

August 2015

# Living in a Transnational World: Identity Negotiation and Formation Among Second-Generation Lebanese Young Adults Living in London Ontario

Wajeha Chams

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/sociology\\_masrp](https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/sociology_masrp)



Part of the [Sociology Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Chams, Wajeha, "Living in a Transnational World: Identity Negotiation and Formation Among Second-Generation Lebanese Young Adults Living in London Ontario" (2015). *MA Research Paper*. 2.

[https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/sociology\\_masrp/2](https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/sociology_masrp/2)

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Sociology Department at Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in MA Research Paper by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact [tadam@uwo.ca](mailto:tadam@uwo.ca), [wlsadmin@uwo.ca](mailto:wlsadmin@uwo.ca).

Living in a Transnational World: Identity Negotiation and Formation Among Second-  
Generation Lebanese Young Adults Living in London Ontario.

by

**Wajeha Chams**

A research paper accepted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Department of Sociology  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

Supervisor: Dr. Tracey L. Adams

2015

## **Abstract**

According to the 2011 Canadian Census, immigrants make up 20.6% of the total Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2014), and a growing body of research is raising questions about immigrants' experiences, their identities and how transnational lives have shaped and influenced Canadian society and citizenship. Recent research on transnationalism enhances understanding of immigrants' relationships within both their source and host countries. This research demonstrates that first-generation immigrants tend to maintain their ethnic identities, language and cultural traditions through the active maintenance of transnational ties and activities. However, the lives of their children are less directly tied to the parents' homeland. As such, exactly how these children negotiate their ethnic identities, and the significance they attach to transnational ties is less clear. Using qualitative methodology, this paper explores the ethno-cultural identities and transnational connections of second-generation Canadian-born young adults of Lebanese descent in Canada. Study respondents identify differently as Canadian, Lebanese or Lebanese-Canadian, and their identities are strongly influenced by their transnational ties, family, community, experiences at school and religion. Individuals who have maintained ties with people of Lebanese descent both in Canada and in Lebanon and speak Arabic were more likely identify as Lebanese or Lebanese-Canadian. In contrast, those educated at an Islamic school in the host country, who have fewer ties within the Lebanese community or do not speak Arabic, were more likely to identify as Canadian or Muslim-Canadian. The implications of this research for future research on identity and transnationalism are discussed.

**Key Words:** Transnationalism, Identity, Second-Generation, Lebanese, Canadian, Lebanese-Canadian, Young Adults.

***Introduction:***

According to the 2011 Canadian Census, immigrants make up 20.6% of the total Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2014), and a growing body of research is raising questions about immigrants' experiences, their identities and how transnational lives have shaped and influenced Canadian society and citizenship. Classical theories on assimilation and acculturation assume that immigrants in the host country eventually acquire the dominant cultural identity and slowly let go of their original ethnic identity (Berry, 1997, Gordon 1964; Sam 2006). Berry (1997) maintained that assimilation could occur either when an individual chooses to replace his or her original culture in order to identify with the host culture or when the host country expects immigrants to adopt the larger national culture. Similarly, in his theory of *Structural Assimilation*, Gordon (1964) maintains that the minority group will inevitably adopt the cultural dynamics of the majority group. He defines assimilation as a "change of cultural patterns to those of the host society" (12). Although such theories were widely used in the past, they have been limiting in explaining newer trends of settlement, integration patterns and psychological well-being among new waves of immigrants and their children (Alba and Nee, 1997).

Recent studies on transnationalism challenge conventional theories of assimilation and show that immigrants are not limited to the cultural conditions of the host country (Simmons, 2010a; Tastsoglou & Petrinioit, 2011; Levitt, 2002; Murphy 2009).

Transnationalism can be defined as "the maintenance of occupations or activities that necessarily require regular social contacts over time across national borders and or across cultures" (Portes et al. in Murphy, 2006, p 80). With the rise of globalization, improved transportation and technological advancement, it has become easier for immigrants of all

origins to maintain a transnational way of life. Immigrants residing in the host country are able to maintain their ethnic identities, language, and cultural traditions (Murphy, 2006; Simmons 2010b; Portes, 1999). According to Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton (1992: 7), a transnational way of life is maintained when immigrants “forge and sustain multi-stranded relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.” For instance, sending remittances, travelling to the home country, participating in ethnic clubs, forming religious organizations or starting entrepreneurial interests in the host country are all common activities that strengthen a transnational way of life.

Evidence suggests that the lives of first generation immigrants have been forged within and across national borders; however, the lives of their children are less directly tied to the parents’ homeland. Exactly how these children negotiate their ethnic identities, and the significance they attach to transnational ties is less clear. Researchers, who have conducted empirical work on the transnational trends of the second-generation, have produced contrasting conclusions on the matter. Based on a sample of 10 second-generation Canadian-born young adults of Lebanese descent, this article seeks to identify those factors that encourage and discourage transnational identities and involvement among the children of first-generation immigrants living in Canada. This study finds that institutional settings and social ties within the family, community, religion, school and employment combine to shape whether an individual identifies as Canadian, Lebanese or Lebanese-Canadian.

