THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND CRIMINOLOGY

THE EFFECTS OF ORIGIN AND GENERATIONAL STATUS ON FINANCIAL STATUS OF MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

JIWON LEE
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Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Kevin J.A. Thomas
Associate Professor of Sociology, Demography, and African Studies
Thesis Supervisor

Stacy Silver
Associate Professor of Sociology and Human Development and Family Studies
Honors Adviser

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

ABSTRACT

The Muslim immigrant population in the United States are a diverse group facing different financial situations. Existing research highlights that generational status affects these financial situations because each generation faces different barriers in the workforce. The more or bigger challenge the generation must overcome, the worse their financial status will be. Issues such as terrorism and discrimination have resulted in financial difficulties for minorities in the past. With the current rise in debate on Muslim immigrants, it is important to examine the factors that influence their financial situations. This study addresses some of those factors to provide an insight on this issue. It examines whether the region of origin and the generational status affects the financial status of Muslim immigrants in the United States.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Assimilation of immigrants is important for the host country. Immigrants who adapt well can make a significant contribution to economic growth. On the other hand, immigrants who have difficulty adapting may significantly increase the ethnic wage gap and the costs of income maintenance programs (Borjas, 1994). Many factors can influence assimilation of immigrants. For example, previous research has found that tragedies associated with a certain group can create negative generalization about and discrimination toward that group, making assimilation harder for the group. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks are associated with a 9 to 11 percent decline in the real wage and weekly earnings of Arab and Muslim men (Kaushal, 2007). Arab Americans, moreover, had a harder time finding initial employment following the September 11th incident. At that time, Arab male job applicants were 50 percent less likely to receive a callback for a job than white male applicants (Widner, 2011). Muslim immigrants are currently receiving similar negative attention due to the attacks by Islamic extremist terrorist groups (Gould and Klor, 2015). Negative stereotypes of Muslims, such as that all Muslims are terrorists or that they cannot be trusted, are dangerous because they can lead to discrimination and alienation of the Muslim community in the United States. Such negative narratives install fear and insecurity in Muslim people (Britton, 2015). Victims of anti-Muslim hate crime can suffer from emotional, stress, and anxiety (Awan and Zempi, 2015). Therefore it is important, perhaps now more than ever, to examine the assimilation of Muslim immigrants in the United

States. There are many ways to measure assimilation, but I decided to focus on their financial status because it is key to establishing stability and settlement in a place.

Existing research offers various findings on immigration assimilation and their financial status. However, specific research on Muslim immigrants is less developed. This study also examines factors that may influence the financial situation of immigrants, but I hope it will improve the existing knowledge by focusing on Muslim immigrants.

I used the Muslim American Survey by the Pew Research Center. The data contains information on the generational status of the Muslim immigrant and their perceived financial situation, as well as control variables for race, age, sex, and education. I conducted a Multiple Linear Regression using SPSS. This study is approved by the Institutional Review Board (STUDY00006106).

My first hypothesis is the region that immigrants are from affect their financial status in the United States. The region of origin is the background of the immigrants, which may influence the foundation of their financial status in the U.S. Immigrants from different regions will have different financial status in the U.S. My second hypothesis is that their financial status improves as their generational status in the United States increases. The first generation of immigrants will have worse financial status than the later generations because they have more challenges to face, such as language barriers and cultural differences.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Theory

The segmented assimilation theory is an adequate framework to guide research on immigrants. There are numerous factors that influence the assimilation of immigrants, and the outcomes vary greatly depending on these factors. The segmented assimilation theory explores the diverse possible outcomes of immigrants from the process of adaptation (Portes and Zhou, 1993). One factor is the type of group immigrants settle into. The assimilation process differs if immigrants join the middle-class as opposed to the lower-class. The similar effect takes place with different racial groups (Portes, Fernández-Kelly, and Haller, 2005). Assimilation outcomes are also positively associated with educational achievement and psychological well-being of immigrants (Xie and Greenman, 2005). Thus, the segmented assimilation theory provides a theoretical framework for researching the diverse situations of immigrants and the importance of the factors that influence them.

