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Between Here and There: Pre- and Post-migration Experiences and Generalized Trust among Recent Immigrants in Canada

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**BETWEEN HERE AND THERE: PRE- AND POST-MIGRATION
EXPERIENCES AND GENERALIZED TRUST AMONG RECENT
IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA**

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Generalized trust can be thought of as a smoothing mechanism to social interactions between members of a given society. The norms of reciprocity underpinning generalized trust allow people to engage in social, economic, and political interactions with the belief that they will be treated with respect and honesty by other members of society (Putnam 1993). From a broader perspective, Almond and Verba (1963) in their seminal work identified generalized trust as one of the key characteristics of civic culture, necessary for the functioning and stability of democracy (see also Inglehart 1997). Supporting such a claim, a few studies highlight that greater generalized trust is associated with a greater satisfaction with democracy and with a greater compliance in paying due taxes (Scholz and Lubell 1998; Uslaner 2002; Zmerli and Newton 2008). Finally, generalized trust is also associated with greater economic growth (Knack and Keefer 1997; Zak and Knack 2001).

In the context of countries with significant immigrant populations, generalized trust is arguably even more central. Generalized trust can be seen as critical for immigrant integration. Recent immigrants in particular are likely to be “outsiders” to mainstream social networks in the host society, and therefore to be less familiar with the expectations and norms that structure day-to-day social interactions. This “outsider” status could have important consequences for immigrants’ levels of generalized trust in their host society and, consequently, for their overall integration in the host society. A number of studies highlight that generalized trust is related to individuals’ perceived state of health (Helliwell 2003) and overall life satisfaction (Lindstrom and Mohseni 2009; Rostila 2007). There is no reason to think that immigrants are any different from the general population when it comes to these kinds of relationships. From this perspective, generalized trust among immigrants can be seen not only as a likely determinant of their integration in the host society, but also as a potential expression of their resilience in the face of cultural, social, economic, and political challenges. The debate regarding the relationship between immigration and generalized trust has also taken another form, with Robert Putnam’s (2007) study indicating that overall levels of generalized trust are lower in areas with high levels of ethnic diversity. The implication is that high levels of immigration could undermine social cohesion in the host society, although Putnam’s findings have been challenged (Portes and Vickstrom 2011).



Although it is not the focus of this study, this debate further highlights the need to investigate immigrants' levels of generalized trust.

Even though generalized trust might be a key indicator of immigrants' potential and actual integration into the host society, rarely have immigration scholars investigated newcomers' levels of generalized trust in Canada or other Western democracies. Dinesen and Hooghe (2010) provide the most insightful contribution so far on this question, investigating whether immigrants' levels of generalized trust tend to converge with those of the local population in the host society in fifteen European countries, and examining whether integration policies in these countries facilitate or impede convergence.

Building from Dinesen and Hooghe (2010), this study examines levels and origins of generalized trust among recent immigrants in Canada. Our approach to immigrants' generalized trust, however, departs from their work in important ways. While Dinesen and Hooghe (2010) investigated cross-national variation in immigrants' levels of generalized trust, we focus on variations across groups of immigrants in Canada. Accordingly, our study investigates the impact of differences between immigrants in one setting, rather than the impact of integration policies across different national settings.

We might expect levels of generalized trust to vary widely among immigrants in Canada simply because of their diverse experiences before and after migration. While until the 1960s the vast majority of immigrants came from Europe, newcomers now settle from all regions of the world. Immigration is thus diverse from the perspective of the personal histories immigrants bring with them to Canada. Immigrants come from a vast number of countries, and with a wide array of social, economic, and political experiences. Accordingly, one might ask whether diverse pre-migration experiences leave an enduring imprint on generalized trust. Delhey and Newton (2005) have shown that there are noticeable cross-national variations in levels of generalized trust, and research on immigrant political attitudes highlights the enduring character of pre-migration experiences on orientations such as political participation (Bilodeau 2008; Bueker 2005) and support for democracy (Bilodeau 2014; Bilodeau, McAllister and Kanji 2010). It is quite



possible, then, that these distinct generalized trust orientations travel with immigrants, and are enduring enough to structure immigrants' outlooks in the host society. That is, immigrants' propensity to trust other people might already be crystallized before they settle in Canada.

In addition, immigration is also diverse because of the ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds of new Canadians. This diversity is not without its challenges for newcomers, however; all segments of Canadian society are not equally tolerant and accepting of this changing face of Canada (Bilodeau et al. 2012; Wilkes and Corrigan-Brown 2011). Many immigrants in Canada face discrimination in the workplace, in housing, and in many other aspects of their day-to-day lives (Biles et al. 2008). Above and beyond the problems of discrimination, the social and economic experiences of immigrants in Canada also vary greatly. Accordingly, it seems appropriate to consider whether recent immigrants' negative and positive experiences in Canada structure their levels of generalized trust.

