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Measuring Immigrant Integration Diversity in a Dutch City

By Dr. Peter Reinsch

Abstract:

How do social researchers - and other observers - recognize successfully integrated immigrants? What presumptions are made to detect and clarify individual differences in integration?

In this study Dr. Peter Reinsch develops a conceptual model that outlines the numerous normative, theoretical and methodological issues bound to the measurement of immigrant integration. He then uses it to order and interpret survey data gathered in the city of Haarlem. Dr. Reinsch takes an essentially normative step by ranking Haarlem residents according to their success at achieving a distinct set of personal goals: self-reliance, contentment and sociability. This combination of goals presumably reflects local objectives characteristic of the tolerant vision so often propagated in Dutch debates and policies. A broad selection of survey measures is subsequently reviewed that represent divergent theoretical clarifications for individuals' integration. Differences in migration age, gender, educational background, labor market position, housing situation, ethnic affinities, language capabilities, local contacts and many others are considered. While evaluating these measures for their potential to qualify the successfully integrated Haarlemmer, the author reveals methodological barriers to more adequate survey instruments. The study provides social observers with numerous guidelines to help systematize and ameliorate their analyses of the integration process, a process crucial for the future of European cities. Dr. Peter Reinsch, an American-born sociologist, has conducted research on Dutch ethnic relations the past twenty years. He has been affiliated with Utrecht University since 1993.

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