

Diversity-Management Strategies (DMS) and their implications for social cohesion and immigrants' integration

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Abstract

Current immigration is being perceived by many as a threat to the cohesion of the nation-state. The salient images of social cohesion in popular discourse and political rhetoric assume the necessity of a high degree of likeness among co-citizens in order to facilitate their close interaction. Common understanding of civil society or social capital, both of which place a high premium on values such as trust, civic responsibility and co-operation, often assumes that immigrants' cultural backgrounds preclude such value structures. (Vertovec, 1997)

The current presentation offers a conceptual framework for studying culturally-diverse societies and identifying the strategies they use for managing their internal diversity, and discusses the implications for social cohesion.

Culturally diverse societies are often referred to as multicultural societies. The term "multicultural", however, bears a number of different meanings.

One meaning is descriptive, demographic: in this sense, a multicultural society is one, which is comprised of people who come from different cultural backgrounds.

Another meaning is ideological: here the reference is to a society that perceives of cultural diversity as an asset rather than a liability, and wishes to maintain and nurture its diverse cultural communities.

A third meaning is structural/political: from this point of view, a multicultural society is one that applies ample mechanisms to abolish discrimination against cultural minorities, a society which ensures equal life-opportunities for individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Internal cultural diversity in society can be managed in a number of different ways, such as: Segregation (e.g. Apartheid); overt assimilation; Transitional pluralism; Residual multiculturalism; Interactive multiculturalism (the STEW metaphor); or Federative Pluralism (the MOSAIC metaphor). (Sever, Each of these strategies carries implications for immigrants' integration and for social cohesion in their new society.

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