This paper addresses three questions: First, how much generalized trust do recent immigrants exhibit in comparison to other Canadians? Second, to what extent are immigrants' levels of generalized trust structured by experiences accumulated prior to migration to Canada? And third, to what extent are immigrants' levels of generalized trust structured by their post-migration experiences in Canada? The study relies on a unique combination of three sources of data all derived from *World Values Surveys*: 1) 2000 and 2006 Canadian components, 2) special sub-samples of recent Canadian immigrants in 2000 and 2006, and 3) corresponding national components for immigrants' countries of origin.

THE ORIGINS OF GENERALIZED TRUST AMONG RECENT IMMIGRANTS: THE IMPACT OF PRE-MIGRATION AND POST-MIGRATION EXPERIENCE

There are at least two ways to think about generalized trust. First, generalized trust can be thought of as norm-driven, representing a moral orientation (Uslaner 2002). From this perspective, it is "something inherited through socialization rather than acquired. It is not primarily based on personal experiences or other information (...)" (Nannestad 2008, 415). Extending this conception of generalized trust to immigrants, one would expect the pre-migration socialization



in the countries of origin to be a powerful and enduring determinant of immigrants' levels of generalized trust.

Conventional theories of socialization contend that social norms, values, and beliefs, such as generalized trust, develop relatively early in life—sometime between early adolescence and early adulthood (see Sears 1990). These norms, values, and beliefs strengthen and deepen with time. Given that a significant number of studies have highlighted systematic differences in levels of generalized trust across countries (Dehley and Newton 2005; Inglehart 1997), it is quite possible that such cross-national differences persist among immigrants in the host society. Accordingly, we expect immigrants from countries with lower generalized trust to express lower generalized trust in Canada, and those from countries with higher levels of trust to express higher trust in Canada.

Another perspective on generalized trust, however, sees it as grounded in the institutional structure of a society. Thus, generalized trust would be expected to vary with societal conditions and relate to individuals' experiences in society (Stolle 2002, 408). Extending this conception of generalized trust to immigrants, we would expect the unique social and economic challenges faced by immigrants in their host society to have a significant impact on their levels of generalized trust.

We know that economic integration is frequently a challenge for immigrants, and the evidence is that it is increasingly difficult for recent immigrants in Canada (Picot 2008; Kustec 2012). Immigrants often struggle to find jobs, or to find employment that will allow them to thrive rather than merely get by. Immigrants' economic expectations and their changing economic conditions might have important implications for generalized trust. Maxwell (2010) reports that immigrants who are more satisfied with the economy in the host society are more inclined to express greater satisfaction with the government. Similarly, White et al. (2013) observe that newcomers whose economic situation improves with immigration express more positive feelings toward Canada than newcomers whose economic situation deteriorates. Whether the same holds for generalized trust has yet to be investigated, but it is not unreasonable to presume that



immigrants who struggle economically might be more likely than other immigrants to become more distrustful of people in general. Accordingly, we expect immigrants in Canada who are unemployed to express lower levels of generalized trust than other immigrants. We also expect immigrants who see their economic situation improve with migration to express higher levels of generalized trust than those who see their economic situation deteriorate.

Social integration in the host society is also a challenge for many immigrants. A few studies have shown that perceived discrimination in the host society can negatively affect immigrants' relationships with political institutions (Michelson 2003; Maxwell 2010) and jeopardize their identification with the host society (Ono 2002; Berry et al. 2006; Verkuyten and Yildiz 2007). Even though none of these studies examines generalized trust, it seems plausible that discrimination and perceived mistreatment is also a source of weaker generalized trust among immigrants. Immigrants presumably have a strong desire to be accepted as full members of the host society (Kao and Tienda 1995); feelings of mistreatment or rejection from the host society could generate distrust. Accordingly, we would expect immigrants who believe that they are treated worse than other citizens (either by the government or other Canadians) to be less likely to express generalized trust. Moreover, we could expect visible minority immigrants—those more likely than other immigrants to experience discrimination—to exhibit lower levels of generalized trust.

