

Immigrant Acculturation in a Complex National and International Climate

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Introduction

Two important trends are very apparent in Canada and in many other major industrialised societies. First, natural population increase has fallen below replacement levels. In Canada, the total fertility rate dropped to just below 1.5 according to the data from the 2001 Canadian Census. Therefore, immigration has become the major component of real population growth. The most recent population estimates in Canada show that the average annual population increase due to net international migration was almost 157,000 between 1997 and 2002, compared to under 120,000 due to net natural population growth during the same period. The impact of this substantial immigration is clearly evident in many of Canada's major cities. The proportion of foreign born in 2001 was 43.7% in Toronto, 37.5% in Vancouver and 18.4% (the national average) in Montreal.

The dramatic increase in the proportion of immigrants leads directly to the second trend. The ethno-cultural (and social) character of immigrants is changing in a very fundamental way. Over 90% of the immigrants who arrived in Canada before 1961 declared European origins. In fact, many were from Western and Northern Europe (including the British Isles). In contrast, almost 60% of the immigrants who arrived in Canada between 1991 and 2001 declared Asian or Middle Eastern origins. The result is a dramatic change in the ethnic composition of Canadian society.

How immigrants adapt when they arrive in a host society is a function of many factors, not the least of which are the degree to which the receiving society is open to immigration and the ethno-cultural, social and human capital characteristics of the migrants. Furthermore, exogenous events such as international conflicts and crises and general national and international economic conditions have an impact on the attitudes of the receiving society and on the programs that are designed to help immigrants adapt (or acculturate) once they arrive.

The question of immigration is often studied from the perspective of the impact of immigrants on the receiving society. In most of these works the impact is measured either in demographic (see Beaujot and Kerr, 2004; Henripin, 2003; Trovato, 2003) or economic terms (see DeVoretz, 1995; Esses et al, 1999). Immigration is also studied from the perspective of the migrant (see Li, 1998; Perin, 1990; Tulchinsky, 1994). This study adopts the perspective of the immigrant.

A variety of “push factors” influence emigration. They range from political strife, persecution, economic factors or social factors such as family reunification. While the push factors may vary, there are common factors that draw immigrants to highly developed countries such as Canada. Foremost among these factors is the opportunity to take advantage of acquired human capital and skills (Li, 2003: 4). It is reasonable to conclude from this that immigrants seek to become self-sufficient once they establish themselves in their chosen country of destination. Taking this argument one step further, one may assume that finding employment leads to self-sufficiency.

The primary research questions being addressed in this study are: (1) How do the socio-cultural and human capital characteristics of the immigrants affect the outcome of

acculturation when measured by the length of time it takes to obtain a first job? and (2) How do the effects vary over time, especially when juxtaposed with an international event like the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001? That kind of event might change the way immigrants are perceived in the receiving society as well as the state of the economy and the opportunities in the labour market.

A brief description of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada – the primary data source that supports the analysis – is offered in the next section. Readers are encouraged to read the descriptive documentation on these data (referred to in the References) to gain an appreciation of the analytical potential they offer. The authors continue with a descriptive profile of the population that is analysed in this study. This is followed with a brief discussion of the methods (model) used to perform the analysis. A description of the full model, including the dependent variable, the covariates and the time-varying covariates is included in the discussion of the methods. The next two sections present the analytical results and a discussion of their implications. The concluding section of this article offers a glimpse at the future directions for the research the authors are planning on this topic.

The Data

The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) is the primary source of data for the analysis presented in this paper. This survey follows a sample of the cohort of immigrants who arrived in Canada between October 1, 2000 and September 30, 2001. The intent of the survey is to study how immigrants adapt to life in Canada and to provide information on the factors that either facilitate or act as barriers to immigrant acculturation (Statistics Canada 2003).

The analyses in this paper are based on data collected from the first interview of a sample of immigrants from the cohort (identified above). The interviews were conducted 6 months after the immigrants arrived in Canada – i.e. between April 2001 and March 2002. This cohort of immigrants will be interviewed again 2 years and 4 years after their arrival in Canada to complete the longitudinal sample for waves 2 and 3 of the survey. More information about the design of the survey may be found in the “Microdata User Guide: Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, Wave 1” (Statistics Canada 2003).