### ***Lebanese Immigration to Canada:***

The nation of Lebanon—with a current population of about 5,882,562—is made up of a diverse group of people who hold different religious and ethnic orientations (CIA, 2014). There are 18 religious sects recognized, three of the most prominent are Muslims 54% (27%

Sunni, 27% Shia), Christian 40.5% (Includes 21% Maronite Catholic, 8% Greek Orthodox, 5% Greek Catholic, and 6.5 other Christian) and Druz 5.6%. The majority of Lebanon's ethnic composition is made up of Arabs at 95%, whereas 4% are Armenian and 1% is classified as other (CIA, 2014). The prominent languages spoken are Arabic (official), French, English and Armenian.

Despite this diversity, the people of Lebanon have emigrated for similar reasons. Emigration from Lebanon to Canada began around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Two major historical events that led to the high levels of out migration can be linked to the harsh treatment of the Ottoman (Turkish) colonial regime and the civil war of 1975. Emigration from Lebanon peaked around 1900 and 1914 averaging about 15 thousand per year. Many Lebanese people moved to countries like Brazil, Argentina, the United States and Canada. Up until 1911, Canada had welcomed over 7000 Lebanese immigrants, however the rise of both world wars led to set national restrictions on the admission of immigrants from parts of Asia, including Lebanon.

It was not until 1967 when Canada's discriminatory immigration policy was abolished. This made way for new waves of migration from other parts of the world (Boyd, 2000). The variations in religious, cultural and ethnic compositions of Lebanon were increasingly reflected in made its way into diversifying the Lebanese-Canadian society. In the 2011 census, 190,275 Canadians claimed to have Lebanese ancestry. The majority of the Lebanese-Canadian population is primarily concentrated in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec (Statistics Canada 2007). A larger share of the population is found in Ottawa making up 2% of the total population. Montreal and Halifax are also two cities that are home to more than 1% of the total Lebanese community in Canada. Moreover, in recent years, population

growth among people of Lebanese origin has concentrated in cities like Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, Windsor, London, Fredericton and Charlottetown (Statistics Canada 2007).

### ***Transnationalism: A First-Generation Phenomenon?***

Some studies find that maintaining transnational ties and homeland belonging are not as important for the children of immigrants (Murphy, 2006; Louie, 2006; Portes, 2001; Simmons, 2010b; Rambaut, 2002). In some cases, researchers argue that the experiences of the first generation are very different compared to those of the second generations. As such, the degree to which these two generations express transnational connection in their lives will vary. For instance, empirical studies have found that new immigrants residing in the host country often face hardships when trying to integrate into the broader society (Esses, 2014; Simmons, 2010b). Feelings of perceived discrimination, exclusion and stress have led immigrants to find ways to become resilient against times of uncertainty. Transnational relations among the first generation can enhance social networks and serve as a buffer against negative stereotypes, racism, prejudice or discriminatory experiences (Murphy, 2006; Simmons, 2010a). Interestingly, research has maintained that transnational activities and ties are related to higher life satisfaction and a stronger sense of belonging. Murphy (2006) studied the transnational activities of first generation West Indian immigrants and highlighted the role of their transnational activities on their psychological adjustment in the host country. He designed and used what he called the *Transnational Scale* to assess this relationship [See Murphy, 2000, for a further discussion of this scale]. This scale assesses the types and frequency of transnational activities, like how often one participates in cultural events, for example. In a study of 137 adults aged 18 to 54, Murphy found that first

generation participants engaged in and indicated high frequencies in family-related ties through communication, and cultural ties through traveling back home. Overall, it was reported that a strong transnational orientation among these immigrants provided a sense of higher life satisfaction and happiness (Murphy, 2006).

Similarly, Louie (2006) argues that although first-generation immigrant parents may want their children to maintain a strong connection to their original homeland, some will not adopt transnational orientations or practices. In his qualitative analysis looking at the children of Chinese immigrants, second-generation participants expressed a “loss of ethnic language and scarcity of contact with their parents’ homeland” (p 363). Louie connects this finding to an authoritarian parent-child relationship, and language barrier, which has resulted in an absence of a strong transnational connection. In connection, Portes (2001), emphasizes the importance of transnational ties and activities as a phenomena most appreciated by the first generation. The children of immigrants are more involved in the country in which they were born holding a strong allegiance to one nation. Similarly, Rambaut (2002) identified a sparse level of transnational attachment among the second generation. Sending remittances, visiting the homeland and keeping in contact with relatives and family were more salient among the first generation.

