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Econ 496/895

Weeks 9-10: Culture, Crime, and Immigration

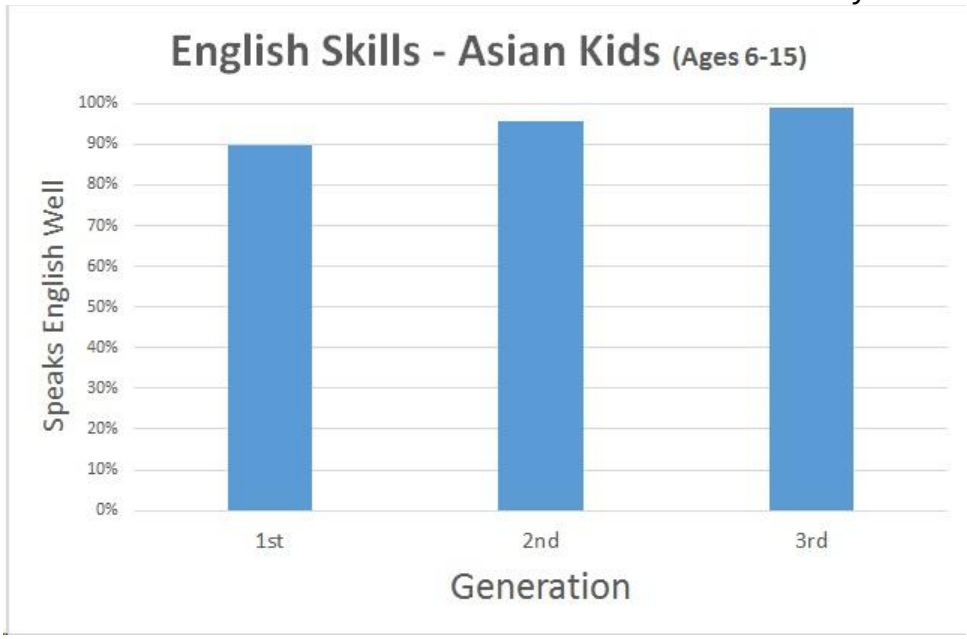
I. The Value of Assimilation: Coordination and Beyond
   A. The American "melting pot" has long been a popular ideal.
   B. Though some have put forward the competing "salad bowl" ideal, almost everyone favors immigrant assimilation along *some* important dimensions.
      1. Language
      2. Support for democracy
      3. Support for human rights
      4. Educational success
      5. Self-support
      6. Rejection of extremism
   C. What's good about assimilation?
   D. Palatable answer: coordination. No culture is "better" than any other, but it is better for people who share a country to share a culture to avoid a "Tower of Babel" situation.
   E. Bitter but potentially better answer:
      1. Good culture makes countries successful.
      2. Successful countries spur immigration from unsuccessful countries.
      3. If immigrants assimilate, larger group gets to enjoy the benefits of the "superior" culture.
      4. Otherwise, receiving countries will eventually be as bad as sending countries.
   F. Example: Is Islamic fundamentalism a good system in culturally supportive countries? Or is it bad everywhere?
   G. Of course, some assimilation concerns could be about coordination, while others are about cultural superiority.
   H. Related point: Comparing different *kinds* of immigrants.
      1. Krikorian's position
      2. Typical nativist's position
   I. "Magic dirt" – or magic culture?