Data are collected on topics ranging from socio-demographic characteristics to employment and educational history. The survey also includes data on the immigrant’s perceptions of settlement in Canada. The analysis presented in this paper focuses on a few key variables: age, sex, years of schooling, ethnic origin, admission category, province of residence, the date of arrival, the date of the interview, the date on which the immigrant obtained his or her first job and the impact of September 11, 2001 as an influential event on the settlement of immigrants.

The survey includes relatively detailed data on the ethnic origins of the immigrants (18 categories). For example, European origins are classified into seven groups based on geographic considerations. The data also include a category for Aboriginal origins. These

18 categories were collapsed to the 10 ethnic origins listed in Table 1 for the purposes of the analyses performed in this study.

Immigrants to Canada – the study population

Immigration to Canada was predominantly from European sources until the early to mid 1970s. We observed a distinct shift to immigration from Asia, the Caribbean, Latin, Central and South America and the Middle East. This shift is evident in the distribution of immigrants by ethnic origin presented in the following table.

Table 1: Univariate statistics for the ethnic groups, LSIC 2003

Ethnic Group	Weighted Count	Median Age	Mean years of schooling	Male/Female Ratio
British Isles	2,290	38	14.34	1.02
French	1,770	31	15.59	1.10
Other European	22,955	34	14.93	1.01
Arab	12,164	32	15.84	1.21
West Asian	8,479	31	15.70	1.00
South Asian	40,345	32	17.99	0.99
East/Southeast Asian	56,718	34	14.88	0.95
African	6,366	31	14.57	1.18
Caribbean, Latin, Central and South American	8,015	32	14.80	0.74
Other	2,707	34	15.10	0.97
<i>Total Canada</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>12.8</i>	<i>0.96</i>

The age of the immigrants is a reasonable proxy for the age at immigration since the interview occurred 6 months after arrival to Canada. We see from these data that immigrants declaring British origins were among the oldest to come to Canada (median age = 38) and those who declared French, West Asian and African origins were the youngest (median age = 31). If age alone is considered, one would expect that the younger immigrants will have an easier time finding employment as far as adaptability is concerned. However, age is also an indicator of the potential work experience. People who are older generally have greater opportunity to acquire work experience. Because of those two opposite effects of age, it will be included in the models in a quadratic form.

The data in Table 1 show that the immigrants of South Asian origin were the best educated. In theory, this should translate into better labour market outcomes. It is important to note that we consider labour market outcomes as a binary state in this study – either the individual has a job or he or she does not. No attempt is made at this stage of the analysis to assess how closely the job concords with the human capital characteristics of the immigrants. In fact, we know that immigrants experience difficulty in finding employment in their chosen field. According to a recent study by Galarneau and Morissette (2004: 9) immigrants are often underemployed with respect to their academic qualifications. One quarter of immigrant men and 38% of immigrant women with university education were employed in jobs requiring secondary education or less in 2001 (Galarneau and Morissette, 2004: 9). Furthermore, they found significant differences when considering the ethnic origins of the immigrants. About 37% of immigrant men

from South Asia with university qualifications were employed in jobs requiring high-school or less. The comparable figure for those of Southeast Asian origins was 48% (Galarneau and Morissette, 2004: 9).

Immigrants of African origin were, on average, among the least educated in the study population with slightly more than 14 years of schooling. This translates to slightly more than secondary education. It is not clear at this point whether lower levels of education translate into lower expectations with respect to the quality of the job being sought, hence into higher chances of finding employment.

It is noteworthy that all immigrants have higher mean years of schooling than the total Canadian population. This fact is easily explained when the selection criteria for immigrants are taken into account. Education is an important component of the selection criteria for immigrants wishing to immigrate to Canada (CIC, 2003). Therefore, there is a degree of selection bias in these statistics.

The proportion of men to women is another noteworthy feature of the immigrant population. More men than women of Arab and African origins immigrated to Canada during the period covered by the survey. This is an important observation since it is generally the case that more men than women from these ethnic groups will enter the labour market as the primary income earner for the family. Hence, one would expect to see some impact on the time to obtain the first job.