Discrimination may play a role in the assimilation of immigrants in the host country. The nationalism theory suggests that discrimination increases when immigrants are portrayed as 'others' through racial or ethnic terms. Chuck Baker (2005) found that this ethnic nationalism is most likely the cause for increase in discrimination in the United Kingdom. The integrated threat theory states that when natives feel threatened, they are more likely to believe that immigrants do not want to assimilate (Croucher, 2013). When immigrants are less accepted in the host country, they may have less or worse opportunities, thus making assimilation more difficult.

More specific to the research in question, a theory useful in examining the financial status of immigrants is the human capital theory. This theory analyzes of wage growth of immigrants. It takes immigrants as imported human capital for the host country and examines the factors that cause the increase of value of the capital, the wages of immigrants. A research using the human capital theory found that wages of immigrants depend on their skills, their ability to move up the occupational hierarchy, and their accumulated experience in their host country (Eckstein and Weiss, 2010). The human capital theory offers an insight on the important factors that could influence the financial status of immigrants.

Region of Origin and Financial Status

An immigrant's region of origin is defined as the region that the immigrant is from (Adsera and Chiswick, 2006). Literature has previously shown that immigrants from countries of certain characteristics are more likely to have better financial status than those from other countries. These characters could include: politically stable, free, developed, and wealthy. Immigrants from countries that have these qualities are less likely to be unemployed in the destination country (Fleischmann and Dronkers, 2010). However, Vigdor (2008) found slightly opposing evidence. His study suggests that immigrants from developed countries are not necessarily more assimilated than those from developing countries (Vigdor, 2008). Osili and Paulson (2008) also found that immigrants from countries that have more effective institutions are more likely to access the financial services of the destination country such as banks.

The similarity of the origin county to the destination country also influences the financial situation of immigrants. In the United States, there is a consistent preference for white and culturally more similar immigrants than non-white and culturally more distinct immigrants

(Ford, 2011). For European countries, immigrants from the non-EU countries had the worst earnings (Adsera and Chiswick, 2006). In general, immigrants earn more if they have a close linguistic or cultural background to the destination country (Adsera and Chiswick, 2006). Therefore, the more similar the origin country is to the destination country, the better the financial status of immigrants from that country will be.

Fleishchmann and Dronkers (2010) also found that immigrants from Islamic countries had higher rates of unemployment in European Union countries than those from other parts of the world. This finding highlights the need for deeper research into the effect of origin country on the financial status of Muslim immigrants. I hypothesize that country of origin will influence the financial status of Muslim immigrants in the U.S.

Generational Status and Financial Status

When conducting research on the generational status of immigrants, it is crucial to define the exact terms of each generational status. Sociologist Rubén Rumbaut's definitions of generational status are thus very helpful for this study. He defines first generation immigrants as, "Persons born and socialized in another country who immigrate as adults (age 18 or older)" (Rumbaut, 2004). He also defines second generation immigrants as, "U.S.-born and U.S.-socialized children of foreign-born parents" (Rumbaut, 2004). Socialized in a country for Rumbaut indicates growing up in that country, thus adapting the culture and social actions of that country. For a better analysis of the effect of generational status on the financial status, I will further break down the generations between first and second generations. These in-between generations are foreign-born but socialized in the host country. Stonequist, Warner, and Srole defines these generations by the age of arrival in the U.S. 1.25 generation are immigrants that arrive in their early childhood, ages 0-5; 1.5 generation are those that arrive in their middle childhood, ages 6-12; 1.75 generation are those that arrive in their adolescence, ages 13-17 (Stonequist, Warner, and Srole, 1964).

Previous research has found differences in the financial status of immigrants depending on their generational status. LaLonde and Topel (1991) found that first generation immigrants gain only modest wage growth after arriving in the U.S., but their children who are born in the U.S. prosper. A study by Bisin, Patacchini, Verdier, and Zenou (2011) reports that first generation immigrants were significantly disadvantaged in finding employment and with higher wages, but second generation immigrants had employment and wage probabilities that were not statistically different than those of natives of the host country. Allensworth (1997) also found that Mexican immigrants who came to the U.S. as children show little difference in wages from native, U.S.-born Mexican Americans, while differing greatly from first generation immigrants who came as adults. Thus, existing research suggests that first generation immigrants have a harder time in the labor market than lager generations.