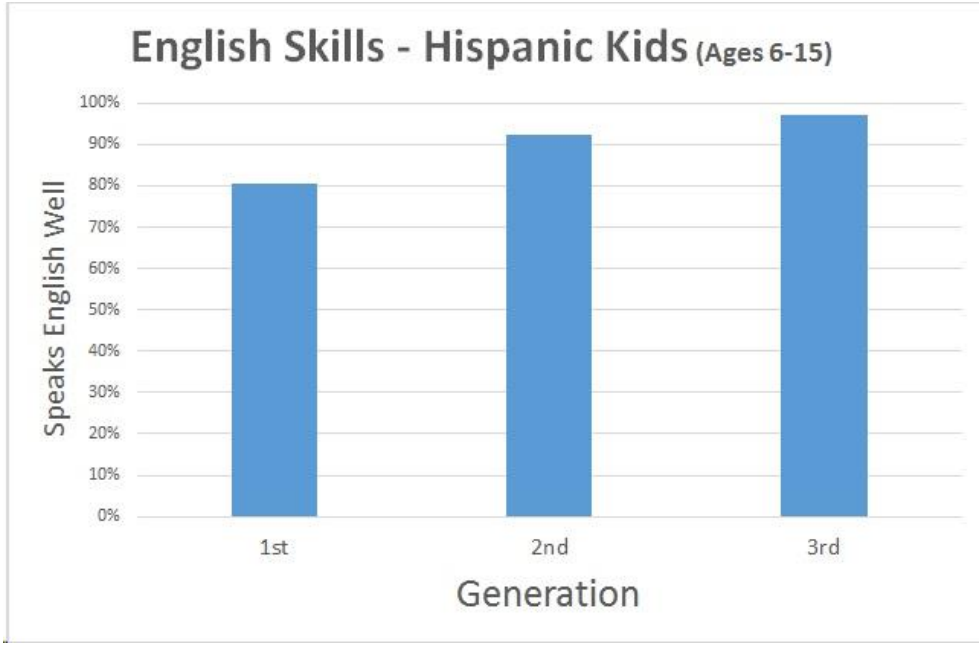
II. Linguistic Assimilation
   A. Best-case for coordination: Life is easier if all the people in a country share a common language, but it doesn't much matter *which* language they share.
      1. Though speaking a globally more *popular* language does have clear benefits.
      2. The case of early Israel.
   B. There is a widespread perception in the U.S. that the latest wave of immigrants is failing to learn English. Is this true?

C. On the surface, yes. Between 1980 and 2010, the share of the U.S. population that doesn't speak English in the home rose from 11% to 21%. 44% in California!

D. On closer look, immigrants themselves haven't changed much.
   1. First-generation adult immigrants from non-English countries rarely became fluent in the past, and rarely become fluent today.
   2. Subsequent generations of immigrants, however, continue to attain near-universal fluency.

E. "Speaks English well" results for kids (ages 6-15) by generation.
   1. Note: These measures understate *adult* fluency.

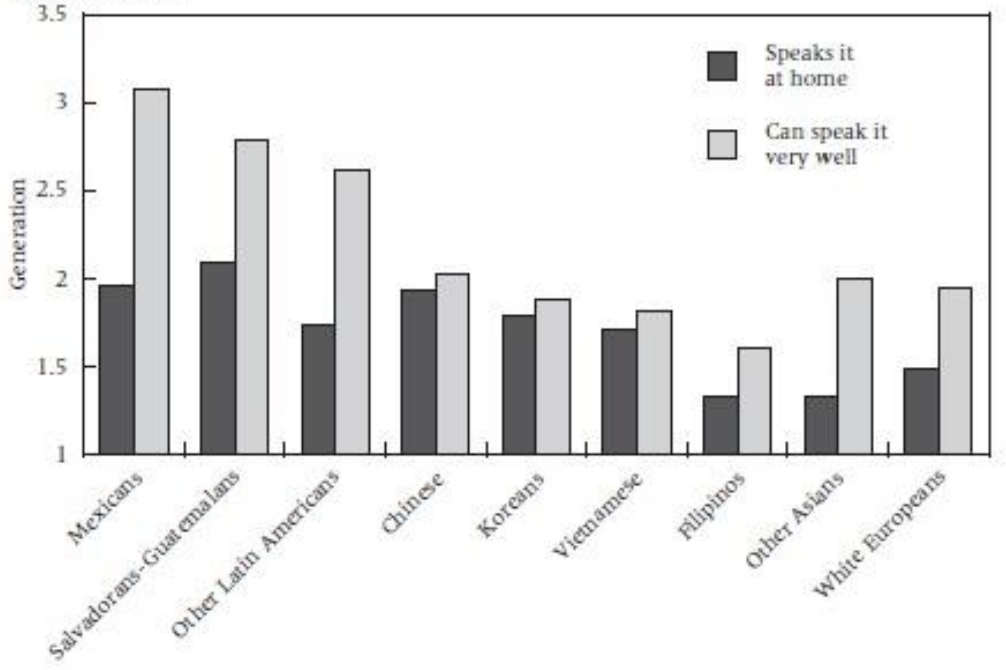




F. U.S. schools spend years trying to teach foreign languages to natives, with negligible results; 88% who say they speak the foreign language "very well" learned it at home.