The Model

Immigrant acculturation is a complex process that includes social, cultural and economic dimensions (Goldmann, 2000: 8). Clearly, it is in the interests of the immigrants to become contributing and self-sufficient members of the receiving society. It is also in the interests of the receiving society that the process of immigrant acculturation results in an outcome that transforms them into contributing members of society. In the Canadian context “... the goal of integration is to encourage newcomers to be fully engaged in the economic, social, political and cultural life of Canada”¹ (Dorais, 2002: 4). Economic independence and self-sufficiency would certainly contribute greatly to achieving the goal referred to by Dorais. Many studies have focused on income as a measure of the degree to which immigrants achieve economic self-sufficiency. However, the length of time required for an immigrant to acquire his or her first paid employment can also be considered a measure of the degree to which the individual achieves economic self-sufficiency² (see Piché, Renaud and Gingras, 2002). The time it takes for an immigrant to become employed (regardless of the nature of employment) is the dependent variable in the analyses presented below.

¹ While Dorais uses the term integration, it can be interpreted as equivalent to acculturation in the context of the analysis presented in this paper.

² It may be argued that the quality of the job must also be taken into account when considering “time to first employment” as a measure of successful economic acculturation. The authors acknowledge this point and will consider some measure of concordance between the immigrant’s qualifications and the nature of the job in subsequent analyses.

Demographic factors such as age and sex have a direct bearing on how immigrants adapt and the degree to which they are successful in obtaining employment. The age of the respondent at the time of the survey is a reasonable proxy for the age at immigration since the data were collected within 6 months of arrival in Canada. While it is not an exact measure, it can be assumed that immigrants who arrived later in life (e.g. while in their 40s or 50s) had more experience in their respective professions than those who were younger at immigration. Hence, the human capital for the older immigrants would generally be better developed. Age also tends to be associated with adaptability – younger immigrants are assumed to be more adaptable.

The sex of the individual must be considered when analysing labour market outcomes. It has been shown in a number of studies that immigrant women experience different acculturation outcomes from their male counterparts (see Amott and Matthaei, 1991; Boyd, 1999; Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1995). Cultural values often dictate the role that women play in the family and the role that they may play in the labour market.

The relationship between the individual's human capital characteristics and his or her labour market outcomes is well established (Heisz et al, 2002). Two components of human capital are particularly important – years of experience and educational/professional qualifications. It has been argued above that the age of the immigrant may serve as a simple proxy for experience. Education, on the other hand, encompasses a range of inter-related variables such as highest degree obtained, major field of study, number of years of schooling and where the education is acquired (i.e. country and institution in which the education is acquired). It can be shown that these variables are highly correlated. Furthermore, studies have also drawn a relationship between the recognition of professional/educational qualifications and immigrant earnings (Ayedemir and Skuterud, 2004; Ferrer and Riddell, 2003; Green and Worswick, 2002). The authors have chosen to consider the number of years of schooling as a relatively unbiased measure of the educational qualifications of the immigrant since it is a purely empirical and void of most qualitative biases introduced by country of origin. It also allows for the possibility that an immigrant may be continuing his or her studies in Canada (this is potentially true for the younger immigrants).

Numerous studies have shown that an individual's ethnic and cultural origin has a direct bearing on labour market outcomes, specifically with respect to income and earnings (see Bassaravajappa and Jones, 1999; deVoretz, 1995; Hum and Simpson, 1998; Pendakur and Pendakur, 1998; Renaud, Piché et Godin, 2003). It is reasonable to assume that a similar relationship exists between ethnic origin and access to employment – a fact that will be demonstrated in this study. The precise ethnic classification used in the model is described earlier in this paper.

It is a well established fact that most immigrants to Canada tend to settle in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver (referred to as the MTV effect). Recent Census data also indicate that a substantial proportion of immigrants are beginning to choose either Calgary or Edmonton as their eventual place of settlement. While many factors serve to attract immigrants to a particular part of the country, labour market opportunities tend to rank

very highly. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the province of residence in Canada may lead to different opportunities on the labour market. We will compare the four major destinations (Ontario, Quebec, British-Columbia and Alberta) to the rest of Canada in the analytical models for this study.