### ***Transnationalism Among The Second-Generation:***

In contrast, other research has found that the children of first-generation immigrants have formed strong transnational ties and ethnic identities despite the fact that they were born and spent most of their lives in the host country (Leichtman 2005; Bolognani, 2014; Somerville, 2008). Levitt (2004) studied the transnational activities and ties of Indian immigrants from Gujarat State living in Northeast Massachusetts. She finds that the members

of this community have participated in several transnational activities to maintain and strengthen their transnational identities. Common activities observed among Gujarat immigrants include sending remittances back to India in order to start small business initiatives, and forming Hindu groups in the United States, in order to build a strong religious foundation in the host country (Levitt, 2004).

Similarly, in her qualitative study Sommerville (2008) interviewed 18, second-generation immigrants from Karnataka, India in order to understand how they identify with their parents' homeland. Somerville was interested in the process of identity formation. She found that their identity—whether Indian or Canadian—was expressed through their level of emotional connection to India or Canada, their appearance, and style of dress as Indian or Canadian and their level of allegiance to either India or Canada. She found that Indo-Canadian youth have sustained transnational networks and strongly identify with their parents' homeland because of frequent visits to India, e-mails and phone calls that are exchanged. It was common that participants hyphenated their identity and attached high importance to maintaining transnational ties as a way of forming a strong sense of belonging in both countries. In a similar vein, Bologani (2014) studied the formation of a new transnational identity among British-Pakistanis. She found that, a high emotional attachment is built through frequent travels made back home and social networks, which combine to fulfill identity-building functions.

These studies suggest that members of the second generation can have transnational identities. They also show that identity can be fostered by social networks, travel and other transnational activities. Further research suggests that transnational orientations among the second-generation can develop depending on the social context of the family in which they

were brought up. The family is the primary socializing agent and plays an important role in shaping the identity of the second-generation (Tuan, 1998). According to the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, (2011) family and friends have played an important role in both first and second-generation immigrants' lives. Whether the support is in finding work or maintaining social networks, a concentrated population of family has been a primary agent in reinforcing transnational connections. Children of immigrants often grow up with cultural practices, language, foods and traditions that play a big role in how they come to associate or identify with the ethnic group and parents' homeland (Ahmed et al, 2003).

Moreover, transnational social groups and spaces, such as ethnic enclaves, also facilitate transnational orientations among the second-generation. According to the Ethnic Diversity Survey, (2003) 47% of second-generation participants reported a strong sense of belonging to their ethnic group. In her study on West Indian communities in New York, Vickerman (2002), found that second-generation West Indies individuals held a strong ethnic attachment to their parents' homeland despite the fact that they did not necessarily come into direct contact with the West Indies. Elements of one's ethnic identity, whether objective or subjective, largely make up part of an individuals' self-identity. First, ethnicity can include a common history, shared values, language, style of dress, and music. Second, it can have national or territorial claims to sovereignty. Third, it has a myth of common descent attached to it. Lastly, it has an assumed inherited racial ideology of similar skin, hair texture, and eye colour or facial features (See Allahar, 1998 for a full discussion on each component). Maintaining ethnic features can provide a sense of understanding and comfort in formulating a shared identity.

Additionally, racial, religious and class differences also foster transnational orientations amongst the second generation. Several studies have argued that the second generation may embrace their ethno-cultural identity and maintain ties with their parents' homeland as a strategy to become resilient against marginalization, inequality or racism (Fouron and Glick-Schiller, 2002). Having a strong ethnic identity offers immigrants and their children three psychological benefits. First it provides the ability to realize that they are part of a group that has shared values and norms. Second, holding onto a unique ethnic identity assumes the individual has a second homeland that they can return to during difficult times. Lastly, holding onto a shared ethnic identity can be comforting to immigrants who feel alienated from the broader host society (Murphy, 2006). Smith (2002) maintains that Mexicans living in New York often take on transnational orientations as a way to separate themselves from Puerto Ricans and African Americans. The latter two ethnic groups are often conflated with Mexicans.

Overall, it is clear that transnationalism is important to first and second-generation immigrants, yet research findings on the significance and prevalence of transnationalism among the second generation has varied. Some studies find considerable evidence of transnational activities amongst the second-generation, while others hold that members of the second generation only loosely tie their ethnic identity to their parents' country of origin. This paper addresses this contradiction in the literature, seeking answers to the following questions: Do second-generation individuals have transnational identities? And what factors appear to facilitate or discourage transnational identities and activities among second-generation Canadians' of Lebanese descent?

***Methodology:***

This study examines how identity, as Canadian, Lebanese or Lebanese-Canadian, has been shaped and negotiated within the institutional settings of the family, community, religion, school and work. It draws on face-to-face- semi-structured interviews with 10 second-generation Canadian born young adults of Lebanese descent. Eligible participants included anyone who was between the ages of 18 to 30, born in Canada and had at least one parent who born in Lebanon. Participants were recruited through a variety of methods. Posters were displayed through out the campus from which students were recruited, and handed to members of the Lebanese community. Announcements were made on cultural and religious Facebook pages and snowball sampling was used. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and were all conducted in English by the author of this study. Data collection took place in April of 2015.

