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It is, I take it, the shared hope at this conference that the commitment to social welfare will *not* prove incompatible with cultural and linguistic diversity: given that we live and will continue to live with the latter, it would be pretty disturbing if these turned out to be in conflict. On this score, the arguments from both papers are reasonably encouraging. Between them, they address three questions. Is there reason to think that cultural diversity makes it harder to achieve a consensus on principles of economic justice? Is there reason to think that people become less trusting of others when they live in societies that are ethnically and linguistically diverse? Is there reason to think that a high level of ethnic diversity correlates with reduced support for social programmes? In essence, the answers are no, yes, and no: no, cultural diversity does not mean major disagreement regarding principles of distribution; yes, there is a diminution of interpersonal trust as societies become more ethnically and culturally diverse; but no, this does not translate in any automatic way into reduced support for social programmes.

Comments on Miller and Soroka, Johnston & Banting

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1 • Which differences?

David Miller's paper addresses the first question through a survey of literature on cross-national comparisons — Americans and Hong Kong Chinese, Australians and Japanese, Americans and Indians — and finds “no reason to think that people use wholly different conceptions of justice when asked to solve some distributive problem”. On what he presents as the three basic principles of distributive justice — equality, need and merit — there seems to be no great divergence, even between countries thought to occupy significantly different positions on a spectrum of individualism through to collectivism. There is some indication that those in more collectivist (but

also poorer) societies prefer a needs-based distribution, and this tendency is particularly heightened for poorer individuals in poorer societies, like women in India. There is some tendency for those in Japan and Korea to link merit to seniority rather than productivity. But the variations are not enormous, and they provide no strong basis for thinking that “people belonging to different cultural groups might be unable to agree on principles of social justice to regulate their common social and political institutions”.

This is encouraging, though it is not clear to me how far it goes in addressing what I take to be the main object of concern, which is cultural diversity *within* rather than between countries. It would be rather surprising, for example, if Indians living in Britain (who tend, on average, to be better qualified and working in better paid occupations than their white counterparts) continued to exhibit a preference for needs-based over merit-based distribution; it seems more plausible to imagine that conceptions of social justice will evolve in new directions when people find themselves in new social contexts. To put this more generally, the causal connection between values and institutions is not just one way. It is not just that people adhere to certain principles of justice and then design their institutions to reflect these, but also that the experience of living under certain social arrangements (legislation, work-practices, systems of payment) generates and sustains particular systems of value. If so, one would hardly expect people to retain in pristine form the conceptions of social justice that predominate in their countries of origin.

This anticipation is confirmed by a considerable body of evidence on generational differences within migrant communities, which indicates that the values espoused by older migrants are often at odds with the values of a younger generation born and brought up in the new country of residence. To give just one example, recent research carried out among Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities in London and Bradford on “Community Perceptions of Arranged Marriage” revealed a significant divergence between older and younger respondents (Samad and Eade 2003); and while the findings do not tell us much about views on *economic* justice, they still suggest quite a lot about individualist and collectivist values. The younger respondents are more overtly individualist than their elders in their attitudes towards marriage; while not particularly objecting to the role played by parents or grandparents in proposing suitable marriage partners, they are clear that marriage is ultimately a matter for the individual to decide. Equally interesting is that while the younger people mostly agree with the elders in their community that it makes sense to marry someone with the same religion or from a broadly similar ethnic group, they have little time for the idea that a marriage part-

ner should come from the same caste group or same area of origin in the Indian sub-continent; and they are thoroughly out of sympathy with what they see as their elders' confusion of culture with religion. They see their parents as seeking to rescue them from the corrupting influences of Western culture by persuading them into marriage with someone from back "home". For the younger generation, this is not a good basis for marriage. They define themselves as Muslim and Western, and no longer identify with the usually rural culture of their parents' birth place.

Two points emerge from this that are relevant to our discussions. The first is that cross-national comparisons may be of limited relevance in considering whether cultural communities *within* a given country espouse different conceptions of social justice; this is acknowledged in David Miller's paper, but not perhaps given enough weight. The second is that people may differentiate strongly between an "in-group" and "out-group" for one purpose (in this case marriage) without this implying anything very substantial about which groups they are inclined to trust. When the young people in question say it is better to marry someone of the same religion, and better to marry an Asian than a non-Asian, they could be said to be reflecting rather sensibly on the difficulties of marriage across religious and ethnic lines. But they are not saying they would not trust anyone outside that group as work colleagues or neighbours; they explicitly question the assumption that they are so different in "cultural" terms from their non-Asian contemporaries; they are just saying that it is better to restrict yourself when it comes to marriage. Note here that we don't usually think an unwillingness to *marry* "outsiders" necessarily translates into an unwillingness to support social programmes that will benefit them. We tend to think that the parochialism of most people's marriage choices — same class background, similar level of educational achievements, same ethnic group — can coexist with strong support for a welfare state; and I cannot call to mind any research that tries to link the tendency to marry within one's "group" with a resistance to welfare spending. Yet we do tend to think — we are indeed invited by the conference topic to consider — that some kinds of in-group/out-group division could have serious consequences for support of the welfare state. Before jumping too readily to this conclusion, we should perhaps reflect more on the underlying assumptions.