Immigration admission categories, as defined in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (2001) may also have an impact on settlement. Refugees selected abroad cannot necessarily prepare their migration. Their decisions on where to settle and on how to enter the labour market are often driven by external factors such as local (in Canada) economic, social and political conditions. It is likely that this will have an impact on the time required for them to incorporate themselves into Canadian society (in social and economic terms). Family class immigrants will, by definition, benefit from a Canadian family network. They have an established social network that will help in the process of acculturation. Economic class immigrants are selected on the basis of their labour market potential and the immediate economic contribution that they may make. In effect, the selection process ensures that they should integrate easily into the labour market.

Ideally an immigrant arriving in a new host society would like to obtain employment immediately upon arrival. However, this situation occurs only in instances when employment has been pre-arranged. Other events generally have an impact on the process of obtaining employment. For instance, some immigrants may require upgrading of their professional qualifications to Canadian standards. Others may require upgrading of their language skills in either English or French.

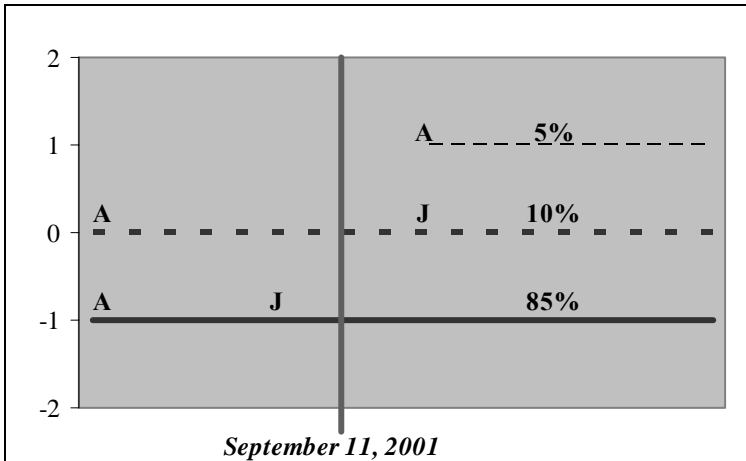
Exogenous events may also have an impact on the process of obtaining employment. For example, the general downturn in the high-technology sector that occurred in Canada in the late 1990s had a dramatic impact on employment opportunities. Similarly, recessionary periods tend to reduce the number of job opportunities available to newcomers (e.g. the early 1980s in Canada).

The impact of international events such as the 1990 Iraq war, the tensions in the Middle East and conflicts in Africa and South Asia is very complicated. On the one hand they tend to make employers more cautious in their decisions concerning expansion and growth. However, these events also act as push factors thereby increasing the flow of immigrants from the affected regions of the world. While such push factors may not increase the absolute number of immigrants, they certainly have an impact on the ethnic composition of the immigrant population. It is possible that such events may influence the policies and attitudes in the receiving society.

The analysis presented in this paper considers the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York as an exogenous event that may have a bearing on how quickly immigrants to Canada succeed in finding their first job. In fact, the original impetus for this paper came from numerous discussions with immigration officers and NGO members on the impact of the bombing of the World Trade Center: was it greater for some immigrants such those of Arab or South Asian descent, indicating discrimination, or is it a general effect, afflicting everyone looking for a job?

Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the possible event trajectories for immigrants in the study population seeking employment in Canada in the period encompassing September 11, 2001. The symbol “A” represents the point at which the immigrant arrives in Canada (either before or after 9-11). The symbol “J” represents the point at which the immigrant obtains his or her first job after arrival in Canada³. The vertical line in the middle of the chart represents September 11, 2001 – the critical event.

