

## Measures and Their Countermeasures: Reflexivity and Second-Order Reactivity in Quantifying Immigrant Integration

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*Sociology is inherently reflexive. It deals with actors who themselves are constantly engaged in sociological reasoning. Concepts from academic sociology are thus prone to enter and affect the very dynamics they describe. The sociology of quantification is particularly attuned to such paradoxical effects of “reactivity,” that is, measurements and categories altering observed realities. The article builds on these insights but extends them by adding one more iteration of reflexivity. Examining administrative integration departments in Germany that have implemented statistical indicators for measuring immigrant incorporation, it attends to a case where bureaucrats are themselves anticipating “reactivity” of the measurements they use. Integration officers fear that integration indicators may inadvertently reify and stigmatize the statistical category of first-to third-generation immigrants, or “persons with a migration background.” Consequently, they engage in various counterstrategies to offset such effects. Most notably, they launch a counter-campaign against negative connotations of migration background that their own measurements are reinforcing as they frame migration background as an asset for society. The article argues that this is an example of second-order reactivity, a phenomenon as yet neglected in the literature: Officers alter reality in reaction to an anticipated reactivity of their own integration statistics.*

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**KEYWORDS:** immigration; policy; quantification; reactivity; reflexivity; state bureaucracies.

### INTRODUCTION

Sociology is unique among the scientific disciplines in that it is part of its own object. For one, academic sociology is, of course, itself a social enterprise situated in society and thus amenable to social analysis (see, e.g., Abbott 2001; Bourdieu 2004; Gouldner 1970). Second, sociology has no monopoly on sociological reasoning. Actors outside of academic sociology themselves make sense of the social world they act in; they maintain theories of social behavior, observe the world through specific concepts, and draw general conclusions from social experiences. They are, in the sense of Anthony Giddens (1984) or Margaret Archer (2007), reflexive, that is, constantly monitoring their own actions and making themselves and their social environment the object of elaborate considerations and inferences. In essence, this means that sociology is not only conducted *by* sociological actors; by necessity it also deals *with* sociological actors.

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