The above two approaches to understand generalized trust (moralistic and institutional) capture well two important components of immigrants, namely their pre-migration and post-migration influences. In the first case, generalized trust is viewed as more durable, reflecting deep-seated beliefs and orientations. From this perspective, generalized trust among immigrants would be grounded in early socialization experiences that pre-date migration. In the second case, the strength of generalized trust is viewed as dependent on particular social relations and experiences. Accordingly, generalized trust among immigrants would be grounded in their particular conditions in the host society, and would thus reflect their economic and social experiences in Canada. Of course, these two approaches are not mutually exclusive: generalized trust could be partly grounded in both pre-migration and post-migration experiences. The rest of this study assesses the relevance of these two approaches for understanding generalized trust among recent



immigrants in Canada.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA

The analysis relies on the 2000 and 2006 Canadian sections of *World Value Survey* (WVS) (Nevitte 2000a, 2006a) as well as the 2000 and 2006 *New Immigrant Survey* (NIS) (Nevitte 2000b, 2006b) conducted as part of the Canadian component of the WVS.¹ The WVS sample contains 1,766 face-to-face interviews with members of the Canadian-born population, and the NIS sample is comprised of 1058 immigrants who have lived in Canada for ten years or less.² The interviews for the NIS were conducted in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, three immigrant-rich Canadian cities. The NIS survey's focus on recent immigrants (i.e. those in Canada for up to ten years) limits our ability to generalize about all immigrants' orientations in Canada, but this data provides a unique opportunity to shed some light on the ways in which recent immigrants relate to Canada in terms of generalized trust.

In order to verify the impact of pre-migration experiences on newcomers' levels of generalized trust, immigrants are grouped in three categories based on the level of generalized trust that prevails in their country of origin. The generalized trust scores for immigrants' country of origin were obtained from the earlier waves of the *World Values Survey* using the following question: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" The sample of immigrants was divided in order to obtain three categories of broadly equal sample size based on the proportion of the population in the country of origin who expressed the opinion that "most people can be trusted": low generalized trust (0-25%), moderate generalized trust (25.1-40%), and high generalized trust (more than 40%). Overall, we were able to obtain the generalized trust scores in the country of origin for 856 immigrants in the NIS sample.

For the investigations, we rely on the standard survey question used over the last decades in most studies on generalized trust. Respondents to the WVS and NIS were asked: "Generally

¹ For more information about the *World Values Surveys*, please visit: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>

² We have excluded from the analyses 393 immigrants from the WVS. These include a small number of immigrants who have also been in Canada for ten years or less. We excluded these immigrant respondents because the WVS questionnaire did not allow us to identify their specific country of origin.

speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" This indicator has two advantages. First, it is the same question as that asked in immigrants' country of origin. This is critical to be able to verify for the correlation between immigrants' level of generalized trust and that in the country of origin. Second, this indicator measures generalized trust from a very general perspective. No specific people are mentioned in the question.

GENERALIZED TRUST AMONG RECENT IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA

The place to start is by comparing levels of generalized trust among recent immigrants and the rest of the Canadian population. Data presented in Table 1 indicates a clear difference in levels of generalized trust between recent immigrants and the Canadian-born population. Interestingly, recent immigrants appear more trustful than the Canadian-born population. While about 52% of recent immigrants indicate that "most people can be trusted", this proportion is only 39% among the Canadian-born population.³ At first sight, this might come as a surprise considering that immigrants are by definition functioning in a new society in which they likely know relatively few people.

TABLE 1. GENERALIZED TRUST AMONG RECENT IMMIGRANTS AND THE CANADIAN-BORN POPULATION

	CANADIAN-BORN POPULATION	RECENT IMMIGRANTS			
		ALL	HIGH TRUST COUNTRIES	MODERATE TRUST COUNTRIES	LOW TRUST COUNTRIES
% expressing the view that "most people can be trusted"	39% (3332)	52% (856)	65% (333)	49% (240)	39% (283)

Source 2000 and 2006 WVS and NIS

As indicated by Delhy and Newton (2005) and Inglehart (1997), levels of generalized trust vary significantly across countries. It is possible that immigrants in our sample come largely

³ This proportion is for the entire Canadian-born population. Additional analyses (not presented here, but available from the authors upon request) indicate that the results are not significantly different when we limit the analyses to the Canadian-born population living in cities with more than 500,000 people in Quebec, Ontario, and British-Columbia. This holds for the entire set of analyses presented in this study.



from countries with higher levels of generalized trust and have transposed this generalized trust to the Canadian society; this would explain the higher level of trust among recent immigrants. The question is: Are immigrants from countries with higher levels of generalized trust more trustful than the Canadian-born population and other immigrants? Table 1 provides some support for that interpretation. The data suggests that immigrants' levels of generalized trust are partly related to levels of generalized trust in the countries from which they come. Although approximately 65% of immigrants from countries with high aggregate levels of generalized trust express the view that "most people can be trusted", that proportion drops to 49% among immigrants from countries with moderate aggregate levels of generalized trust, and to only 39% among those from countries with low aggregate levels of generalized trust. These initial findings are quite important as they suggest that immigrants' levels of generalized trust may indeed be grounded in pre-migration socialization experiences.