The average age of participants in this study is twenty-two years. Six females and four males were interviewed. Four out of ten participants had both their parents born in Lebanon while the other six participants had one parent who was either born in Canada, Holland or Syria. In terms of religious composition, all participants identified as Muslim, with nine identifying as Suni and one as Shia. In terms of first language, every participant indicated that they understood Arabic; however, only three participants could read and write it fluently. Six out of 10 participants were employed during the time of the interviews. The other four participants were unemployed but did have work experience in the past. Two participants worked for a family business, one participant worked for a bank, as a sales representative, one worked part-time as a hospital receptionist as well as a supply teacher,

one worked at a local Muslim resource center, and the last employed participant worked as a health research assistant at her university.

All participants were attending university and living in Southwestern Ontario at the time of the interviews. The interviews were all conducted at places that were most convenient to the participants. Three interviews were conducted at coffee shops, two were conducted at the homes of participants and five were conducted on campus. Each participant was asked a series of questions that sought to learn more about their identity, family, community, school, religion and work. Common questions asked across each interview included: “Would you identify or describe yourself to belong more closely to Lebanese or Canadian culture?”, “Has there been a set of values or expectations set out by your family/parent’s that has influenced your identity?”, “What influence do you think your Lebanese community has had in shaping your self-identity?”, “Is your religion closely linked to your ethno-cultural identity or is it separate?”, “Tell me about your experiences in school and how your experiences have been linked to your Lebanese identity”, “Does any element of your ethnic background give you an advantage or disadvantage when applying for work?” and “Are you more likely to search for work among your ethnic group? Each interview was recorded and transcribed. Interviews were typed up verbatim and categorized into those who identified as Canadian, Lebanese or hyphenated their identities. This made it easy to identify common themes and differences among each group of participants. Each participant answered all the questions and each participant was compensated with a \$10.00 iTunes gift card.

***Conceptualizing Identity Among the Second Generation:***

When asked about their identity, participants either identified as Lebanese, Canadian or Lebanese-Canadian. Interestingly, the majority of participants (5) hyphenated their identity with either Lebanese or Muslim first, followed by Canadian. Those who identified as Muslim-Canadian ascribed more importance to their religious orientation than their ethnic culture. Three participants indicated that they felt that they were more Lebanese, despite the fact that they were born in Canada. Two other participants indicated that they felt Canadian but that they would often mention, if asked, that one or both of their parents were born in Lebanon. Eman (age 22), whose parents were both born in Lebanon, identified as just Canadian regardless of the context in which she was asked. She says:

*If an Arab person asks me where I am from, I know they are expecting me to talk about my ethnicity, but I still want to say that 'I'm Canadian, but my parents are from Lebanon'. A lot of other people cut straight to it and say 'oh.... I am Lebanese'. But I was born here so I really do feel like I am more Canadian in my values and perspectives than a lot of other people. Um... now... if a Canadian person asks me, I would say the same thing, and I won't even tell them I am Lebanese.*

In contrast, Munir (age 19) whose mother was born in Lebanon and father in Syria argues that:

*I would say Lebanese, even though by Arab inheritance standards I would be considered 'Syrian', because my dad is Syrian. The public image in the Middle East of Lebanese people is much better than Syrian people. When you think Lebanese you think charismatic and strong personality, when you think Syrian you think of a mechanic or something....so., I just automatically say Lebanese.*

Similarly, Farah (age 18) whose father was born in Lebanon and has a mother with Dutch origins expresses her identity as just Lebanese, she says:

*Even though I was born in Canada, I always say that I am from Lebanon. I usually don't tell people my mom is Dutch, just because she also feels more Lebanese after marrying my dad. I have a close relationship with my Lebanese family because I always keep in contact with them. Through out my childhood I went to Lebanon and*

*stayed there for multiple times. I was there about two years ago and all my friends here in Canada are Lebanese too.*

Interestingly, both Munir and Farah grew up with a mixed-ethnic background but strongly identified as Lebanese only. The ways in which they negotiated their identities are not entirely clear, but it was observed that they spoke more warmly about the parents whose ethnicity they claimed as their own.

Moreover, those who claimed a hyphenated identity as ‘Lebanese-Canadian’, expressed feelings of belonging in more than one place. Amira (age 25), for instance, says she is more Canadian when she is at work:

*In the school system, when I am supply teaching, I usually get asked ‘are you Arabic or are you Muslim’, and because I wear the hijab it is obviously an elephant in the room and Muslim teachers are a minority in the education system anyways...so.... I say ‘yes, I am’ and I openly embrace those parts of my identity, but when I am teaching I would spread my Canadian identity more, it sort of matches the setting more.*

Adam (age 24), whose parents were both born in Lebanon, identified as, ‘Lebanese-Canadian’, says:

*Honestly, I don’t know which to call home; it feels like I am in limbo between the two countries. So.... I would call home depending on which crowd I’m rolling with. If I am with my white friends, I sing the Canadian anthem loud and clear and if I’m with my Lebanese friends, I talk about how messed up health care system is in Lebanon.*

Both Amira and Adam negotiate their identities based on the context in which they find themselves. In some contexts they emphasize their Canadian identity, and in others their Lebanese or Muslim identity. The hyphenated identity captures the two cultures they move between.

