

Title: Co-Ethnic Concentration and Trust in Neighbours

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Research Question:

This study examines the relationship between the ethno-racial composition of urban Canadian neighborhoods and interpersonal trust. The key research problem focuses on whether the proportion of co-ethnics in the neighborhood influences trust in neighbors among racial minorities (recent immigrants). In addition, the analysis examines how non-White ethnic groups react to a rising presence of people from non-White ethnic groups other than their own group.

Importance:

Through immigration, the Canadian population is becoming more ethnically diverse, especially in gateway cities. This demographic trend is propelling a process of community succession (neighborhood transition) and the proliferation of ethnic communities or enclaves. These changes raise questions about trust, given that it is a function of stable and dense social networks. On one hand, the interlocking of mutual interests in ethnically homogeneous communities could represent a fertile environment for the development of trust. In contrast, heterogeneous environments could have negative implications for trust if these neighborhoods lack social ties between neighbors.

Research Findings:

The results indicate that living among co-ethnics increases trust in neighbors among non-White ethnic groups. This effect is net of socioeconomic environment (concentrated disadvantage), neighborhood turnover, and other ecological and individual-level covariates that confound the relationship between ethnic diversity and trust. The presence of other racial minorities (out-groups) has a non-significant influence on trust in neighbors among non-White ethnic groups.

Implications:

The spatial concentration of recent immigrants raises questions about their social integration into the host population, especially when this pattern of settlement represents racial segregation. However, recent immigrants have considerable choice of neighborhood, and preference for living among co-ethnics could represent a strategy for coping with the immigrant experience. Living among co-ethnics appears to be a good source of social capital and can thus ease the process of settlement and integration.