However, it turns out this pre-migration influence is unlikely to account for immigrants' higher levels of generalized trust than the rest of the population. Indeed, although Canada classifies as a country with a "high" aggregate level of generalized trust, its score (39%) is significantly lower than the level of generalized trust observed among immigrants in the "high" generalized trust category (65%).⁴ Once we take into account immigrants' country of origin, the gap between the Canadian-born population and immigrants is actually larger than originally observed. Moreover, the evidence in Table 1 also suggests that there is something about immigrants that distinguishes them from the populations of their countries of origin. While the ceiling is 25% for our "low" aggregate trust category, 39% of immigrants from those countries expressed the view that most people could be trusted. Similarly, while the ceiling is 40% for our "medium" aggregate trust category, 49% of immigrants from those countries expressed the view that most people could be trusted. Thus immigrants also appear to be more trusting than other people in their countries of origin.

The socio-economic profile of immigrants could account for their higher levels of generalized trust than the Canadian-born population. More specifically, we know that the recent immigrant population tends to be more educated than the rest of the Canadian population, in

⁴ This proportion (39%) is for the Canadian-born population only. For the entire Canadian population (including immigrants), the proportion is 42%, which makes Canada a 'high social trust' country by the standards set in this study.

part because of the immigration point system that favours educated applicants. In our sample, a much larger proportion of recent immigrants possess university degrees than other Canadians (62% versus 16%, respectively). This variation appears to account for the gap in generalized trust between recent immigrants and the Canadian-born population. The analysis presented in Table 2 examines whether education and other socio-economic variables (age, unemployment status, financial satisfaction, sex, visible minority status, and province of residence) can explain the gap in generalized trust between recent immigrants and the Canadian-born population. The analysis proceeds in three steps. Model 1 (see Table 1), only the “country of origin” variable is included. In Model 2 (see Table 1), we include all of the socio-economic variables mentioned above, except for education. Finally, in Model 3 (see Table 1), we include a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent has completed some university education. The purpose of the analysis is to verify whether including these socio-economic variables can explain the observed gap in generalized trust between recent immigrants and the Canadian-born population.

TABLE 2. EXPLAINING THE GAP IN GENERALIZED TRUST BETWEEN RECENT IMMIGRANTS AND CANADIAN-BORN POPULATION

	MODEL 1			MODEL 2			MODEL 3		
	B	SE		B	SE		B	SE	
Country of origin (ref. Canada)									
Low Trust	-.03	.13		.21	.14		-.29	.13	*
Moderate Trust	.39	.14	**	.57	.15	***	.03	.16	
High Trust	.99	.12	***	1.28	.16	***	.75	.17	***
Age				.00	.00		.00	.00	
Female				-.09	.07		-.06	.07	
Unemployed				-.33	.11	**	-.25	.12	*
Financial satisfaction				.61	.13	***	.55	.14	***
Visible minority				-.40	.14	**	-.33	.14	*
Province of residence (ref. QC)									
Ontario				.09	.08		.06	.08	
BC				.18	.10		.25	.11	*
University Education							.95	.08	***
2006 Interview				.18	.07	**	.15	.07	*
Constant	-.43	.04	***	-.89	.14	***	-1.04	.14	***
Pseudo R-square		1.4%			2.5%			4.9%	
N		4096			4096			4096	

Entries report Binary logit estimates. Source: 2000 and 2006 WVS and NIS

***: p<.001; **: p<.01; *: p<.05



The analysis in Model 1 corroborates the descriptive findings; the difference in levels of generalized trust between immigrants from countries with high and moderate generalized trust and the Canadian-born population is statistically significant. Once we control for all socio-economic variables in Model 2 (except for education), the same general pattern is maintained. However, when education is included in the model, the overall predicted level of generalized trust among all three groups of immigrants decreases significantly. Controlling for education level, the predicted proportion of immigrants who express the view that “most people can be trusted” drops from 65% to 59% among immigrants from “high” trust countries, from 49% to 41% for immigrants from “moderate” trust countries, and from 39% to 34% for immigrants from “low” trust countries; the predicted proportion for the Canadian-born population is 41%. As a result, immigrants from “low” trust countries now appear less trusting than the Canadian-born population and there is no longer any significant difference between immigrants from “moderately” trusting countries and the Canadian-born population.

Trust in Canadians among Recent Immigrants in Canada

The previous section has shown that recent immigrants exhibit relatively high levels of generalized trust and that at least some of that trust appears grounded in pre-migration experiences. The survey indicator we have used thus far, however, is decontextualized. That question is about trust in people in general, not trust in a particular group of people. This offers some advantages, but it does not tell us much about the trust directed specifically at Canadians, the population in the society. After all, when investigating immigrants’ levels of trust, it might be more important to investigate their levels of trust in relation to the specific situation in Canada rather than trust in people in general.