G. How long does this home learning last? Sociologists actually measure "linguistic life expectancies" in generations. Results for sample in southern California:

FIGURE 3 Linguistic life expectancies for selected immigrant groups by generation



H. Some people see the higher survival of Spanish fluency in Hispanics as a sign of poor assimilation. Given Hispanic kids' high English fluency, is the ability to speak a second language really a sign of a *problem*?

III. Educational Assimilation

A. There is normally a high correlation between parental education and child education.

B. Question: If we admit lots of low-education immigrants, should we expect this to sharply depress the education of the next generation?

C. Answer: No, because the children of immigrants have *much* higher upward mobility than children of natives.

D. The pattern for children of natives:

TABLE 8-9 Predicted Educational Distribution of U.S.-born Children of a U.S.-born Parer Percentages of Parental Offspring Expected to be in an Educational Category (rows add 100)

Parent's education \ Child's education	Less than high school	High school graduate	Some college	Bachelor's degree	More than bachelor's
Less than high school	29.4	50.9	18.4	1.3	0.0
High school graduate	7.6	42.2	42.2	7.8	0.2
Some college	1.0	16.9	50.1	28.8	3.2
Bachelor's degree	0.0	2.3	26.0	51.8	19.9
More than bachelor's	0.0	0.3	7.0	40.3	52.4

Color Scale: 10-20, 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, >50

E. The pattern for children of immigrants:

TABLE 8-8 Predicted Educational Distribution of U.S.-born Children of a Foreign-born Parent, Percentages of Parental Offspring Expected to be in an Educational Category (rows add to 100)

Parent's education \ Child's education	Less than high school	High school graduate	Some college	Bachelor's degree	More than bachelor's
Less than high school	17.1	44.1	32.4	6.2	0.3
High school graduate	4.3	27.2	46.2	20.3	2.0
Some college	0.7	11.9	40.2	38.0	9.2
Bachelor's degree	0.1	2.2	21.7	46.5	29.5
More than bachelor's	0.0	0.6	8.8	37.7	52.9

Color Scale: 10-20, 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, >50

F. Suppose we code the five educational categories from 1-5, then look at the conditional expectation for childrens' education as a function of parental education. Results:

Parental Education	Native Parent	Immigrant Parent
1	1.9	2.3
2	2.5	2.9
3	3.2	3.4
4	3.9	4.0
5	4.4	4.4

G. We can use this information to construct another table mapping immigrants' observed education into their *potential* education – i.e., the education they would have acquired if they'd been born in the United States.

Immigrant Education		**Environment Deprivation**
Actual	Potential	
1	1.67	-.67
2	2.57	-.57
3	3.29	-.29
4	4.20	-.20
5	5.00	-.00

H. This gives us a plausible measure of the environmental deprivation effect of growing up outside of the U.S.
   1. The poorer the country, the greater the likely deprivation.

IV. Basics of Trust
   A. Intuitively, social trust seems like a good thing.
      1. "Society works better if we trust each other."
      2. Less conflict.
      3. Less need for formal enforcement.
   B. Social scientists almost always measure trust with simple survey questions. E.g. the General Social Survey asks, "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in life?"
      1. Response options: "Can trust," "Depends," and "Can't be too careful."
      2. Generic label for such questions: "generalized trust."
   C. Since the World Values Survey also measures generalized trust, a vast literature uses trust to predict local, state, nation, and international outcomes.

D. Standard results: Trust is good for almost all desirable social outcomes. Trusting societies are richer, safer, happier, etc.

E. Caveat: This is the consensus view. However, a few seemingly careful review articles argue that the trust literature suffers from both confirmation bias and carelessness.

V. Immigration and Trust

A. Many scholars are worried that immigration will hurt trust.

B. Why? Main argument is that immigration raises diversity, and diversity is bad for trust.

C. Even many left-wing social scientists regretfully make this argument, most notably Robert Putnam.

D. If you actually look at the numbers in Putnam's own work, however, the magnitude of this diversity effect is microscopic.