Algan, Dustmann, Glitz, and Manning (2010) examined the factors that could explain this difference of financial status between generations. They found that there is a difference in barriers for the generations. For the first generation, language ability is the most important factor for determining wages. For the second generation, discrimination from the natives and/or reluctance of natives to integrate with the immigrants was the biggest problem (Algan et al., 2010). They suggest that these different barriers for each generation are the cause of the diverse financial outcomes.

Demographics and Other Controls

There is a great disparity in financial status of male and female immigrants. Gain in earnings is associated with many factors, such as age, time in the U.S., and English proficiency, differ by gender (Allensworth, 1997). This trend occurs because the factors that affect employment and earnings are different for men and women. For earnings, schooling matter more for women while language skills are relatively more important for men (Adsera and Chiswick, 2006). According to the Islamic family law, men have an exclusive responsibility to maintain their wives and families while women are responsible for housekeeping and caregiving. Thus for Muslim families who use Islam to interpret their roles, opportunities, and constraints in the labor force and the household, there is a significant difference in the financial status between men and women (Predelli, 2004). Therefore, it is critical to control for gender when assessing the financial status of Muslim immigrants.

LaLonde and Topel (1991) studied the effect of education attainment in the earnings of immigrants. They report that immigrants with higher education attainment earn more, and these earnings also increase with time in the U.S. (LaLonde and Topel, 1991). Thus the education level of immigrants is an important factor in their financial status.

Chapter 3

Data and Methods

Data

The data for this study were obtained through a national survey of American Muslims conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2011. The survey interviewed a total of 1,033 adult Muslims living in the United States. To insure generalizability, the survey used a complex design consisting of three sampling frames to obtain a probability sample of Muslim Americans: a random digital dial (RDD) landline sample, a RDD cell phone sample, and a sample of previously identified Muslim households. Of the 1,033 Muslims interviewed, 358 of them came from the RDD landline sample, which entailed screening 41,689 households. 501 came from the RDD cell phone sample with a database of 113 million households. The remaining 174 interviews were obtained from the sample of previously identified English-speaking Muslim households. The interviews were conducted on phones because the Muslim population is rare and highly dispersed throughout the U.S., making phone interviews the most efficient sample design. The strength of this survey was that it yielded a probability sample because each U.S. had a known probability of being included in the study. The limitations of this survey were that some people had a greater chance of being included than others, but this is taken into account in statistical adjustment. Confidentiality was maintained by not releasing respondent names, contact numbers, detailed geographic information or any other uniquely identifying information.

The interviews were conducted in four languages, English, Arabic, Farsi, and Urdu to limit the difficulty of many recent immigrants in completing the survey in English. The interview started with general questions about the respondent such as home ownership and college enrollment. The respondents were then asked about their religious affiliation. Once it was established that the respondent identified as Muslim, the respondents were offered $50 incentive to complete the survey. This incentive was intended to increase commitment and response rates. The respondents were allowed to quit any time. The survey covered a wide range of topics, and although it was designed to be short, the mean length of an interview was approximately 32 minutes. Nonetheless, 78 percent of the Muslim respondents completed the survey, totaling to 1,033 interviews.

Dependent Variable: Financial Status

The respondents were asked, “How would you rate your own personal financial situation?” They had to choose one of four options, coded orderly. 14.2 percent responded that they are in poor shape (1), 36.3 percent in only fair shape (2), 38.4 percent in good shape (3), and 11.1 percent in excellent shape (4).