Figure 1: Possible event trajectories



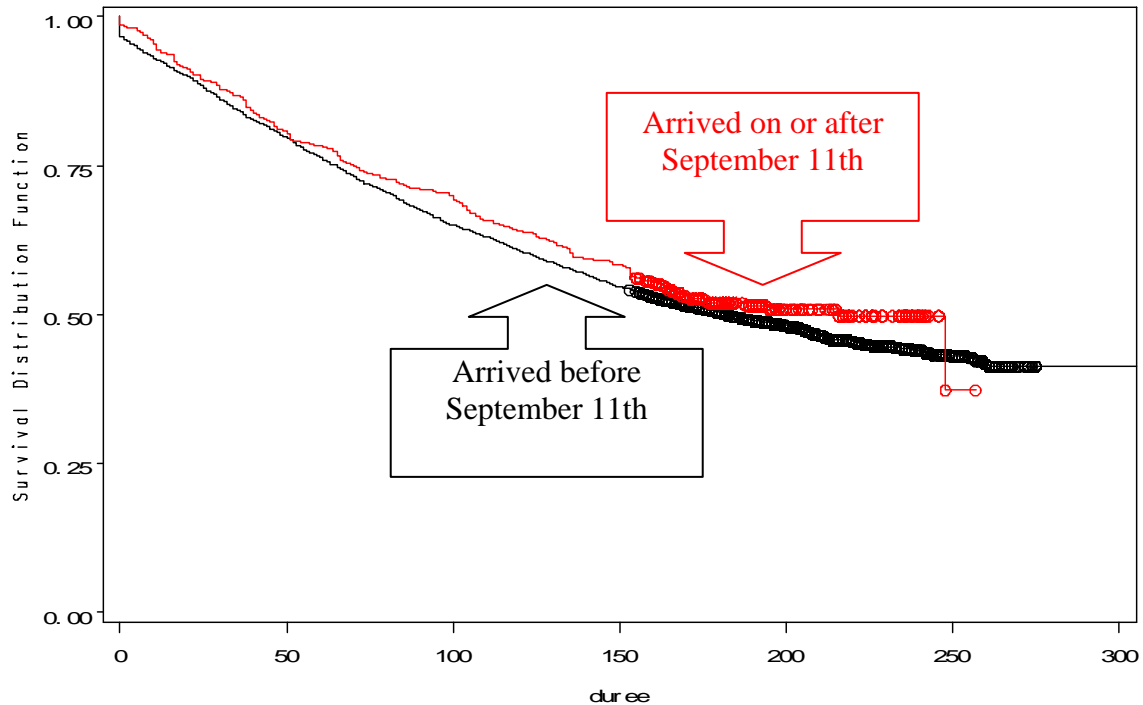
Three outcomes are possible for immigrants arriving in Canada and seeking jobs. Immigrants may arrive and whether obtain their first job before September 11th or complete the interview before September 11th without having experienced a first job (represented by the solid line in Figure 1). In fact, 85% of the study population falls in that category. It is also possible for immigrants who arrived before September 11th to find a job after that date or to be still looking for a job at the interview after September 11th (represented by the line at the 0 point on the y-axis in Figure 1). Approximately 10% of the study population are in this category. Finally, 5% of the immigrants arrived after September 11th (the small dashed line at the top of Figure 1). The method used to perform the analysis (Cox survival regressions with time-varying covariates) allows the authors to examine the impact of this seminal event and to draw conclusions about its impact on obtaining a first job after immigration. The scope of this analysis will be expanded once the data from the second wave of interviews are available. Additional cycles of data will allow us to examine job retention in addition to obtaining a first job.

Analytical Results

It is clear from the results of the analyses presented below that September 11th had an impact on the length of time required for immigrants to obtain their first job in Canada. The following chart contains survival curves for immigrant who arrived before 9-11, and those who arrived after 9-11.

³ It is important to note that no assumption is made with respect to any concordance between the first job and the qualifications of the immigrant.