2 • Does trust matter?

The relationship between ethnic and linguistic diversity, levels of interpersonal trust, and willingness either to trust the government or support redistributive social programmes is challenged empirically by Soroka, Johnston and Banting, in research that seeks to put flesh on what are otherwise vague intimations of concern. The overall results are, again, reasonably encouraging. It does seem that levels of interpersonal trust drop as diversity grows: ethnic majorities are less trusting when their community is more ethnically diverse; while “(m)oving to Quebec reduces a non-francophone’s interpersonal trust to about one-eighth the maximum possible distance.” (It is also the case that levels of interpersonal trust are lower when the respondents are poor or male; and it would be interesting to see how economic stratification maps onto either ethnic or linguistic diversity; we don’t get this in the paper but it can presumably be teased out from the data.) But “there is hardly any ethnic story — even a theoretical one — for trust in government”; and the only story “worth telling” on the relationship between ethnic diversity and support for social programmes is that visible minority respondents and Quebec dwellers are less likely than others to support equal access to health care. The authors can trace “no direct impact of ethnic diversity on support for social services”.

The suggestion in the paper is that the Canadian story may be unusual, so that while levels of interpersonal trust do decline with ethnic diversity, this is being countered by the development of a “multi-cultural” national identity that continues to sustain support for public programmes. This offers one possible line of enquiry, and fits in with David Miller’s suggestion that cultural barriers can be overcome if we have access to an inclusive national identity that is not founded on cultural homogeneity. But I am worried about the potential circularity in an argument that starts with the presumption that interpersonal trust is an “attitudinal prop” for the welfare state, discovers no very close correlation between levels of interpersonal trust and either trust in the government or support for the welfare state, and concludes that there must therefore be something else at work sustaining the welfare state. An alternative conclusion might be that the importance both papers attribute to interpersonal trust is over-stated. Maybe levels of interpersonal trust are no more a key indicator of support for social welfare than the willingness to marry outside one’s ethnic/religious/class group? Maybe the capacity to identify with others — not, after all, hugely strong in class-ridden Britain even at the height of public support for the welfare state — is not such an important element in explaining attitudes to the welfare state?

The other optimistic story that is sometimes told of ethnic diversity is that people living in ethnically and culturally mixed neighbourhoods become more willing to perceive the ethnically different “others” as like themselves than those who live in more homogeneous communities. But we cannot really get at this from the otherwise very interesting evidence presented in Keith Banting’s paper. As it stands, the influence of individual trust is measured through a “wallet test” that implies geographically contained neighbourhoods, with the proportion of visible minorities within these neighbourhoods seen as a possible trigger for change. But if the underlying issue is majority reaction to ethnic diversity, we would also want to get at the impact on majority individuals of living in a *country* with a high proportion of visible minorities, but not in a *neighbourhood* with a high proportion. It is surely possible that majority individuals living in localities that contain very few minority members might continue to show high levels of interpersonal trust, but still live in a state of profound “distrust” in relation to real or imagined communities elsewhere, seen perhaps on television or glimpsed on visits to metropolitan centres. This more generalised feeling of “distrust” seems to have no outlet in either of the two measures of trust constructed in the article.

3 • Culture and “race”

We need, in my view, to ask why some forms of “otherness” are more readily accommodated than others; and whether there is a danger of mistaking racism for cultural unease or mistrust. Miller notes interesting research that indicates that white people are less likely to help black people than they are to help other white people — but only when they can justify their behaviour to themselves as not about race. Presumably the story they tell themselves is that black people are more likely to be criminals, or more likely to be violent; nowadays, the story may also be that black people are culturally incomprehensible. As “culture-racism” increasingly substitutes for the biologisms of an earlier period, people are less willing to say they see people as different because of the colour of their skin, and more likely to stress the barriers of culture, ethnicity, language. The language of “diversity” may then help make the racial component less visible. It may encourage us to think we are addressing a common human phenomenon of identification (that we identify more easily with those most like us) rather than relations of power. Much of the general literature referred to at the beginning of Keith Banting’s paper seems to be about the relationship between levels of immigration and support for the welfare state. Yet if there is, as suggested, a

depressingly inverse relationship between these two, this may have less to do with perceptions of cultural or ethnic difference, and more with cruder perceptions of “race”.

The starting point of any enquiry builds in certain presumptions. In this case, it encourages us to focus on culture and language as the main axes of difference — overshadowing for the moment divisions by class, gender or “race” — and to anticipate that cultural diversity will undermine relationships of economic solidarity. When the anticipations (the worst fears) are not borne out, we then turn to something else to explain why not. In both these papers, the suggestion is that there may be some new kind of inclusive national identity that holds what otherwise might tear us apart. I am not wholly out of tune with this as a conclusion, but there is a circularity in the arguments that causes me concern.

R E F E R E N C E S

[1] Samad, Yunas. and Eade, John. 2003. Community Perceptions of Forced Marriage, research carried out for the

Community Liaison Unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, www.fco.gov.uk.