Independent Variable: Region of Origin

The respondents were asked, “In what country were you born?” Although the participants of the survey responded with the specific country of their origin, the countries were recoded into regions in the dataset by the Pew Research Center. 28.5 percent of the respondents were born in the U.S. (1), 21.6 percent in the Middle East/North Africa (2), 15.6 percent in Pakistan (3), 5.7 percent in Iran (4), 12.3 percent in South Asia excluding Iran and Pakistan (5), 6.9 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa (6), and 9.4 percent in countries coded as Other/Undetermined (7). I then created 6 new variables, one for each region and excluding Other/Undetermined. For example, to create a new variable for respondents from the U.S., I recoded the old value 1 to new value 1 for U.S., and old values 2 through 7 to new value 0 for not U.S. I applied the same procedure to the other regions.

Independent Variable: Generational Status

The survey did not specifically ask the generational status of the respondents, but the Pew Research Center determined the generation status from a set of questions about the respondent and their parents' country of birth. The researchers define first generation as respondents born outside the U.S., second generation as respondents born in the U.S. but have at least one parent born outside the U.S., and third generation as respondents born in the U.S. and have both parents born in the U.S. They reported that 63 percent of the respondents are first generation immigrants, 15 percent second generation, and 22 percent third generation.

Since the generational status is only in the report and not in the actual survey, I determined the generational status from the dataset for myself. I used the variable from the question, "In what country were you born?" which is described above. To determine which respondents are first generation, I recoded this variable into a new variable called first generation and changed old values 2 through 7 to new value 1 for first generation, and old value 1 to new value 0 for not first generation. Thus, any respondent who answered that they were born in the U.S. would not be first generation, and those who answered other places would be first generation.

For the respondents born in the U.S., the survey then asked, "In what country was your father born?" 16.1 percent responded U.S. (1), 5.3 percent Middle East/North Africa (2), 1.9 percent Pakistan (3), 1.7 percent South Asia excluding Iran and Pakistan (5), and 2.2 percent

Other/Undetermined (7). They were also asked, “In what country was your mother born?” 18.5 percent responded U.S. (1), 3.3 percent Middle East/North Africa (2), 1.6 percent Pakistan (3), 1.5 percent South Asia excluding Iran and Pakistan (5), and 2.4 percent Other/Undetermined (7). To determine which respondents are second and third generation, I added the two variables and created a new variable that is the sum of the values from the two questions for each respondent. From there, any sum that is 3 or larger is second generation, and a sum of 2 is third generation. I created two separate variables for each generation. Similar to the first generation, for each of the second and third generation variables, a value of 1 means the respondent is that generation and a value of 0 means the respondent is not. Therefore, any respondent born in the U.S. but with at least one parent born outside the U.S. is second generation. Only respondents born in the U.S. and have both parents also born in the U.S. are third generation.

Control Variables: Age, Sex, Race, and Education Attainment

Out of the 1,033 respondents, 24.9 percent are between the ages of 18 to 29 (1), 23.2 percent are 30 to 39 (2), 31.2 percent are 40 to 54 (3), and 20.7 percent are 55 years old or older (4). 55.4 percent of the respondents are males (1) and 44.6 percent are females (2). The respondents were asked, “Which of the following describes your race?” 26.6 percent are white, non-Hispanic (1), 19.8 percent are black, non-Hispanic (2), 31.1 percent are Asian, non-Hispanic (3), 2.6 percent are Hispanic (4), and 19.9 percent are other/mixed non-Hispanic (5). For education attainment, 54 percent completed high school or less (1), 19 percent completed some college (2), 15 percent graduated college (3), and 11 percent completed post-graduate training after college (4). I recoded the race variable to make 5 new variables, one for each racial category. For example, to make a variable for white respondents, I recoded the old value 1 to new value 1 for white, and old value 2 through 5 to new value 0 for not white. I applied the same procedure to the other racial categories. For all other variables, I did not make any changes.

Analysis Methods

I analyzed the data using SPSS. Basic descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample. To understand the relationships between the variables in the study, I used multivariable regression models. Regression models are appropriate because this research involves multiple variables and control variables. The reference group of the regression analysis are respondents from the U.S., first generation respondents, and white respondents.