Figure 2: Survival curves for access to first job, LSIC 2003

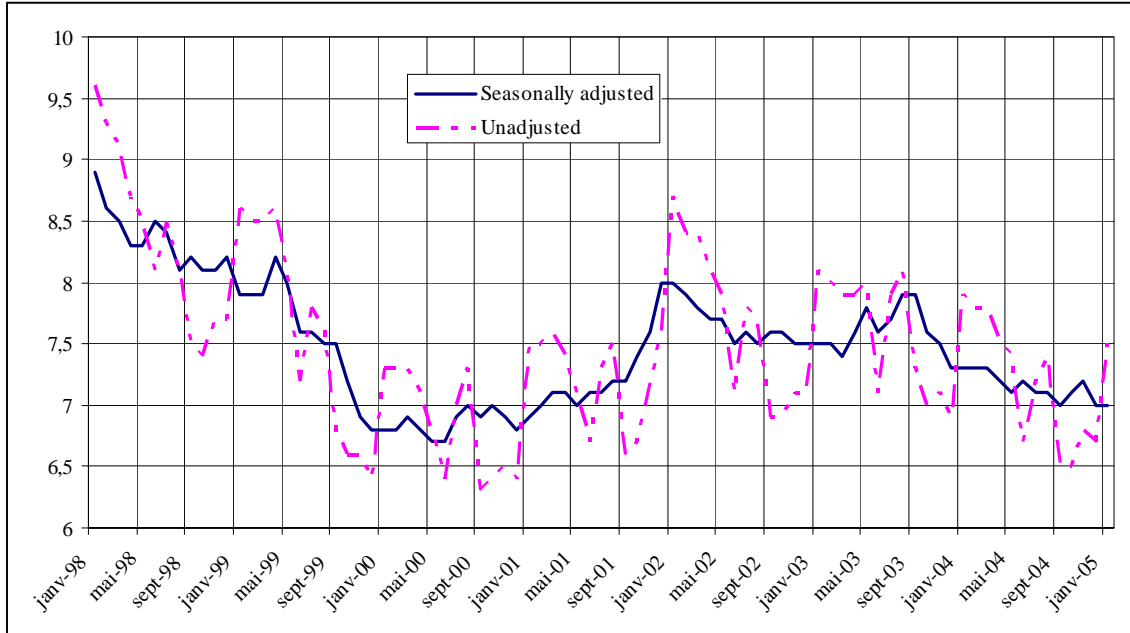


If everyone in the sample found jobs immediately upon arrival in Canada the survival distribution function (sdf) curve would be a vertical line at point 0 along the time axis (labelled *duree* in the chart). Similarly, the sdf curve would be a horizontal line parallel to the x-axis at the point 1.00 along the y-axis if no one found employment after arriving in Canada.

The results in Figure 2 show that September 11th was a significant event. The curve labelled “Arrived before September 11th” (in black for those who view this document in colour) indicates that this group generally experienced greater success in finding their first job than those who arrived on or after September 11th (the red curve for those who view this document in colour). The fact that two curves in Figure 2 diverge over time (the axis labelled “*duree*” in the graph) indicates that the impact of September 11th increases with the length of time it takes for an individual to obtain his or her first job. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that this particular subset of the immigrant population may be harder to place, possibly due to qualifications, language, age or other factors affecting employment. This will be explored in subsequent analyses.

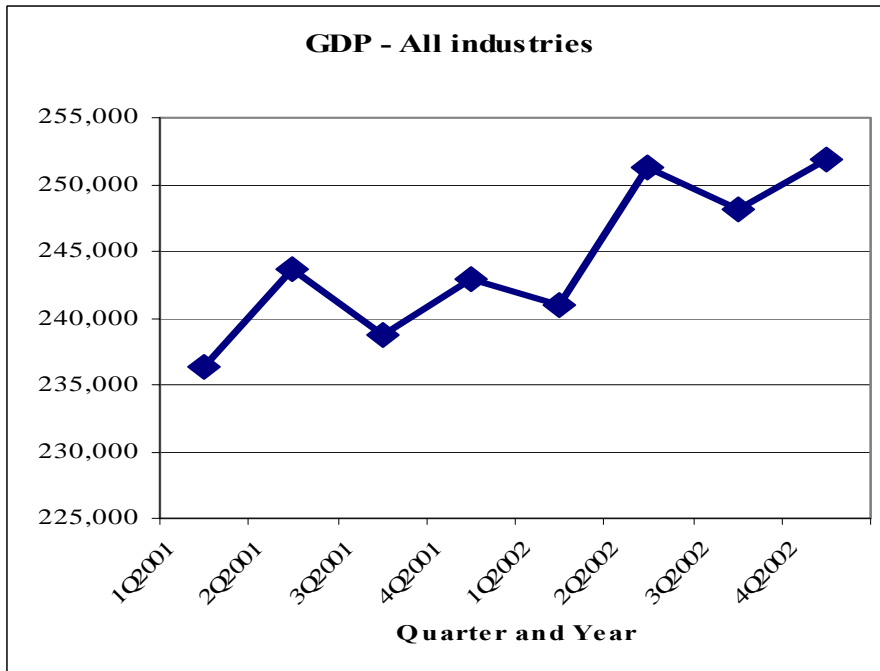
The general economic conditions with respect to employment in Canada during the time immediately following September 11, 2001 must be examined to determine whether the effect of that day on the employment prospects of immigrants can be partially explained by a general downturn. Unemployment rates and the gross domestic product are two key indicators of economic conditions that are germane to this analysis.