Even though some identified as simply Canadian, all of the participants expressed a sense of uniqueness and pride in being ‘Lebanese’. Being Lebanese meant that they had a set

of shared values that differed from Canadian values, a common language, history, music and food. Most significantly, being Lebanese was important because it was part of their parents' experiences. Eman (age 22), speaks best to this when she says:

*I feel like Lebanon is part of my history because my parents are Lebanese and they tell me stories about how it was living there and like the war and stuff like that...so... I feel like in terms of my relationship to my parents I am Lebanese, but as an individual, I am Canadian because I grew up here.*

Although study participants expressed their identity in different ways, all expressed pride in and a connection to their Lebanese heritage. For most, this identity was connected with their relationship with their parents and community. As we will see in the next section, family and community ties and religion were particularly salient in shaping the identity and transnational experiences of the study participants.

***Maintaining Family Ties and Community Networks:***

Those who expressed a strong Lebanese identity were more likely to have close ties to their extended family both in Canada and in Lebanon. Farah (age 18) who identified as Lebanese explains:

*I have so much family here in Canada, probably over 100 cousins... I keep in contact with them through a chat group we made on WhatsApp<sup>1</sup> and I call them often. Also, I was actually in Lebanon last month visiting my grandparents...we usually go to Lebanon for vacation and I get to see my dad's family. I absolutely love going to Lebanon. It's just so beautiful and sort of like a spiritual retreat in a way. When we are in Canada, every week my dad calls his mom in Lebanon and my siblings and I are always hovering around the phones waiting for our turn to speak with her.*

Using social media such as Skype, Facebook, or WhatsApp and traveling to the homeland were common forms of communication that sparked a transnational orientation among the second generation. In addition, the parents' level of involvement in maintaining

transnational ties to the homeland influenced the degree to which the second generation came to associate with their ethno-cultural identity. Warda (age 23) whose father was born in

Lebanon and mother in Canada says:

*My dad is planning go back to Lebanon after he retires and he wishes that we all go with him. My family owns a lot of land in Lebanon and my dad hired a company who is currently building a home there for us now. My dad always speaks of how lovely it would be when the home is complete and how much better the tea will taste with a view from the highest balcony.*

In a similar instance, Nancy (age 24) says:

*My dad always speaks of 'going back home', he has this vision where we are all there living together as one big happy family. I don't mind this idea, I would love to visit there and bring my family to visit also in the future.*

In Warda and Nancy's case, both their father's were economically involved in the homeland, which shaped their attachment to Lebanon. On the other hand, those who identified as Canadian appear to have fewer personal ties to the homeland. For instance Eman's parents, regularly called family in Lebanon, but she was not particularly close to them.

*My mom and dad actually call their parents, who live in Lebanon, almost every day on Skype. I don't voluntarily call my grandparents but when my mom calls me over to speak with her, I will.*

Muna's (age 24) experience was similar:

*I do have a lot of cousins and family, we are actually really big here in Canada and Lebanon, I feel bad...but I don't actually communicate with some of them. I have met my dad's brothers and their wives, but I don't go out of my way to hang out with them.*

---

<sup>1</sup> WhatsApp is a free universal mobile messaging application that was created in 2009. Users can send instant messages, videos, pictures and phone calls to friends and family all around the world.

Thus, even if their parents retained transnational ties, participants who did not actively engage in (or initiate) communication with extended family were less likely to have strong transnational ties themselves.

Bilingual fluency was another factor that played an important role in facilitating transnational attachments among the second generation. The majority of the young adults in this study were able to speak, understand or write the ethnic language of Arabic. Those who could speak Arabic fluently, emphasized the importance it played in their self-identity.

