

**TONY CAPSTICK**  
UNIVERSITY OF READING

**BOOK REVIEW: BENNETT, S. (2018).  
CONSTRUCTIONS OF MIGRANT  
INTEGRATION IN BRITISH PUBLIC  
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LONDON: BLOOMSBURY**

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### CONTACT

Tony Capstick, Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics, School of  
Literature and Languages, University of Reading, Whiteknights, PO Box 217, Reading  
RG6 6AH, UK. [tony.capstick@reading.ac.uk](mailto:tony.capstick@reading.ac.uk)

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*Constructions of migrant integration in British  
public discourse*. London: Bloomsbury**

**Tony Capstick**

*University of Reading*

The title of the introductory chapter, ‘To be or not to be (British)’, of the book *Constructions of Migrant Integration in British Public Discourse* neatly captures the complexities of what it means to belong in Britain in this age of migration.

Bennett makes it clear from the start that immigration cannot be decoupled from integration and settlement as it can no longer be thought of as simply moving across geographical borders. Researching the conceptual borders of identity and belonging also underpin Bennett’s conceptual framework in this deeply thought-out and meticulous analysis of the discourses of who belongs and who doesn’t in the UK.

Philosophical questions relating to the nature of the Other — the non-citizen — are tacked alongside the potential that UK society has for facilitating the ‘successful integration’ of incoming nationals, which Bennett believes to be ‘hamstrung’ from the start (p. 1).

These dilemmas are explored through an innovative framework grounded largely in the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) in Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and the use of corpus tools and methods. Rigorous analysis of discourses about migration from the public sphere is achieved through a combination of a corpus-based analysis with qualitative techniques based on the DHA. Bennett works hard from the outset to define his terms — what is and what is not the public sphere is explored (Aristotle, Arendt and Habermas included) and a very clear discussion of who is the public in *public sphere* concludes with a useful articulation of how public discourse is created, mediated and received in modern democracies (p. 10). This enables Bennett to provide the theoretical foundations on which his research problems, hypotheses and questions rest. In doing so, he focuses on four ‘lead off’ problems: how nation-states such as the UK face the cultural pluralism that immigration elicits; how the normative nature of the discourse of integration is in tension with the lived reality of incoming nationals. Connected to this are research problems three and four: how the discourse of integration positions incoming non-nationals/new citizens given the specific power relations and social inequality of the UK and how, within the British public sphere, there is little questioning of what integration actually includes.

Having set out the problems, Bennett goes on to identify what he calls six discursive hypotheses which are again a useful orientation to how he understands the discursive construction of integration. He goes on to explore how this discursive construction leads to the creation of insufficient integration strategies, which in turn negatively impacts

how the new citizens which Bennett is interested in integrate into UK society and ultimately, he argues, leads to less cohesive communities (p. 13). From these six hypotheses emerge four research questions which focus on the discursive construction of integration in government policy (RQ1), in the media (RQ2), by those affected by integration (RQ3) and finally how these discursive constructions affect the integration of incoming nationals (RQ4).

What is useful about the organization of each aspect of the study in this way is that the previous discussion of the public sphere and taking a critical approach to integration discourses introduces just enough conceptual framing to enable the reader to understand where the research questions come from and how they link to the data which Bennett introduces in the subsequent sections. The data come from interviews and focus group discussions as well as policy documents and media texts from the public sphere.

The discursive nature of racism and exclusion is then explored in Chapter 2, which is perfectly fitting given the foundations outlined above. Bennett presents a clear overview of some of the theories of racism which highlights the centrality of the discriminatory and conflicting positions towards migrants present in the documents, policies and media extracts he analyses. His explanation of integration and citizenship in Chapter 3 flows from this discussion of racism and therefore forms a clear thread from the discriminatory discursive processes of the former and the neoliberal conceptions of what it means to be a 'good' member of society. This depth of analysis continues throughout chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 where socio-political contexts, government policy texts, media and focus group discussions with in-coming non-nationals are analysed with precision, initially through word frequency and concordance, then later by identifying discourse topics. Bennett never loses sight of the over-arching hypotheses and research questions.

Bennett successfully revisits the public sphere in his Discussion and Conclusion, where he is keen to demonstrate how he has persuaded the reader that it is inherently discursive in nature — largely due to the role of the media. His model of how discourse flows through the public sphere is well tested by his analysis. Using corpus tools he has provided evidence that the integration discourse originated in the public sphere before being recontextualised by the media. Of significance is the way that Bennett demonstrates how the media had the opportunity to critique this discourse but his analysis shows that this challenge was not taken up. It is the case, then, that 'there was both implicit and explicit support for the discursive construction of integration along neoliberal, assimilatory lines, and this support in turn legitimized that policy' (p. 173).

Having summarized these findings and conclusions, Bennett reminds his readers that the framework has enabled him to show in the analysis that the term 'integration' was an empty semantic container, the contents of which were fluid. Moreover, the results show that the term *integration* accomplished its role as a *consensus concept* in the sense that it could be agreed on by anyone participating in the debate at hand — the semantic concepts

'differed from person to person and from policy to policy' (p. 175). Bennett has clearly demonstrated this with a data set stretching over 10 years — and he shows this in the analysis of how government discourse became neo-assimilatory during this time. Furthermore, the results show how community was also defined in relation to integration: sometimes *community* was constructed as spatial or geographical such as *in the community*, however we see how even a single town can consist of multiple communities.

This micro-level labelling of key terms and concerns is, towards the end of the book, set against the high level of interdiscursivity with which integration is linked. We are reminded that discourses of integration were present in documents from English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to crime and that over the duration of the analysis, ESOL also became a major provision for everything from citizenship to anti-terrorism. These claims are used to evidence the validity of Bennett's claim that racism is both an effect of discriminatory discourse and a source of it and cites Kamali's work (2008) pointing to the narcissism of western democracies. I suggest that Bennett is on safer ground when he argues that the discourse of integration is neo-assimilationist in the way that it racializes the Other (Roxworthy, 2008) as we now, thanks to this study, have the evidence of a significant shift in rhetoric away from integration as a two-way process in the UK today towards one which is much more one-way. The use of corpus tools to explore these patterns of recontextualisation is by far Bennett's greatest contribution here.

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