Table 3. Predicting Trust in Neighbours from Individual and Contextual Variables

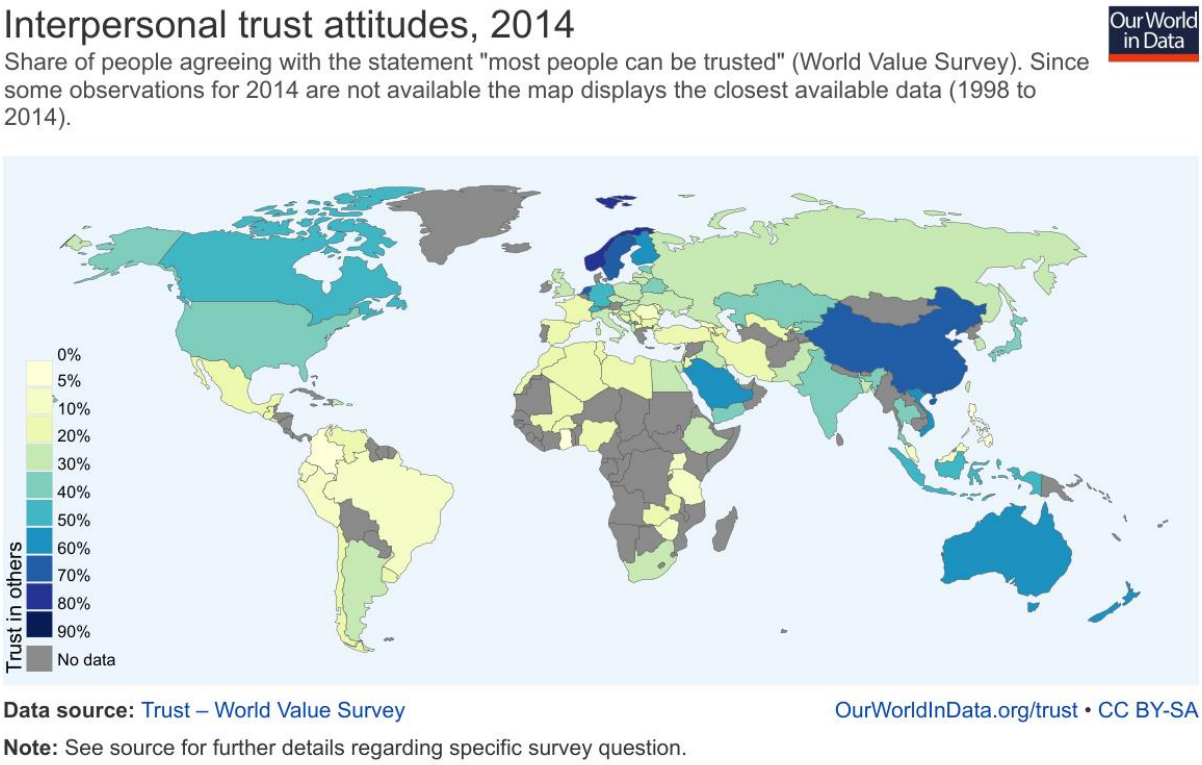
	B	S. E.	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.79	0.11		7.0	0.0000
R's age	0.01	0.00	0.15	21.4	0.0000
R owns home (v. rent)	0.25	0.01	0.13	19.7	0.0000
R's education (years)	0.04	0.00	0.13	19.1	0.0000
R's ethnicity: black	−0.31	0.02	−0.12	−18.6	0.0000
Census tract poverty rate	−0.66	0.09	−0.08	−7.1	0.0000
R's satisfaction with current finances	0.10	0.01	0.08	12.4	0.0000
R's ethnicity: Latino	−0.24	0.02	−0.07	−9.8	0.0000
R's household income ($100,000)	0.14	0.02	0.05	7.5	0.0000
County: Non-violent Crimes per Capita	−2.57	0.41	−0.05	−6.2	0.0000
Census tract Herfindahl Index of Ethnic Homogeneity	**0.18**	**0.04**	**0.04**	**5.1**	**0.0000**
Census Tract Population Density (100,000 per sq. mi)	−0.39	0.08	−0.04	−4.8	0.0000
Census Tract Percent Living Same Town as Five Years Earlier	−0.24	0.04	−0.04	−5.4	0.0000
R's decades in this community	.020	.004	0.04	5.3	0.0000
Census Tract Percent Renters	−0.14	0.04	−0.04	−3.5	0.0006
Census Tract Percent Bachelor's Degree	0.29	0.07	0.03	4.3	0.0000
R is Spanish-speaker	−0.13	0.03	−0.03	−4.1	0.0001
R is female	0.05	0.01	0.03	4.7	0.0000
Census Tract Gini Coefficient for Household Income	0.39	0.15	0.02	2.7	0.0069
Census Tract Average Commute Time (hours)	−0.21	−0.06	−0.02	−3.4	0.0006
R's ethnicity: Asian	−0.09	0.03	−0.02	−3.3	0.0011
Census Tract Percent United States Citizens	0.21	0.09	0.02	2.2	0.0264
County: Violent Crimes per Capita	6.59	3.35	0.02	2.0	0.0489
Census Tract Percent Over 65	0.21	0.10	0.01	2.1	0.0364
R is a citizen	0.06	0.03	0.01	2.1	0.0356
R's average monthly work hours	.002	.001	0.01	1.8	0.0732
R is resident of South	−0.02	0.02	−0.01	−1.2	0.2182
R is resident of Midwest	−0.02	0.02	−0.01	−1.0	0.3296
R is resident of West	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.8	0.4238
R's commuting time (hours)	−0.00	0.01	0.00	−0.2	0.8069