Nancy (age 24), who identified as Lebanese, said:

*My parents usually speak to us in Arabic at home. We often reply in English and Arabic, but mostly Arabic. I'm actually happy that my parents taught me Arabic growing up because when I go to Lebanon or even when I'm talking with my aunts over the phone I know that I have an advantage.*

Munir (age 19) who identified as Lebanese had a similar experience:

*We always speak Arabic at home. My father was very against speaking English. When we spoke English at home, he used to say 'this is not our language we should not speak this in the household unless we need to'. Eventually we started speaking in Arabic and I'm glad we do because I can switch between English or Arabic when speaking to my 'Arabic speaking only family'.*

Those who could fluently speak Arabic and practiced it at home were more likely to develop an emotional connection with their ethno-cultural identity than those who did not use or practice the language. Those who did not speak the language at home were less likely to communicate with their Lebanese family or community. This can be seen most clearly in the case of Eman (age 22) who identified as Canadian:

*We speak English 24/7 at home and it really annoys my mother. She only speaks Arabic to us, but my dad will speak English to us. So she gets annoyed at him as well because she says to him you are deteriorating the little Arabic that they have. I can see my mom's point though because we are lacking in that area. Just in terms of like, if you want to get more into that religion, like reading the *Quran*, um...even though I might be able to sound out the vowels and stuff, I won't be able to understand it. My*

*dad used to teach Arabic so he knows a lot about Arabic grammar and he has a whole library of Arabic books in our house. If I were to open one of his books I will have no idea what it says because it is in another language for me, so I can't relate to that part of my culture as much.*

Maintaining the ethnic language made participation and engagement within the ethnic community easier and more frequent. In connection, the young adults in this study who identified as Lebanese expressed a strong interest in keeping up with Lebanese elections, watching Lebanese television shows or even following Lebanese celebrities online. Farah (age 18) says:

*There are the different political parties in Lebanon and I like to know which parties people associate with. I am interested in observing how they are portrayed in Western media also. Also, I really like watching Lebanese soap operas, there is one called 'Al- Galebooun.' it is about when like the Turks were in Lebanon and the French. It is funny actually.... because since all these shows are in Arabic, sometimes I don't really understand what they are talking about, so when I am watching with my dad, I'm like 'baba... pause it or explain, what's going on?'*

Similarly, Nancy, (age 24), who identified as Lebanese says:

*My entire music playlist is made up of a combination of Arabic songs. I do listen to Arabic artists who are Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian too...but I mostly listen to Lebanese songs. Fairuz is my favourite classic singer; she is like the Marilyn Manroe of Lebanon. She is loved by my parents and grandfather also. Some of my friends think I'm weird because I keep up with the latest celebrity news in the Middle East.*

Thus, individuals who embraced Lebanese culture and were familiar with Arabic were more likely to express transnational ties and identities. Those who did not speak the language were less likely to identify as Lebanese or Lebanese-Canadian. Although the young adults who identified as Canadian did have parents who were transnationally involved in the homeland, as we will see in the next section, they placed more emphasis on religion than ethnic culture.

***Identity Formation: Religion and School:***

The young adults in this study who initially identified as Canadian were more likely to associate with their religious orientation than their cultural background. This is not to say that those who identified as Lebanese or Lebanese-Canadian were not religiously oriented, but that they placed more emphasis on their culture in formulating their self-identity. The participants who felt a stronger emotional connection to their religion attended Islamic schools at a young age. Adam (age 24) who identified as Muslim-Canadian said:

*I actually went to the [local] Islamic school for 6 years.... I had a great experience, I learned a lot about my religion and I made a lot of friends that I still keep in contact with today. My Lebanese culture is important to me, but growing up as an Islamic school kid, I learned to gain an appreciation and attachment to my religion more.*

Muna (age 24) also identified as Muslim-Canadian:

*Like it sound really bad, but I don't think I would have any connections with Lebanon if it were not for my grandparents who live there. I would not care to be honest. It sounds bad but its true. The reason why I feel closer to my religion is because my parents actually took Islamic school really seriously...like... I remember doing my Islamic homework every night for a couple hours with my mom, that's how important it became in my life.*

The parents of the young adults, who identified as Muslim-Canadian, placed more importance on religion. Cultural practices and customs were not emphasized in their everyday interactions at home. Muna (age 24) goes on to say:

*I don't think being Lebanese has a big influence on me actually. I would not call myself, 'Lebanese-Canadian', I would say, 'Muslim-Canadian'. I feel like our family is not very nationalistic toward Lebanon. Like...they are not very proud about Lebanon, especially because my mom came to Canada when she was five so she doesn't care too much about her Lebanese-ness and it rubbed off on me".*

For those who identified as Muslim-Canadian, religion was a key component of their identity. Participants who attended Islamic school at a young age expressed a continued

involvement in religious events and activities more so than cultural events. Adam (age 24) spoke about an Islamic hockey team that he and a few of his friends created:

*When I was in Islamic school, a few guys and I started a Hockey team. We always used to play hockey before class....so we used to play it, watch it, binge drink it, anything we could do with hockey, we would do it. Today, we all go back and we play every Tuesday and Thursday at the school gym. This team is not only Lebanese, the guys are all Muslim though...so um, there are like Egyptian, Palestinian and Syrian guys who are on our team, it's great".*

Many of those who identified as Muslim-Canadian were members of or volunteered at religious clubs and organizations like the Muslim Student Association<sup>2</sup>, the local Muslim resource center<sup>3</sup> and the Muslim Association of Canada<sup>4</sup>. Despite the fact that those who identified as Muslim-Canadian did not maintain strong transnational orientations to their parent's homeland, through technology, travel and speaking the ethnic language, they were observed to engage in religiously oriented activities and initiatives in the host country. This group of participants rarely attended traditional or cultural events in the host country. In contrast, those who hyphenated their identities or simply identified as Lebanese expressed more interest in participating in local events that heightened their awareness of their Lebanese roots.