Chapter 4

Tables and Results

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	%
Age	
18-29	24.9
30-39	23.2
40-54	31.2
55+	20.7
Sex	
Male	55.4
Female	44.6
Race	
White	26.6
Black	19.8
Asian	31.1
Hispanic	2.6
Other	19.9
Education	
High School or Less	29.3
Some College	19.9
College Graduate	27.7
Post-Graduate Training After College	23.1
Region of Origin	
U.S.	28.5
Middle East/North Africa	21.6
Pakistan	15.6
Iran	5.7
South Asia (excluding Iran and Pakistan)	12.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	6.9
Other/Undetermined	
Generational Status	
First Generation	70.2
Second Generation	11.7
Third Generation	15.7
Rate of Personal Financial Situation	
Poor Shape	14.2
Only Fair Shape	36.3
Good Shape	38.4
Excellent Shape	11.1

As shown in Table 1, the sample is fairly evenly spread out among the demographics of age, sex, race, and education level. The regions which most respondents are from are the U.S. (28.5%) and the Middle East/North Africa (21.6%). Majority of the sample is first generation (70.2 %), and the rest are second (11.7%) and third generation (15.7%). In terms of financial status, the most popular responses are the more moderate ones, with respondents reporting that they feel they are in good shape (38.4%) or only fair financial shape (36.6).

Table 2. Summary of Linear Regression Analysis for Predicting Financial Status Based on Region of Origin

Variables	*B*	*S.E (B)*	*P*
Predictors			
Middle East/North Africa	.032	.015	.671
Pakistan	.062	.026	.539
Iran	-.226	-.061	.069
South Asia	.047	.018	.651
Sub-Saharan Africa	.097	.028	.409
Controls			
Age	-.032	-.040	.205
Sex	-.003	-.002	.957
Black	-.184	-.085	.046
Asian	-.126	-.067	.162
Hispanic	-.056	-.010	.750
Other (Race)	.041	.019	.599
Education	.226	.297	.000
Constant	2.049		.000

Table 2 show that there is not a significant difference in the financial status among immigrants from various regions of origin. Controlling for age and sex does not significantly influence this prediction. However, race has a greater effect on the prediction in that black respondents have significantly worse financial status in comparison to white respondents (B = -.184, p = .046). In addition, for every unit increase in education, the financial status unit increases by .226 (*p* = .000). Thus, the education level of the respondent has a significantly positive effect on their financial status.

Table 3. Summary of Linear Regression Analysis for Predicting Financial Status Based on Generational Status

Variables	*B*	*S.E (B)*	*P*
Predictors			
Second gen.	.028	.010	.747
Third gen.	-.182	-.077	.037
Controls			
Age	-.033	-.041	.204
Sex	-.012	-.007	.818
Black	-.063	-.029	.473
Asian	-.093	-.049	.178
Hispanic	-.008	-.002	.961
Other (Race)	.043	.020	.581
Education	.221	.290	.000
Constant	2.082		.000

Table 3 show that there is not a significant difference in the financial status of first and second generation immigrants. Third generation immigrants, on the other hand, have significantly worse financial status than first generation immigrations (*B* = -.182, *p* = .039). Age, sex, and race does not have a significant influence on this prediction. However, similar to the results from Table 2, education has a significantly positive effect on the financial status. For every unit increase in education, the financial status unit increases by .221 (*p* = .000).

In summary, the region of origin of Muslim immigrants does not significantly influence their financial status in the United States. Also, first generation immigrants do not have significantly worse financial status than second generation immigrants, but they do with third generation immigrants. The results do not support neither of my hypothesis that the region of origin affects the financial status, and that the greater the generational status, the better the financial status of the immigrants will be.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

This research has found that the region of origin of Muslim immigrants in the United States does not have a significant effect on their financial status. This result contradicts many previous studies on the effects of origin on financial status of immigrants. Race may have influenced this result, as black immigrants have significantly worse financial status than white immigrants. Additionally, first generation Muslim immigrants in the United States have similar financial status than second generation but better than third generation Muslim immigrants. The result between first and third is unexpected and inconsistent with previous knowledge. Third generation immigrants are expected to have better financial status than both first and second, but they have the worst financial status out of the group. Education has a positive effect on financial status in both regressions; the higher the level of one's educational attainment, the better their financial status is.

