CultureCase

The impact of cultural activities on the wellbeing of immigrants

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Summary

This paper explores the ‘participation of migrants in socio-cultural activities related to arts, theatre, concerts and sports events’ and the impact of that participation on subjective well-being (SWB). The research looked at the experience of first, second and ‘2.5 generation’ immigrants as well as ‘natives’ in Germany and the UK. Both countries have good survey data on cultural participation, wellbeing and other demographic variables. The data shows that the SWB of everyone is improved by participating in socio-cultural activities. The immigrant stories told by the data in Germany and the UK are different: first-generation immigrants who participated in socio-cultural activities improved their wellbeing more than subsequent generations of immigrants in Germany who did the same. The "generation gap" between the SWB of 'culturally engaged' immigrants was less strong in the UK data.

The SWB measures were derived from a German government survey from 1984–2017 and a UK government survey from 2010–2013

In Germany people were asked: ‘How satisfied are you with your life as a whole, all things considered?’ with answers on an 11-point scale. Life satisfaction in the UK was measured on an 8-point scale ranging from 0 to 7 and general happiness with the question ‘What is your overall happiness?’, measured on a 4-point scale.

The data from Germany shows that attendance to a concert of classical music, theatre or opera and religious related activities had the largest influence on SWB

This may reveal that engagement with a country's traditional cultural practices is a signal of full integration and hence indicative that someone is more able to navigate its political, social and cultural life and possibly be less subject to discrimination. 'Due to various socio-economic and political factors, such as a lower degree of social embeddedness, barriers in language and the potential discrimination in the labour markets, first-generation immigrants are more likely to report lower levels of SWB'. The author concludes that 'policies encouraging the participation in socio-cultural events may help immigrants to integrate in the social norms of the host societies and to improve their SWB'.

Keywords

wellbeing **Germany** **survey** **migrants** **UK**

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