### ***Identity Formation and Negotiation at Work:***

In discussing their experiences of employment, racial and religious differences were observed to be factors that influenced the degrees to which the second-generation identify

---

<sup>2</sup> A campus based student club that represents and promotes the needs of Muslims on and off campus.

<sup>3</sup> An organization that seeks to establish social support networks for Muslim individuals dealing with issues of integration, family conflict and domestic violence.

<sup>4</sup> A non-profit organization that provides services and programs to inform individuals and families on the holistic message of Islam.

with transnational orientations. Amir (age 22) expressed a connection to Lebanon when he felt marginalized at work:

*I used to work in Alberta, last summer, in Fort McMurray. I worked for a company who supplies for an oil company...it was a very labour intensive kind of setting. I had to move a lot of boxes and there really was a lot of physical labour. I got really tired at the end of the day, I would usually get a sore back and my arms would hurt at times...and sometimes it became even more difficult because, people were racist and prejudice toward me. But...these hard or negative experiences, to be honest, are when I would feel stronger to my Lebanese roots. I get this feeling that reminds me of how proud I am of what I've seen my parents do. They worked hard and kept going despite the negative experiences they dealt with. It is like a hard working kind of resilient mentality that we build. In the end you don't care, you are just trying to succeed. That is what I take away from my Lebanese identity, a mentality of hard work and resiliency.*

Warda (age 23) also felt closer to her Lebanese roots when her father had been discriminated against.

*My dad used to work long and hard hours at a transportation company, painting and making truck parts. I know that my dad was a very hard worker and really liked by everyone. I remember overhearing my dad talk to my mom about a group of guys he used to work with that vandalized his locker at work and put up racist posters of Osama Bin-Laden on his locker. I felt so angry and discouraged that my dad had to experience this and I developed a sense of hate toward Canada for some reason. I knew that my dad loved his job and was proud to be in Canada but he would also speak proudly of his Lebanese identity in times like this and mention how the people back home, were respectful of others... And to comfort myself... I also associated with his homeland as a way to feel a sense of comfort with him I guess.*

Those who associated more strongly with their ethno-cultural identity used it as a strategy to become resilient against marginalization, inequality or racism. Those who reported experiencing racism or discrimination were more likely to identify with their Lebanese identity because it made them feel part of a group that shared common goals and values. Furthermore, participants were asked whether they felt more comfortable working with Lebanese co-workers or Canadian co-workers or if it did not make a difference.

Participants who identified as Canadian really did not have a preference; however those who

experienced marginalization in their past employment experiences expressed a preference in working with people who had Lebanese roots. This finding speaks to those who were employed at a family owned business. These participants expressed a sense of pride and comfort in being employed by their parents.

***Discussion and Conclusion:***

This study explored the extent to which Canadian-born, second-generation adults of Lebanese descent expressed transnational connections in their self-identification, and sought to identify the factors that facilitate transnationalism amongst the second generation. Study participants variably identified as Lebanese, Canadian, or Lebanese Canadian. Those who expressed closer transnational connections and a Lebanese (or Lebanese-Canadian identity) had more ties to extended family here in Canada and in Lebanon, spoke Arabic and embraced Lebanese culture. In contrast, those who identified as Canadian or Muslim Canadian reported fewer close relationships with extended Lebanese family members, and more close ties with people who shared their religious orientation. These individuals were also less likely to fluently communicate in Arabic. The fact that several participants claim a hyphenated identity and speak of moving between two worlds, suggests that they have assimilated (or can assimilate) into the Canadian culture, while simultaneously maintaining their ethnic ties and identity.

With the advancements in technology and communication, immigrants and their children residing in the host country have been able to form social and emotional connections to both the homeland and host country. Members of the second generation do express transnational ties and have transnational identities, however they do not always do so. These findings support those of both Sommerville (2008) and Bologani (2014). Sommerville found

that Indo-Canadian youth have sustained transnational networks and strongly identify with their parents' homeland because of frequent visits to India, e-mails and phone calls that are exchanged. Similarly, in her analysis of British-Pakistani young adults, Bologani (2014) finds that a high emotional attachment is built through frequent travels made back home and social networks. In this study as well, social networks were also crucial in shaping transnational ties amongst the second generation.