Notes: Question was 'How much can you trust people in your neighbourhood?' N = 23,260. Adj. $R^2 = 0.26$.

E. Putnam uses a 4-point scale. Moving from current U.S. diversity level to *maximum* diversity reduces predicted trust by .04.

F. Much bigger effects:
   1. Black and Hispanic shares
   2. Homeownership
   3. Citizenship

G. There is however a *much* stronger argument that immigrants depress national trust. Namely: Most would-be immigrants come from poor countries, and poor countries have low trust.



VI. Trust Assimilation

A. If migrants bring their low trust with them, and pass their low trust on to their kids, admitting low-trust migrants eventually yields a low-trust country.

B. Is trust really so persistent? Researchers are divided.

C. How do you measure assimilation? Standard method:
   1. Measure trust in ancestral country.
   2. See how well this predicts trust in country of residence.

D. One common view:
   1. High assimilation for Europe
   2. Low assimilation for U.S.

E. When I looked at U.S. studies, the work seemed poor. In particular, the sample of countries of origin was very narrow. So I greatly expanded the sample.

1. Trust measure is binary; 0=”most people can’t be trusted,” 1=”most people can be trusted.”
2. Perfect trust persistence means C=0, Born*Ancestral=(1-Born)*Ancestral=1.

F. Results: if you treat African-Americans like immigrants, trust assimilation is moderate, especially for later generations.

Dependent Variable: TRUST
Method: Least Squares
Date: 05/24/17 Time: 13:30
Sample (adjusted): 9121 62446
Included observations: 25210 after adjustments

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic
C	0.100325	0.020419	4.913316
BORN	0.121811	0.022546	5.402829
BORN*ANCESTRAL	0.560910	0.029475	19.02983
(1-BORN)*ANCESTRAL	0.700551	0.072665	9.640823

G. If you distinguish between slaves and free migrants, trust assimilation is high, especially for later generations.

Dependent Variable: TRUST
Method: Least Squares
Date: 05/24/17 Time: 13:46
Sample (adjusted): 9121 62446
Included observations: 25210 after adjustments

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic
C	0.100325	0.020288	4.944959
BORN	0.230960	0.023201	9.954724
BORN*ANCESTRAL	0.276592	0.033244	8.320146
(1-BORN)*ANCESTRAL	0.700551	0.072200	9.702911
SLAVE	-0.214622	0.011874	-18.07506