Although research done on immigrants as a whole is abundant, focus on the financial status of Muslim immigrants in the United States is rare. This paper offers an insight on this specific group and perspective. One major weakness in this study is that the financial status is measured by the respondent's perceived status of their own financial situation. Because each person's definition of what is a good and bad financial situation, the responses may be inconsistent and inaccurate. A better representation of their financial status would be their income and wages.

The interesting finding in third generation immigrants is uncommon in existing knowledge. Further research could address whether the third generation in other immigrant groups also have worse financial status, the financial status of fourth generation and later generations, and the reasons that third generation Muslim immigrants experience the worst financial situations.

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JIWON LEE

jql5857@psu.edu ♦ http://jessicalee812.wix.com/jiwon-lee

EDUCATION

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY, University Park, PA — May 2017
Bachelor of Arts: International Politics-International Relations — GPA: 3.91
Bachelor of Arts: Sociology — Dean's List every semester eligible
Honors: Schreyer Honors College, Paterno Fellows Honors Program
Thesis: *The Effects of Origin Country and Generational Status on the Financial Situation of Muslim Immigrants in the U.S.*

YONSEI UNIVERSITY, Seoul, South Korea — Summer 2015
Study Abroad
Coursework: Family Sociology, Korean Culture and Cinema
Activities: Volunteered at North Korean refugee centers, orphanages, and senior citizen centers

EXPERIENCE

UNITED NATIONS, New York, NY — Spring 2017
Intern, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- Implement projects and capacity development activities including on open government data and on corruption prevention
- Research and analyze public engagement for inclusive and accountable public administration for sustainable development

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY DEPT. OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, University Park, PA — Summer 2016
Research Assistant
- Researched political engagement and citizen social movements by conducting interviews and analyzing results
- Surveyed 100 protesters at the Democratic and Republican national conventions about their activity and purpose at the events

THE MALINI FOUNDATION, Colombo, Sri Lanka (Remote) — Fall 2015-Spring 2016
Education Advisor
- Created 80 lesson plans of diverse styles to teach English and critical social issues to students in a Sri Lankan orphanage
- Researched policies and literature for a grant to protect and improve the work and living conditions of migrant domestic workers
- Advanced the interests of women in Sri Lanka through education, empowerment, and opportunities for their voices to be heard

SAMSUNG SIDIA, Manaus, Brazil — Winter 2015
Intern, Human Resources
- Implemented labor laws, rights, and regulations of Brazil in the company to ensure proper work conditions and employee welfare
- Practiced internal and external communication by analyzing performance evaluations and promoting the company on social media

PHILADELPHIA URBAN SEMINAR, Philadelphia, PA — Summer 2015
Student Teacher/Intern
- Instructed 30 3rd grade students in an inner-city public school to observe education policies and the school system
- Participated in community service in area neighborhoods by farming the community garden and cleaning up the streets

LEADERSHIP

PHI ALPHA DELTA LAW FRATERNITY INTERNATIONAL, University Park, PA — Spring 2016-Spring 2017
Professional Development Chair
- Organize law school fairs and career development opportunities to 50 members of the fraternity and to other pre-law students
- Contact pre-law advisor, admission representatives from several law schools, and other law school preparation organizations

GLOBAL BRIGADES HUMAN RIGHTS, Yaviza, Panama/University Park, PA — Fall 2014-Spring 2017
Brigader/Member
- Provide pro-bono legal consulting and legal rights resources to members of rural communities in Panama
- Collaborate with Panamanian lawyers to resolve family law cases including child custody, alimony, divorce, and criminal cases
- Develop and implement educational workshops on human rights topics such as domestic violence and right to an education

PENN STATE UNICEF, University Park, PA — Fall 2014-Spring 2017
UNICEF Distinguished Member
- Engage in UNICEF initiatives through volunteer, fundraising, and advocacy to support and protect children worldwide