Scholars studying questions of trust do make the distinction between generalized trust and particularized trust (Nannestad 2008; Luo 2005). This distinction usually presupposes, however, that under generalized trust, individuals trust people they do not know personally, whereas under particularized trust, individuals trust specific people that they do know and with whom they have had previous interactions. When studying the general Canadian population, trust in



Canadians is not a suitable measure of particularized trust, as it refers to a group of people that Canadians do not all know personally. The same is true for recent immigrants. However, for recent immigrants, trust in Canadians arguably takes on a much more precise meaning. Whereas trust in Canadians or trust in people, likely refers to broadly the same group of people for the Canadian-born population (i.e. those with whom Canadians will have had most of their interactions for most of their lives), for recent immigrants it represents a new encounter, a new group of people that they might not consider as “people in general” and that they might evaluate more specifically in relation to their experience in Canada. Thus, although not fitting perfectly under the definition of “particularized trust”, trust in Canadians is “somewhat” particularized for recent immigrants. According to such a rationale, we could expect post-migration experiences to correlate more strongly with recent immigrants’ levels of trust in Canadians than with the standard measure of generalized trust.

Respondents to the 2006 WVS and NIS were asked: “I’d like to ask you how much you trust people from various groups (Canadian people in general). Could you tell me for each whether you trust people from this group completely, somewhat, not very much or not at all?”⁵ The drawback of this question is that we have no equivalent measure in the immigrants’ country of origin. Nevertheless, the advantage is that it might reveal different correlates, especially for those that are specific to immigrants’ experiences in Canada, such as social and economic integration. There is only modest variation in the responses to this question. Accordingly, we made the decision to group the responses: those who say they trust Canadians “completely” or “somewhat” (1) and those who say they trust Canadians “not very much” or “not at all” (0).⁶

The data reported in Table 3 indicate that while there was a significant difference in levels of generalized trust between recent immigrants and the Canadian-born population, there is no difference between the two groups when it comes to trust in Canadians. A large and equal proportion of recent immigrants and other Canadians (85%) report that they trust Canadians “somewhat” or “completely.” Table 3 further indicates that coming from a country with low,

⁵ The wording of the question was different in 2000; we therefore do not use it.

⁶ For the analyses that follow, we analyzed other transformations of the variable, but they resulted in broadly similar conclusions as those reached using the current version. Results not presented.



moderate or high aggregate levels of generalized trust has little effect on the propensity to trust Canadians. While 87% of immigrants from countries with a high aggregate levels of generalized trust express trust in Canadians, that proportion is 86% among those from countries with moderate aggregate levels of generalized trust and 82% among those from countries with low aggregate levels of generalized trust. In sharp contrast with the generalized trust question examined in Table 1, trust in other Canadians does not appear to correlate with pre-migration experiences.⁷

TABLE 3. TRUST IN CANADIANS AMONG RECENT IMMIGRANTS AND THE CANADIAN-BORN POPULATION

	Canadian-born population	Recent immigrants			
		All	High trust countries	Moderate trust countries	Low trust countries
% expressing they trust Canadians “completely” or “somewhat”	85% (1734)	85% (415)	87% (162)	86% (118)	82% (135)

Source 2006 WVS and NIS

PRE- AND POST-MIGRATION EXPERIENCES AND TRUST AMONG RECENT IMMIGRANTS

The analyses so far suggest that immigrants’ levels of generalized trust is partly grounded in pre-migration experiences, but that this is not the case when it comes to their trust in Canadians. Our analyses, however, have not yet investigated the impact of specific experiences in Canada. In order to do so, we focus our analyses solely on recent immigrants. As presented above, we expect that immigrants’ social and economic experiences in the host society structure their levels of generalized trust and their trust in Canadians. Our social experience indicators include measures of whether immigrants believe they have been treated worse than other Canadians, either by the Canadian government or by Canadians in general. Moreover, we include a variable indicating whether immigrants are members of a visible minority group, given that this group is generally more likely to experience discrimination. Our economic experience indicators include measures of “unemployment” and “change in economic situation with migration.” Considering that the question on trust in Canadians is more specific to Canada, we expect the social and economic experiences in the host society to be more strongly correlated to trust in Canadians than to gener-

⁷ No gap between groups was present. Thus, we did not proceed with further analysis. Also, no differences emerge when we control for the socio-economic situations of immigrants and the Canadian-born population. Results not presented.



alized trust.

