

Multiculturalism, Interculturalism and opinion on Muslims, Jews and Sikhs.

Jack Jedwab
Executive Director
Association for Canadian Studies
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In the aftermath of 9-11 there was much concern around the possible rise in negative attitudes and prejudice aimed at Muslims as well as other religious minorities notably Jews and Sikhs. Indeed such concerns indirectly contributed to ongoing debates about the models of diversity best suited to promoting harmonious relations within Canada. It was argued that the multicultural model by promoting group differences failed to encourage necessary interaction between groups designed to build a sense of shared values and foster cohesion. A presumed alternative model described as interculturalism aimed to encourage interaction between communities as is central focus. However this model which the Quebec government characterizes as its approach to managing diversity defines interaction on the basis of majority-minority relations and in doing so may foster strong majority and minority ethnic group identities. In each instance contacts between members of various groups do not occur in a vacuum and are a function of the mix of the population in a given area. Hence in cities there is more opportunity to interact with members of different communities that is the case in most small centers. To test the presumed effectiveness of the two models in the Canadian context the Association for Canadian Studies commissioned the firm Leger Marketing to ask questions about the degree of contact on the one hand and how favorable opinion on the other hand of Muslim, Jewish and Sikh Canadians. Over the past two years the ACS has begun tracking opinion on these communities to monitor changes. In this instance the focus is on regional differences in contact and opinion and other demographics. The survey was conducted amongst 1 500 Canadians over the period August 22-28th. The poll's margin of error is 3.1% 19 times out of 20.

As observed in Table one when asked about their degree of contact with the three groups some 44% of Canadians report either often or occasionally having contact with Jews compared with 37% with Muslims and 21% with Sikhs.

Table 1
Do you have contact with the following groups...

	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Jews	15%	29%	22%	31%
Muslims	13%	24%	23%	39%
Sikhs	7%	14%	23%	53%

On the basis of age when asked whether they often have contact some profound differences emerge with the younger cohorts (under the age of 35) more likely to report often having contact with Muslims than with Jews whereas the baby-boomers (45 and over) are more likely to have contact with Jews than with Muslims.

Table 2
Do you have contact with the following groups...

Often	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Jews	13%	16%	14%	18%	14%	15%
Muslims	22%	19%	14%	10%	6%	5%
Sikhs	8%	10%	8%	6%	5%	2%

On the basis of one's principal language clearly it is English Canadians that have report often having contact with Jews than do francophones. The allophones are far more likely to have contact with Jews than do francophones but there contact with Muslims is also by far more frequent than is the case for both English and French.

Table 3
Do you have contact with the following groups...

Often	French	English	Other
Jews	5%	20%	13%
Muslims	7%	11%	24%
Sikhs	1%	7%	12%

When it comes to having a favorable opinion of each of the groups it is the Jewish population that fares best with 78% reporting a favorable opinion. Muslims are second with 61% but it is the Sikh population that fares the worst at 53%. To be fair because of the substantial percentage of persons saying they have no opinion when it comes to the Sikhs their numbers are reduced. As such a higher percentage of Canadians hold unfavorable views of Muslims (27%) than they do Sikhs (25%).

Table 4
Would you say you have a Very Favorable, Somewhat Favorable, somewhat Unfavorable or Very Unfavorable opinion of the following groups?

	TOTAL Favorable	Very Favorable	Somewhat favorable	Total Unfavorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	Don't Know
Jews	78%	30%	48%	12%	8%	4%	10%
Muslims	61%	18%	43%	27%	18%	9%	12%
Sikhs	53%	15%	38%	25%	16%	9%	22%

On the basis of language background it is the English group that reports a more favorable rating of Jews followed by francophones and then allophones. In the case of Muslims it is the allophones that have a more favorable opinion than the francophones.

Table 5
Would you say you have a Very Favorable or Somewhat Favorable opinion of the following groups?

FAVORABLE	French	English	Other
Jews	72%	84%	67%
Muslims	53%	65%	60%
Sikhs	44%	58%	50%

Where the gaps become wide is when Canadians are asked to indicate very favorable opinion toward the groups. The difference is especially important between the English and French with a 24 point gap in the extent to which a very favorable opinion is expressed.

Table 6

Would you say you have a Very Favorable opinion of the following groups?

Very Favorable in percentage	French	English	Other
Jews	11%	39%	24%
Muslims	9%	20%	24%
Sikhs	6%	19%	17%

In the table below we examine the relationship between the degree of contact with each of the three groups and opinion of them. It is apparent that in the case of all three groups persons with more contact have a more favorable opinion.

Table 7

Do you have contact with the following groups...

Would you say you have a Very Favorable, Somewhat Favorable, somewhat Unfavorable or Very Unfavorable opinion of the following groups?

JEWS	Total	Often/Occa.	Rarely/Never
Total Favorable	78%	90%	68%
Very Favorable	30%	45%	17%
Somewhat favorable	48%	45%	51%
Total Unfavorable	12%	5%	19%
Somewhat unfavorable	8%	4%	12%
Very Unfavorable	4%	1%	7%

Table 8

Do you have contact with the following groups...

Would you say you have a Very Favorable, Somewhat Favorable, somewhat Unfavorable or Very Unfavorable opinion of the following groups?

MUSLIMS	Total	Often/Occa.	Rarely/Never
Total Favorable	61%	81%	50%
Very Favorable	18%	31%	11%
Somewhat favorable	43%	50%	39%
Total Unfavorable	27%	12%	36%
Somewhat unfavorable	18%	11%	22%
Very Unfavorable	9%	1%	13%

Table 9**Do you have contact with the following groups...****Would you say you have a Very Favorable, Somewhat Favorable, somewhat Unfavorable or Very Unfavorable opinion of the following groups?**

SIKHS	Total	Often/Occa.	Rarely/Never
Total Favorable	53	80	47
Very Favorable	15	34	10
Somewhat favorable	38	46	37
Total Unfavorable	25	11	29
Somewhat unfavorable	16	10	18
Very Unfavorable	9	1	11

Returning to our original premise a detailed analysis of this study and a previous one reveal that francophones reporting similar degrees of contact with Muslims and Jews as anglophones report less favorable opinions. Therefore if the intercultural approach breaks down negative sentiment as opposed to the multicultural one than the differences in favorable or positive views towards reporting equal degrees of contact should not be so wide.

Positive Opinion towards Muslims on the part of English and French by degree of contact

Table 10

English	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Generally positive	71.4%	61.5%	52.5%	29.6%
Generally negative	20.4%	27.6%	35.7%	49.4%
Neither positive nor begative	5.7%	7.4%	6.2%	7.2%
DK/NA	2.4%	3.5%	5.6%	13.8%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
French	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Generally positive	50.0%	41.6%	48.9%	25.9%
Generally negative	26.3%	37.6%	37.8%	53.3%
Neither positive nor begative	22.5%	20.8%	11.1%	17.5%
DK/NA	1.3%		2.2%	3.3%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 11

Generally positive opinion of Jews	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
English	65.1	44	42.5	27.2
French	35.1	21.5	26.1	8.9

Other policy considerations arising from these findings suggests that there is a need to look at cross cultural relationships outside of the interaction between majority language or ethnic groups and minority religious and/or ethnic communities. In turn programs aimed at promoting language exchange amongst youth need to further involve to a larger degree the non-French/non-English groups.