Figure 3: Seasonally adjusted and unadjusted unemployment rate, 1998 - 2003



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 282-0087

Figure 4: Gross Domestic Product, 2001-2002



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 379-0018

The unemployment rate shown in Figure 3 is not seasonally adjusted. It can be seen that the unemployment rate rose from October 2001. But this is not a seasonal effect for in

1998, 1999, 2000 and 2002 the unemployment rate in October is always equal to or lower than the rate in September. This single and persistent raise in 2001 thus clearly relates to the World Trade Center attack. While the GDP trend in Figure 4 (unadjusted prices quoted in 1997 constant dollars) also shows a slight dip in the 3rd quarter of 2001 with a rebound in the 4th quarter of the same year, this pattern is consistent across all years. The overall trend in the GDP is a continuous increase. Overall, the economic conditions during and immediately following the event in question offer a possible explanation for the apparent difficulties immigrants experienced in finding jobs after September 11, 2001. The question is, therefore, are all immigrants equally affected by this slowdown? Do some fare better than others? Those questions are explored in the hazard models presented below.

Table 2: Obtaining a first paid job. Proportional Hazard models (Cox regression)

Variable	Model 1		Model 2	
	β		β	
Ethnic origin (British omitted)				
French	0.45946	**	0.46081	**
Other European	-0.07511		-0.07120	
Arab	-0.71109	**	-0.70337	**
West Asian	-0.58400	**	-0.57744	**
South Asian	-0.01537		-0.01224	
East/Southeast Asian	-0.35081	**	-0.34885	**
African	-0.17252		-0.16469	
Caribbean, Latin, Central and South American	-0.08153		-0.07227	
Other	0.17308		0.17857	
Age	0.13064	**	0.11281	**
Age-squared	-0.00197	**	-0.00172	**
Years of schooling	0.02502	**	0.02467	**
Sex (Reference = male)	-0.65893	**	-0.66114	**
Admission category (refugee omitted)				
Family	0.81694	**	0.82163	**
Economic	0.58285	**	0.59386	**
Province (rest of Canada omitted)				
Quebec	-0.66236	**	-0.66648	**
Ontario	-0.28961	**	-0.28980	**
Alberta	0.07200		0.07025	
British-Columbia	-0.35185	**	-0.35422	**
September 11 (9-11) (time varying -0/1)			-1.22626	**
Interaction age and 9-11 (time varying)			0.06808	**
Interaction age² and 9-11 (time varying)			-0.00095	**
Log-likelihood Ratio	1856.041	**	1879.5432	**

* ... p<0.05

** .. p<0.01

The results⁴ shown in Table 2 are based on survival regression models (proportional hazard) in which obtaining the first job is the critical event. Model 1 incorporates only the control variables and excludes all interaction terms. Age, years of schooling, sex, admission category, province of residence, ethnic origin, all have a significant net impact on the time needed by an immigrant to obtain a first paid job in Canada. The solid curve in Figure 5 shows that 33 is the age at which it has the greatest impact in reducing the time required by an immigrant to find paid full-time employment. It can be seen in Figure 5 that the impact of age increases up to that point and begins to decline thereafter. Age 33 appears to be the point at which adaptability and experience meet – too little experience before and too little adaptability after.