In addition to the variables measuring the social and economic experiences of immigrants in Canada, we also include a variable measuring whether immigrants have acquired Canadian citizenship, and a variable measuring length of residence. If the status of being an “outsider” to the group (Canada) can indeed be associated to lower trust, we might expect that acquiring citizenship of the host society could serve as an important symbolic experience in strengthening the bonding and relationship with other fellow citizens; accordingly, we expect to observe greater levels of trust among immigrants who have acquired Canadian citizenship, especially with regards to trust in Canadians. We do not have clear expectations with regards to length of residence, however. One could intuitively think that trust would grow stronger with length of residence as immigrants become more familiar with the norms of the host society. Conversely, however, it is possible to imagine that with length of residence comes a sense of disillusionment with the host society, and therefore length of residence could be negatively correlated with trust.

We also include a few variables to measure the effect of pre-migration experiences. First, we include the variables indicating whether immigrants come from a country with a low, moderate, or high level of generalized trust. Second, we include a variable that measures immigrants’ satisfaction with their economic situation prior to migration. If immigrants’ level of generalized trust can be grounded into the general generalized trust environment in which they were socialized, it is also possible that it would be grounded into the economic situation they experienced earlier in life. Third, in the model for trust in Canadians, we include the respondent’s individual generalized trust score. This variable will further allow us to investigate the possibility that immigrants’ trust in Canadians is grounded in experiences beyond those that take place in Canada. Finally, our analyses also include basic socio-economic determinants such as age, sex, education, and province of residence.⁸ Our analyses here are limited to recent immigrants in the 2006 NIS. Most of the indicators used for the analyses are not available in the 2000 NIS. Several important findings can be observed in Table 4.

⁸ We do not include income. Non-responses to this question results in a loss of more than 10% of our sample. Given that the sample is already limited in size, such loss is quite important. Moreover, given that we already include the other economic variables, we believe we cover the economic experiences of immigrants in an appropriate manner.



TABLE 4. CORRELATES OF GENERALIZED TRUST AND TRUST IN CANADIANS AMONG RECENT IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA

	GENERALIZED TRUST			TRUST IN CANADIANS		
	B	SE		B	SE	
Pre-migration experiences						
Respondent's level of generalized trust	---	---		1.19	.34	***
Country of origin (ref. high trust)						
Low Trust	-1.44	.30	***	.24	.41	
Moderate Trust	-.77	.29	**	.11	.42	
Economic situation in country of origin	1.96	.66	**	.26	.92	
Post-migration Canadian experiences						
Treated worse by other Canadians	-.40	.34		.63	.48	
Treated worse by government	-.30	.40		-1.29	.48	**
Visible minority member	-.46	.34		-.38	.41	
Unemployed	-.10	.32		.51	.46	
Change in economic situation with migration	1.41	.53	**	.90	.71	
Canadian citizen	-.08	.33		1.62	.49	**
Length of residence (0-10)	.01	.07		-.22	.10	*
Socio-economic profile						
University education	.43	.27		.11	.38	
Age	.03	.01		.03	.02	
Female	-.06	.23		.24	.31	
Ontario	-.62	.31	*	-.05	.39	
British Columbia	-.58	.31		1.07	.48	*
Constant	-.82	.68		.05	.96	
Pseudo R-square		10.4%			15.4%	
N		388			384	

Entries report Binary logit estimates. Source: 2006 WVS and NIS

***: $p < .001$; **: $p < .01$; *: $p < .05$

The analyses corroborate the finding that immigrants' levels of generalized trust in Canada correlate with those that prevail in the country of origin. Our predicted probabilities derived from the model indicate that while 37% and 53% of immigrants from countries with low or moderate levels of generalized trust express the view that "most people can be trusted", that proportion is 71% among immigrants from countries with high levels of generalized trust. No such finding is observed for trust in Canadians, as the analyses above suggested. However, we do see that immigrants with greater generalized trust are also more likely to express greater trust



in Canadians. Hence, while 93% of immigrants who express the view that “most people can be trusted” also appear to trust Canadians, this proportion is only 80% among immigrants who express the view that “you can’t be too careful when dealing with people.” This is another piece of evidence to suggest that immigrants’ trust in Canada is partly grounded in considerations that go beyond their experiences in Canada. Finally, we observe a significant effect for immigrants’ pre-migration personal economic condition. While 71% of immigrants who report full satisfaction with their economic situation in the country of origin express the view that “most people can be trusted”, that proportion is only 25% among immigrants who were completely dissatisfied with their economic situation in the country of origin.