H. Bottom line: Trust is much more like than language than hair color.

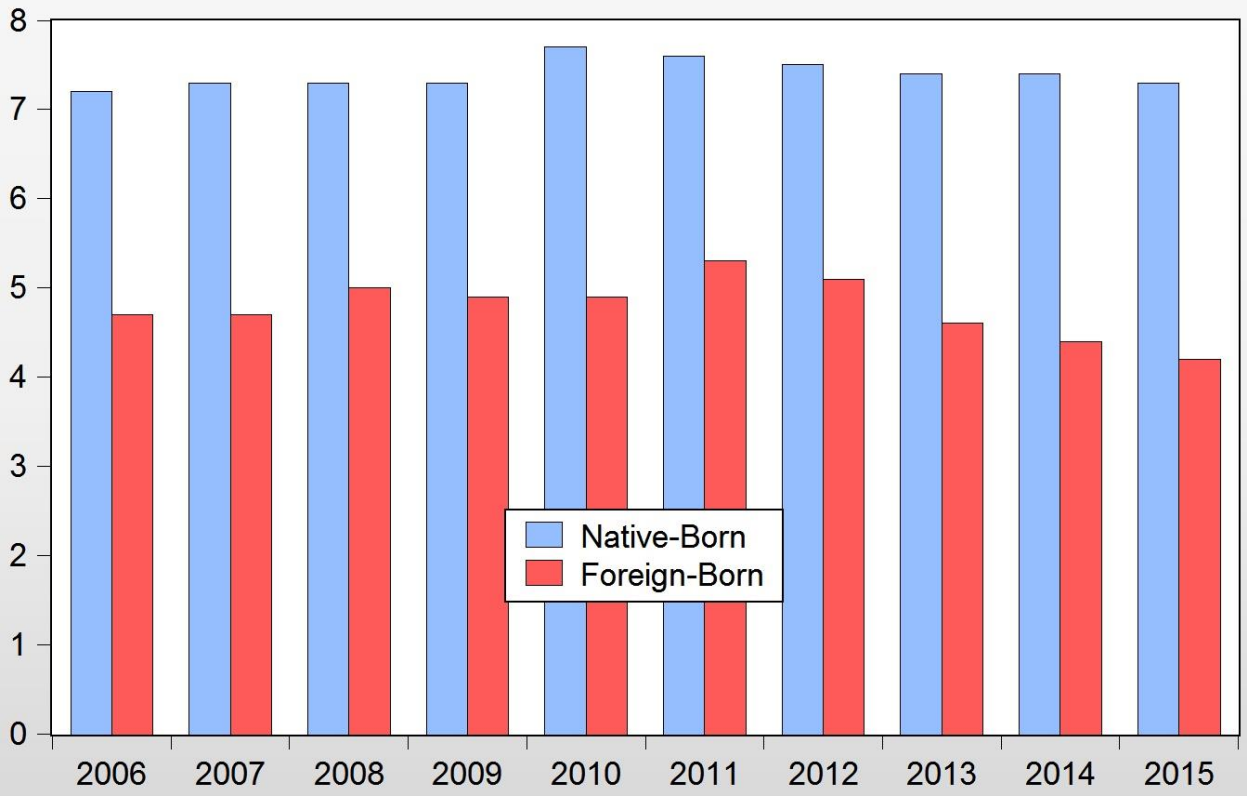
I. Why trust is overrated:
1. Moderate trust is helpful, but almost no one in the U.S. would bother to migrate to enjoy the benefits of higher trust.
2. Moderate trust may be better for growth.
3. Ultra-trusting earn less and get cheated more.
4. What’s really good is not trust but trust*worthiness*.
5. Quip: We need enough trust to make credit cards work.

VII. Immigration and Crime in the U.S.

A. Critics of immigration routinely point to immigrant crime – and immigrants undeniably commit some crimes.

B. From a social science point of view, however, the key question is: Compared to what? Are immigrants more criminally inclined than natives, the same, or less?

C. The answer for the U.S. is clear. By virtually every known measure, immigrants have *lower* average crime rates than natives. Census data:



D. But this doesn't quite decide matters. In principle, immigrants could *indirectly* raise crime rates by raising *natives'* crime rates.
   1. Immigrants raise unemployment, so natives turn to crime.
   2. Immigrants undermine social cohesion, so natives turn to crime.

