve the incomes of the respective group) and create solidarity (the willing to cooperate). It is also tested whether the vignettes impact people to prioritize fighting poverty over the focus on reducing migration.

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Further Vignette development

The vignettes formulated above focus on three experimental dimensions: i) a general class narrative that did not specify the demographic composition of the working class; ii) a narrative that combined multi-ethnic description of the working class; and iii) a narrative that emphasized the prioritization of ethnic majority's economic difficulties.

For the following phases of WP7, we further develop narratives with features that have found empirical effectiveness according to the literature. One of those narratives is the “common enemy” which assumes that it is important to emphasize the common “threat” to working-class families in order to shift the issue from a horizontal boundary made conflict to a more vertical one. López (2019) explains that it is effective to identify the threat to working class family and explain their motives even in simple terms such as the elite being “greedy”. Besides that, we would like to implement narratives that state that racial and ethnic division is a tool from the rich and political elites to divide the working class and distracting them from focusing on organizing. As López (2019) stated, this focus “makes clear that racial [and ethnic] oppression is an ugly strategy rather than a legitimate response to supposedly dangerous people” (p.208). Another way forward is to differentiate and experiment with the wording of an encompassing, uniting group. We now focus an inclusive working-class, but other labels and codes may be more appropriate, since e.g. working class is relatively narrow. More in general, the project will continue in testing which labels to target people and/or groups evoke what reactions.

Next to our written vignettes, we would like to implement visual vignettes as experimental conditions as well. Based on López's book (2019, see the images below), we would like to follow similar strategy but for the Dutch and European context. We believe this would allow us to get a better understanding of the effects of our experimental conditions. We find this relevant because extensive political messaging happens through the use of visual imageries.

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Vignette images as used by López (2019) in the US context

Republican Dog Whistle Flyer

A GOVERNOR FOR MINNESOTA

WE NEED SAFER COMMUNITIES!

FAMILIES NEED MORE MONEY!

CHILDREN NEED MORE OPPORTUNITY!

My opponents are demanding more sanctuary cities for criminal and illegal aliens.

My opponents want to increase taxes on gasoline, income and even support a death tax.

School should be focused on educating our children, so they are ready for success. My opponents want to use education dollars to fund Union Buses, Political Corrupts, and their own political campaigns.



Colorblind Democratic Flyer

A GOVERNOR FOR MINNESOTA

FAIR WAGES!

INVEST IN SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS!

TIME FOR A BETTER DEAL!

Minnesotans work hard and expect to earn enough to own a home, provide our kids a quality education, take occasional vacations and save for retirement.

Special interests are influencing elections to expel them their wealth. Too many Minnesotans are unable to afford the basics.

We need a better deal: fair wages, fully funded public schools, and affordable healthcare for all. Protect our environment, invest in reasonable energy and jobs, and maintain our roads, bridges, and transit across the state.



Race-Class Democratic Flyer

A GOVERNOR FOR MINNESOTA

AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE FOR ALL!

QUALITY EDUCATION FOR EVERY CHILD!

CLEAN AIR AND WATER ACROSS OUR STATE!

Minnesotans work hard to provide for our families. Whether white, black, or brown, 5th generation or newcomer, we all want to build a better future for our children.

My opponent says some families have value, while others don't count. He wants to pit us against each other in order to gain power for himself and lobbyists for his donors.

It's time for Minnesotans to join together and rewrite the rules so that all our families have the opportunity to pursue their dreams.



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In general the following aspects identified will be included and further developed in the narratives, based on López (2019).

1. Formulate a message that is inclusive, express race, migration background and/or religiosity explicitly (*applied in the developed narratives*)
2. Start with an affirmative statement
3. Formulate a threat (*applied in the developed narratives*)
4. Formulate who is responsible for that threat (greedy lobbyist)
5. Formulate what the results is (self-enriching of the powerful and rich)
6. Formulate that minority groups are scapegoated
7. Call for people to join together across groups (*applied in the developed narratives*)

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