As predicted, the Canadian experience in shaping immigrants’ levels of generalized trust varies greatly depending on whether we talk about generalized trust or specific trust in Canadians. There is little evidence to suggest immigrants’ levels of generalized trust are affected by their experiences in Canada. Whether or not immigrants’ report being treated worse than other Canadians—either by the government or by the Canadian people in general—is unrelated to their levels of general generalized trust. By the same token, whether or not they are members of a visible minority group has no discernible impact. Moreover, immigrants’ level of generalized trust does not appear to vary with length of residence, and acquiring citizenship does not appear to be associated with higher levels of generalized trust. The only evidence pointing to the influence of the Canadian experience relates to economic satisfaction: Immigrants who experience an improvement in their economic situation with migration appear more likely than other immigrants to express the view that “most people can be trusted.”

The situation is somewhat different when it comes to the correlates of trust in Canadians. The social experience appears important to make sense of immigrants’ levels of trust in Canadians. While only 71% of immigrants who report being treated worse than other Canadians by the government express trust in Canadians, this proportion is significantly higher among immigrants who do not report mistreatments (90%). Mistreatment by other Canadians and being a visible minority member does not appear to correlate with immigrants’ levels of trust in Canadians, however. The same holds for the economic experience.



Acquiring Canadian citizenship and length of residence do appear to be significantly related with immigrants' trust in Canadians. Immigrants who have acquired Canadian citizenship are substantively more likely to express trust in Canadians than immigrants who have not acquired citizenship, a difference of fifteen points (95% vs. 80%). The acquisition of citizenship does appear a key moment that helps boost immigrants' trust in their fellow Canadian citizens.

Interestingly, however, the evidence also points to an eroding trend in trust in Canadians among immigrants. While our data does not allow forecasting any long-term trend in this regard because our sample is limited to immigrants in Canada for a maximum of ten years, the evidence nevertheless indicates a decline in trust during the first decade in the country. The model predicts that 94% of immigrants will express a great amount of trust in Canadians during their first year in the country, and that this trust erodes by about 2.6% per year to end at 68% after ten years, a level substantially lower than among the rest of the population.

These findings thus highlight two important patterns. First, pre-migration experiences matter significantly for immigrants' levels of generalized trust. Second, post-migration experiences (such as mistreatment by the government, citizenship acquisition, and length of residence) matter significantly for immigrants' level of trust in Canadians. Importantly, however, there also seems to be a transposition of immigrants' generalized trust onto their trust in Canadians.

CONCLUSION

Generalized trust is essential in developing and maintaining common values and goals in Canada and other Western democracies (Putnam 1993; Almond and Verba 1963). In the case of immigrants, we might argue, generalized trust is even more important and likely plays a critical role in facilitating immigrants' integration to the host society. This study shows that there is no deficit of generalized trust among recent immigrants in Canada. Quite the contrary, recent immigrants' higher level of education actually appears to provide them with a larger stock of generalized trust than the remaining population. This suggests that Canada's immigration policy, which favours the selection of well-educated immigrants, plays an important role in determining aggregate levels of trust among new immigrants.



Our investigation into the expression and roots of recent immigrants' generalized trust, however, reveals a complex set of relationships. Scholars of generalized trust (see Nannestad 2008; Stolle 2002) have argued that generalized trust can either be thought as grounded in socialization experiences or institutional structure. Both perspectives are helpful for understanding trust dynamics among recent immigrants in Canada. Together, they provide a more complete portrait of immigrants' trust dynamics in their host society.

Recent immigrants' generalized trust partly reflects a broad orientation toward others, an orientation which structures their relationships with people, irrespective of who those people are. Our investigation highlights the pre-migration influences shaping this generalized form of trust among newcomers. Newcomers thus appear to have developed levels of generalized trust that reflect the prevailing norms in the countries from which they come. An early-life socialization mechanism is likely at work. Moreover, our investigation reveals that this generalized trust is also positively related to immigrants' levels of economic satisfaction in their countries of origin. Recent immigrants thus appear to arrive in Canada with relatively rich or poor stocks of generalized trust. And quite importantly, this stock of generalized trust tends to endure in Canada, despite the starkly different post-migration conditions many immigrants experience in Canada. Such a conclusion is consistent with prior research that emphasizes the enduring influence of pre-migration experiences on newcomers' political orientations in the host society (Bilodeau 2014; Bilodeau, McAllister and Kanji 2010; Bilodeau 2008; Bueker 2005).

Nevertheless, this does not mean that post-migration experiences do not matter. Post-migration experiences in Canada play an important role in structuring recent immigrants' levels of trust. The impact of these post-migration experiences, however, relates to recent immigrants' "specific" trust in Canadians. While recent immigrants hold generalized trust orientations, they also exhibit specific levels of trust in Canadians, and generalized trust only partly shapes their trust in Canadians.

