Earning Your Place: The relation between immigrants’ economic and psychological integration in the Netherlands

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Abstract

Cultural diversity can put a strain on social cohesion in society. On the one hand, immigrants’ loyalty and commitment to the Netherlands have been questioned in public and political debates. On the other hand, the fact that immigrants occupy relatively disadvantaged socio-economic positions in society has raised concerns about discrimination and inequality. This study investigates the psychological integration of immigrants, in other words their sense of national belonging, and asks to what extent economic integration can have a stimulating effect.

The results show that economic integration is directly and indirectly related to psychological integration. Economic integration can contribute to identification with the host country, social trust and political trust, and positive attitudes towards the native population. Social contact with natives can partially explain these positive associations. However, economic integration can also be negatively related to psychological integration, because immigrants who are higher educated tend to experience more discrimination and a lack of opportunities in the host country.