E. In the U.S., at least, the opposite seems true. A large literature finds that immigration lowers overall crime rates.

F. There is less research for Europe, but there immigrants seem to have above-average crime rates. (Table 7.1 from *Routledge Handbook on Crime and International Migration*)

G. Simplest story: U.S. natives have high crime, so immigrants are better than us. European natives have low crime, so immigrants are worse than them.

VIII. Immigration, Terrorism, and Availability Cascades

A. Especially in the U.S., foreigners are greatly overrepresented in deadly terrorism.
   1. From 1975-2015, foreign-born terrorists were responsible for 88% of all terrorist deaths on U.S. soil.

B. The reaction to terrorism has been very costly. The U.S. alone has spent trillions.

C. The measured size of the problem, however, is tiny. For the U.S., murder is less than 1% of all deaths, and terrorism is less than 1% of all murders.

D. Why the disproportionate reaction? The availability cascades model (Kuran and Sunstein) provides the best answer.

Table 7.1 Foreign nationals in European prisons, 28 EU countries

	Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)	*Prison population total*	*Foreign prisoners, percentage of prison population*	*Foreign prisoners, estimated approximate absolute numbers*
Austria	98	8273	48.6	4021
Belgium	108	12126	44.2	5360
Bulgaria	151	10996	2	220
Croatia	108	4741	5.7	270
Cyprus	106	905	53.8	487
Czech Republic	157	16568	8.8	1458
Denmark	73	4091	26.8	1096
Estonia	227	3036	39.9	1211
Finland	58	3134	14.5	454
France	100	67050	17.5	11734
Germany	77	63317	27.1	17159
Greece	111	12479	63.2	7887
Hungary	186	18388	3.5	644
Ireland	89	4120	14.3	589
Italy	105	64047	35	22416
Latvia	304	6117	1.3	80
Lithuania	329	9729	1.2	117
Luxembourg	131	717	72.2	518
Malta	145	610	40.3	246
Netherlands	82	13749	24.6	3382
Poland	209	80482	0.7	563
Portugal	137	14324	18.5	2650
Romania	158	33510	0.6	201
Slovakia	184	9981	2	120
Slovenia	66	1357	10.7	145
Spain	145	66995	31.7	21237
Sweden	67	6364	30.5	1941
United Kingdom (England and Wales)	148	84392	12.8	10802
United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)	101	1866	6.3	118
United Kingdom (Scotland)	146	7808	3.4	265
Totals		631272		117391

Source: The World Prison Brief (n.d.).

E. Cognitive psychologists have found that people frequently estimate probabilities based upon *how easy it is to think of examples*. They call this the “availability heuristic.”
F. This often leads to systematically biased estimates, or "availability bias."
G. Psychologists normally demonstrate this bias in simple experiments. How does it play out in the real world?
H. Kuran and Sunstein’s story: The interaction between availability bias and the media leads to a never-ending series of mass hysterias, or "availability cascades.”
I. The cycle of hysteria:
    1. The media gives massive coverage to shocking but rare events in order to get good ratings.
    2. The public watches. Watching makes it easier for the public to think of examples of the events the media covers.
    3. One effect: The public begins to think the problems are quantitatively serious, so it gets easier to sell the public similar stories.
    4. Other effect: Politicians begin trying to solve the "problem" to win votes.
J. Examples:
    1. Nuclear power
    2. Mass shootings
    3. Frankenfoods
    4. Terrorism

IX. Pre-Assimilation
A. Common observation about immigration today versus 100 years ago: Modern transportation and communication have reduced the benefit of assimilation, so immigrants assimilate less than they used to.
    1. Krikorian’s doughnut analogy
B. Yet this is only half the story: Modern transportation and communication also reduce the *cost* of assimilation.
C. Most notably: In the modern world, many hundreds of millions of foreigners “pre-assimilate” to Western cultures they have never experienced first-hand.
D. If and when they arrive, they are ready to “hit the ground running.”

X. Cosmopolitanism and Diversity
A. Does cosmopolitanism undermine diversity?
B. In one sense, yes: If everyone has full access to all of the world’s cultures, no place remains culturally distinct.
C. In another sense, no: If everyone has full access to all of the world’s cultures, each person has a maximum menu of cultural choices.
D. By analogy: If every store has all goods, do consumers have one choice or vast choice?
    1. Trivially, one choice.
E. Practically, vast choice.