When studying the general Canadian population, trust in Canadians may not be very different from generalized trust, as it refers to a group of people with whom Canadians will have had



most of their interactions for most of their lives. For recent immigrants, however, trust in Canadians arguably takes on a much more precise meaning. Consistent with such an interpretation, we observe that post-migration experiences correlate significantly with recent immigrants' levels of trust in Canadians. Immigrants who feel they have been mistreated by the Canadian government express lower levels of trust in Canadians than other immigrants. Moreover, it appears that the act of acquiring Canadian citizenship plays a key role in boosting recent immigrants' trust in Canadians. Such an event appears to serve as a critical symbolic moment in strengthening the relationship between immigrants and the rest of the community, at least from the perception of immigrants.

Finally, and quite worrisomely, the findings suggest that trust in Canadians declines substantially during the first decade in the country (even after controlling for many potentially confounding factors). This might indicate that some immigrant experiences not considered in our study weaken newcomers' trust in other Canadians. Moreover, it suggests that the trust in Canadians is relatively fragile, especially when compared to immigrants' generalized trust. And perhaps most importantly, it reinforces the significance of the stock of generalized trust that immigrants carry with them from the country of origin. If trust in Canadians is likely to weaken easily, this pre-migration generalized trust is likely to endure (at least during the first ten years in the host society). Of course, using cross-sectional data we cannot be certain that trust in Canadians declines with length of residence. An alternative possibility is that generalized trust is lower among more recent immigrants because of some sort of cohort effect, possibly because of the severe recession in the early 1990s, or because of other unknown social, economic, or political factors. Unfortunately, we cannot determine with any certainty which of these two interpretations best accounts for the observed pattern.

Our conclusions have important policy implications. First, it suggests that immigrants who arrive with a rich stock of generalized trust are to some extent inoculated against potentially negative experiences in the host society. Should they experience negative treatment, these immigrants are quite likely to maintain a positive orientation toward people in general. These immigrants may well show greater resilience in the face of a more difficult integration experience. For



those immigrants who arrive with a poor stock of generalized trust, however, the situation is different. These newcomers, our study suggests, begin the integration process at a disadvantage, carrying the weight of distrust in people, which they acquired prior to migration. This disadvantaged start might make some newcomers more vulnerable and thus might compromise their prospects for integration. Indeed, our study shows that immigrants' stock of generalized trust is partly transposed on their trust in Canadians.

As for recent immigrants' specific trust in Canadians, although it is partly grounded in immigrants' individual orientations toward people in general, it is also grounded in what happens to immigrants in Canada. The Canadian government and, arguably, Canadian society, have a role to play in fostering and nurturing the specific trust relationship that immigrants entertain with Canadians. Once again, fighting discrimination appears to be a profitable strategy from this perspective. Moreover, encouraging naturalization and supporting immigrants in the naturalization process (Bloemraad 2006), is also a central element in ensuring a healthy trust relation among all Canadians, old and new. A very important unanswered question, however, is which type of trust (generalized trust or trust in Canadians) is most important for recent immigrants' orientations and general integration into Canadian society? This is a critical question that shall be answered in the context of another study.



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APPENDIX: CONSTRUCTION OF VARIABLES

Generalized trust:	1=Most people can be trusted 0=Can't be too careful when dealing with people
Trust in Canadians	1=Somewhat or fully trust Canadian people in general 0=Do not trust very much or do not trust Canadians at all
Generalized trust in the country of origin	Based on % in country of origin expressing the view "most people can be trusted" – WVS data. High trust countries: more than 40% of the population Moderate trust countries: between 25% and 40% of the population Low trust countries: up to 25% of the population
Economic situation in country of origin	0 to 10 scale indicating immigrants' self-assessment of their economic situation in the country of origin, where 0 means completely dissatisfied and 10 means completely satisfied.
Treated worse by other Canadians	1=Immigrants evaluate having been treated worse than other Canadians by Canadians. 0=Immigrants evaluate having been treated better or similarly as other Canadians.
Treated worse by government	1=Immigrants evaluate having been treated worse than other Canadians by the government of Canada. 0=Immigrants evaluate having been treated better or similarly as other Canadians.
Visible minority member	1=member of a visible minority group, as defined by Statistics Canada 0=not a member of a visible minority group
Unemployed	1=respondent is unemployed 0=respondent is not unemployed
Change in economic situation with migration	Scale from -1 to 1 indicating the (self-assessed) change in immigrants' economic situation with migration, where -1 indicates a drastic deterioration and 1 means a drastic improvement.
Canadian citizen	1=respondent is a Canadian citizen 0=respondent is not a Canadian citizen
Length of residence	Length of residence in Canada in years (1 to 10)
University Education	1=respondent has completed university education 0=respondent has not completed university education
Age	Age in years
Female	1=respondent is a female 0=respondent is a male