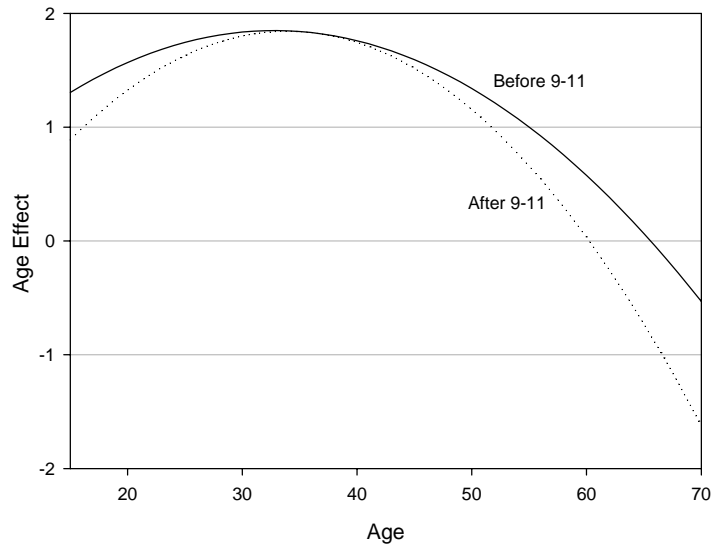
Education, as measured by the number of years of schooling, influences the time required to find a first job – the greater the number years of schooling, the better the access to the first paid job. The results show that males tend to get a job more quickly than females. Immigrants residing in Quebec, Ontario and British-Columbia have slower access to their first job when compared to those in the rest of Canada. Immigrants of Arab, West Asian and East/Southeast Asian ethnic origins experience a slower start in the Canadian labour market than those of British origin, even when controlling for the other variables. These coefficients would suggest possible discrimination in the labour market.

For the next stage of the analysis we examined the impact of September 11th (as a time-varying covariate) both as an additive effect as well as in interaction with some of the control variables. The result presented in Model 2 includes only those variables for which the interaction with September 11th remained significant. It is evident from these results that September 11th had the general effect of increasing the time required for an immigrant to find his or her first paid employment. This result was anticipated.

What is striking in Model 2 is the absence of interaction between September 11th and ethnic origin. We were expecting at least an interaction between Arab origin and 9-11 but none exists. More generally, there is no interaction between 9-11 on the one hand and ethnic origins, years of schooling, sex, admission category and province of residence; those variables behave the same way before and after 9-11 and all coefficients remain essentially the same.

⁴ While bootstrap weights are provided to calculate the variance of estimates, the authors elected to use standardised sample weights in calculating the variance estimates in each model. Estimates were calculated using bootstrap weights for one model. No significant differences were found in the variance calculation between the two sets of weights. Therefore, standardised weights were used for all models.

Figure 5: Getting a First Job. Total Age and 9-11 Effects.



The only significant interaction is between age and 9-11. The interaction between September 11th and age is shown by the dotted curve in Figure 5. It has practically no impact around the age of 33 or 34 (the two curves fully overlap at that point). However, the impact grows increasingly as one moves from that point as indicated by the divergence between the two curves. Apparently only those with both adaptability and experience get through this event unaffected.

What are the implications – a discussion and conclusion

Our analysis began with the hypothesis that the attack on the World Trade Center had a significant impact on the job settlement process of immigrants belonging to certain ethnic groups. The empirical evidence does not support this hypothesis. However, the analytical results clearly show that September 11th had a general impact and that age is a significant factor when looking at the rate at which immigrants obtain their first paying job. The results show that the time required for immigrants to obtain their first job is lowest for those who are in their thirties.

The rise in the unemployment rate immediately following the September 11th attack suggests a tighter labour market with tougher competition for the positions available. This notion is further supported by the fact that the rise is not seasonal or cyclical – there is no comparable rise in the unemployment rate in the surrounding years. It can safely be assumed that this dramatic event had an impact on the general state of the economy which, in turn, affected the labour market outcomes for most immigrants. Our results indicate that immigrants in their early to mid-thirties fare better under adverse labour market conditions such as those that we experienced in Canada during this period.

While the results of this analysis do not support the original hypothesis that immigrants belonging to certain ethnic groups experienced disproportionate difficulties in entering

the labour market after the 9-11 attacks, they support an alternate hypothesis that immigrants of Arab, West Asian and East/Southeast Asian ethnic origins experience greater difficulties than those of other origins in obtaining their first job. The coefficients for both models in Table 2 for these ethnic groups are significantly more negative than for the other ethnic groups. This outcome suggests that other factors are having an impact on the success that immigrants from these ethnic groups are having at obtaining their first paid employment after arriving in Canada. The next phase of our project will be to explore this phenomenon in order to better understand this outcome for the immigrants of Arab, West Asian and East/Southeast Asian descent.

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