

Migration, misinformation, and intergroup relations in multicultural Kinga Bierwiazzonek, Leibniz Institute for Psychology/University of Oslo

Abstract

As a major life event, migration is often accompanied by significant stress and uncertainty related to being immersed in a new and unfamiliar cultural environment. Misinformation research shows that conditions of uncertainty increase people's proneness to different forms of mis- and disinformation. Put together, these two facts may imply that migrants are more vulnerable to misinformation than non-migrants. This notion seems to be supported by research showing that ethnic or religious minorities, often overlapping with migrant groups, show higher tendency to endorse conspiracy theories and, during the COVID-19 pandemic, misinformation about the disease. Other studies, however, suggest that misinformation endorsement only increases if those groups perceive themselves as stigmatized minorities, pointing to the importance of migrant integration into the receiving societies. In this talk, I review this and other research on misinformation and conspiracy beliefs among migrants and minorities in the light of current models of misinformation. I link these phenomena to possible aggravating factors such as prejudice and discrimination, and I discuss potential distal outcomes such as radicalization.

Biography

Kinga Bierwiazzonek holds a double PhD in psychology from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and ISCTE-IUL in Lisbon. She is head of psychological meta-science at the Leibniz Institute for Psychology in Trier, Germany, and principal investigator at the University of Oslo, Norway, where she currently leads a large-scale meta-analytical project that integrates findings from over 1,400 studies on migrant adaptation to living in the receiving societies. Her research follows two main thematic lines: the psychological aspects of migration and the psychology of misinformation and conspiracy beliefs. She has published several meta-analyses and literature reviews on these topics.