Economic Gains and Social Pains: The Interplay of Economic and Socio-cultural Experiences of Immigrants in Canada

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One Big Turbulence of 2000-2010: Backlash against Diversity and Multiculturalism

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The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lectures

Robert D. Putnam*
One Big Turbulence of 2000-2010: Backlash against Diversity and Multiculturalism

Muslims were at the heart of this debate.
Slow integration of Muslim immigrants

- Reasons offered:
  - Lack of willingness
  - Lack of ability

- Solutions offered:
  - Assimilation/Exclusion
  - Inter-cultural understanding
The goal of this research

- To examine the impact of economic factors on the attachment of immigrants in Canada,
- ... measured through the level of their social trust towards the general population
- ... with a focus on Muslim immigrants
Do economic experiences have any impact on social trust among Immigrants?
Today’s trust levels correlate with the early economic experiences (at arrival)

Source: Trust: EDS; Earnings: CANSIM
Today's trust levels correlate with age at arrival (can it be due to their economic experiences?)
Trust levels are lower among those who live in poverty.

Source: Poverty rate: Canadian census PUMF Individual level, 2001; trust: EDS, 2002
Trust levels are lower among those who live in poor neighbourhoods (even if they are not poor themselves)

Source: Neighbourhood poverty: Canadian Census Profile, 2001; Trust: GSS17, 2003
Focusing on Muslims in Canada:
1) They show a relatively low level of trust;
2) They have a higher level of human capital;
3) They have poor economic records
Trust in general public

Proportion who indicated "People can be trusted"

Source: EDS, 2005
Trust in neighbours

How much do you trust the people in your neighbourhood?
(Proportion who indicated 4/5 or 5/5)

Source: EDS, 2005
Could the low level of trust among Muslims in Canada be due to their economic experiences?
Human capital profile:
Muslims seem to have higher levels of human capital, compared to both native-born Canadians and other immigrants.

Source: Canadian Census Data, 2006
Employment status: Despite their higher human capital, Muslims seem to be unable to translate it into economic gains.

Source: Canadian Census Data, 2006
Employment status

Worked mainly full-time weeks in 2005

- West Asia/Middle East: 40.0%
- Canada: 40.0%
- Other: 50.0%

Worked mainly part-time weeks in 2005

- West Asia/Middle East: 16.0%
- Canada: 14.0%
- Other: 12.0%

Unemployed

- West Asia/Middle East: 5.0%
- Canada: 3.0%
- Other: 4.0%
Income status

Census family income groups

Mean Employment Income

Low income family status

Source: Canadian Census Data, 2006
Conclusions

1. The status of Muslims in Canada could be alarming
2. This status could create challenges for their identification with Canada
3. Given the general trends of trust and economic experiences for immigrants, at least one major reason for Muslims’ low level of trust could be their unique economic experiences, i.e., the mismatch between their human capital and economic status
4. Without treating the above structural issue, the cultural solutions (like inter-faith dialogues) may not be too effective in creating bridges between Muslims and mainstream populations.