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Abdi Hersi

Conceptualisation of Integration

An Australian Muslim
Counter-Narrative

palgrave
macmillan

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*I dedicate this book to my beloved parents:
My father Col Mohamud Hersi Muhumed and my mother Miss Mihiya Aw
Muhumed Mubarak Ti'bile.
“My Lord! bestow on them Thy Mercy even as they cherished me in
childhood” (Quran 17:24)*

Foreword

It is a pleasure and a privilege for me to write these lines of recommendation for what is in the first place an interesting and very original book on the conceptualisation of integration. As an academic who has been working in the field of migrant integration for several decades I must say that I have hardly come across a book that is as comprehensive and as insightful as Dr. Abdi Hersi's study. He clearly shows in how many different ways the notion of integration can be and has been conceptualised and interpreted, not only in the literature, but also in practice.

This does not always make things easier for newly arriving immigrants who are expected to integrate into their new society, but who receive vague and often contradictory signals on how to achieve this. Nearly always it is the receiving society and its members who define the conditions for integration, and these conditions sometimes even change as the integration process advances. It happens much more rarely that the integration process is being looked at from the perspective of those who are expected to integrate, that is the newcomers themselves.

This is precisely what Dr. Hersi has done in this book. He has carefully studied views on integration as held by the Muslim community in Australia, which mostly consists of relatively recent immigrants and

which he knows from the inside. He has discovered and analysed a variety of interesting and often unexpected perspectives. Contrary to what is sometimes believed by the dominant population, Muslims have a strong desire to integrate, but they understand integration primarily as participation, and certainly not as assimilation.

A form of integration that also accepts and accommodates differences in culture, religion and—at least in the private sphere—language can work quite well as long as everyone respects the fundamental rights of the other and as long as there is a sufficient degree of mutual respect. Integration certainly is a two-sided process: the receiving society has to make adjustments as well. Such two-sidedness, however, can never imply abandoning the basic values of society.

The Australian Muslims interviewed in Dr. Hersi's study are well aware of this, and they are fully prepared to integrate into Australian society under the conditions just described. The politicisation of immigration and integration as well as worldwide shifts in the appreciation of Islam outside the Islamic world have not made that integration process easier. More than in the past do Muslims encounter prejudice and discrimination, as has also become apparent from this study.

The empirical parts of this book focus on Australia. This is good, because relatively little is known about this country in other Western countries. Australia has a long—and turbulent—tradition of dealing with immigration and multiculturalism. Most Muslims, however, have arrived in Australia relatively recently, and they have added to the country's religious pluriformity. When comparing Australian Muslims to those in most European countries, however, one must keep in mind that the former often have higher schooling levels than the latter. This may have a positive impact on their successful participation in Australian society.

I do hope that the readers of this well-written book will enjoy reading it as much as I have done.

Rotterdam, Netherlands

Han Entzinger
Professor Emeritus of Migration
and Integration Studies
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Preface

This book deals with the highly topical subject of Muslim immigrant integration in Australia. In its recent history, Australia has been a model multicultural nation that welcomed immigrants and refugees from different countries and continents. The country is now a proud vibrant multicultural nation with citizens that hail from multiple regions, nationalities, religions, and ethnicities. But despite this, Muslims in Australia faced significant challenges, as their loyalty and allegiance to their own nation is being constantly questioned. Anti-Islam and Muslim sentiments are high in Australia, and discrimination and prejudices experienced by Muslims are frequently reported in the media. There is abundant research that discusses conceptions of integration but none is concerned with the immigrant's conceptualisation of integration. In writing this book I intended to bring to light the possible counter-narrative of the meanings of integration held by Australian Muslims.

The primary purpose of this book is to broaden public and policy discussions about Muslim integration by shifting the debate away from simply demands of Muslim integration but rather making Muslims part of the integration conversation. The book is based on empirical research that investigated Australian Muslims' conceptualisation of integration.

It is the first book of its kind that provides a comprehensive overview of Muslim conceptualisation of integration with full acknowledgment of other competing interpretations of the concept of immigrant integration. The idea of writing this book stemmed from my long-held belief in equality, social justice, and community cohesion. The book is intended to plea to academics and students engaged in the fields of migration, mobility, integration and social cohesion as well as, policy-makers and ordinary citizens to consider integration conceptualisation more broadly and to appreciate the perspectives of immigrants themselves. Though the journey of writing this book was extensive, the experience was inconspicuously unmatched, fulfilling and highly rewarding.

I thank Allah for giving me the strengths and His blessing in completing this book.

I would like to express my gratitude to Associate Professor Halim Rane from Griffith University in Australia and Professor Ian Woodward from the University of Southern Denmark, for their guidance, fervent encouragement and useful critiques of this research work.

My deepest thanks go to my caring, loving and supportive wife, Meimuna Aden Affey and to my children, Mohamed, Hafsa, Hamza, and Adam, for their understanding, continuous patience and immense support during the long hours I dedicated to writing this book.

I also extend my thanks to colleagues in the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research, the School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science and friends from the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies for their help in offering me resources and a collegial environment to undertake this research.

Finally, I offer my sincere thanks to all participants from the Australian Muslim communities who have granted me permission to interview them in this study. Without their support, this project would not have been completed.

Brisbane, Australia

Dr. Abdi Hersi

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About the Author

Dr. Abdi Hersi is Adjunct Research Fellow at the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research, Griffith University. He was the manager of the award-winning Reporting Islam national research project, that developed suite of research-based training and education resources for Australian media practitioners to encourage more mindful reporting of Islam and Muslims. He has worked on other research projects undertaken by several major Australian universities including The University of Queensland and Curtin University. He has published a number of refereed journal articles in reputable international journals on issues and matters that affect immigration in general and in particular the Muslim communities in Australia. His journal articles have been featured in the *International Journal of Legal Pluralism*, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, *Media International Australia*, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* and the *European Scientific Journal*. In addition to his academic work, Dr. Hersi had a long and distinguished career in the Australian Public Service and over a period of more than ten years worked across the spectrum of Australia's Federal Department of Immigration and Border Protection in different capacities including managerial roles.

Abbreviations

AAR	American Academy of Religion
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Language Program
ANES	American National Election Survey
CC	Cognitive Complexity
CMEB	Commission on Multi Ethnic Britain
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DIBP	Department of Immigration and Border Protection
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
GC	Good Citizen
GSS	General Social Survey
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IS	Islamic State
MIPEX	Migrant Integration Policy Indicator Index
MP	Member of Parliament
SACC	Standard Classification of Countries

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