This study also highlighted the importance of schooling, and religious community ties—factors that have so far received less attention on research on transnationalism amongst the second generation. Future research should continue to explore transnationalism amongst the second generation, and possible variations across ethnicity. This research should consider the importance of family and community ties, religion, language and schooling, since these factors were so important to the people studied here. Moreover, further research should pay particular attention to identity formation and transnationalism among people who have parents from different ethnic backgrounds. Some of the individuals in this study who identified most strongly as 'Lebanese' actually came from mixed ethnic backgrounds. The factors that shape transnationalism and identity formation in these instances are deserving of more attention.

It should be acknowledged that the findings presented in this paper are limited. My sample [might contain] certain members of the Lebanese-Canadian second-generation population. Most importantly, while this work may contribute to our understanding of identity formation and transnationalism among the second-generation, the findings cannot be generalized to all second-generation young adults of Lebanese descent. This age limit for this study was restricted between the ages of 18 and 30. Future researchers should consider

widening this age limit to consider the voices of older generation second-generation groups. This can serve to open up the debate in the immigration literature on how to define the second generation.

This study speaks to the importance of socialization within the family and how it has shaped the ways in which the second-generation have come to negotiate their identity. Further research should look into observing family dynamics and what variables further influence transnationalism among the second generation. Specifically, the ethnic language as a tool of communication and bi-ethnic family units emerged as further points of investigation among the second-generation. This research contributes to the growing literature on the second generation as it further seeks to define the second-generation as well as add to the growing literature on transnationalism, immigration and assimilation.

## References

- Abu-Laban, Baha (2008). History Canada: Arabs. Published, June 12<sup>th</sup> 2008. Retrieved March 4<sup>th</sup> 2015. Web. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/arabs/>
- Ahmed, Sara, Claudia Castaneda, Anne-Marie Frontier and Mimi Sheller (2003). Introduction: Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions on home and Migration Oxford: Berg Press. Pp 1-22
- Alba, Richard and Nee, Victor (1997). "Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration." *International Migration Review*, 31(4): 826-874.
- Allahar, Anton L. and James E. Côté. (1998). Richer and Poorer: *The Structure of Inequality in Canada*. Toronto: Lorimer Press. Print.
- Berry, JW. (1997). Immigration, acculturation and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 41, 5-68.
- Bologanani, Marta (2014). Visits to the country of origin: how second generation British Pakistanis shape transnational identity and mainstream power asymmetries. *Global Networks 14, 1 pp 103-120*
- Boyd, M., & Vickers, M. (2000). 100 years of immigration in Canada.(includes related articles and statistics). *Canadian Social Trends*, (58), 2.
- CIA (2014). The World Fact Book: Lebanon. Retrieved March 4<sup>th</sup> 2015. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>
- Esses M. Victoria, Caroline Bennett-AbuAyyash, Natalia Lapshina (2014). How Discrimination against Ethnic and Religious Minorities Contributes to the Underutilization of Immigrants' Skills. Policy Insights from the Behavioral and brain Sciences.
- Ethnic Diversity Survey: Portrait of a Multicultural Society (2003). Statistics Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage. Ottawa, Ontario. Print. Pp 1 – 26
- Fouron, Georges E. and Nina Glick Schiller (2002). The generation of identity: Redefining the second-generation within a transnational social field. In *The Changing Face of Home: The International Lives of the Second Generation*. Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters Eds. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Pp 268-208
- Glick Schiller, Nina, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton (1992). Transnationalism: A new analytic framework for understanding migration. *Annals of the New York Academy of Science* 645: 1-24.

- Jantzen, Lorna. (2008). Who is the Second Generation? *A Description of their ethnic origins and Visible Minority Composition by Age*. Canadian Diversity Spring/ Print Temps, Vol. 6 No 2.
- Jones-Correa, Michael (2002). The Study of transnationalism among the children of immigrants: Where we are and where we should be headed. In *The Changing Face of home: The International Lives of the Second Generation*. Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters Eds. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Pp 221-241
- Leichtman, A, Mara (2005). The Legacy of Transnational lives: Beyond the first generation of Lebanese in Senegal. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 28 No 4 pp. 663-686.
- Levitt, Peggy. (2001). Transnational migration: taking stock and future directions. *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs* 1(3): 195-216
- Levitt, P. and M. Waters. (2002). *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Levitt, P. (2004). Transnational Migrants: When “Home” Means More Than One Country”. [Migrationpolicy.org](http://Migrationpolicy.org).
- Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Process, Progress and Prospects (2003). Retrieved Feb, 20<sup>th</sup> 2014. <http://publications.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/89-611-X/89-611-XIE2003001.pdf>
- Louie, Vivian (2006). Growing up in Transnational Worlds: Identity among second-Generation Chinese and Dominicans. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 13: 363-394.
- Murphy, E.J. (2006). Transnational ties and mental health. In R. Mahalingam (Ed.), *Cultural psychology of immigrants* (pp. 79-94). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Multicultural Canada, (2014) Migration. *The Encyclopedia of Canada’s People: Lebanese/Collections*. Retrieved March 4<sup>th</sup> 2015. Web. <http://www.multiculturalcanada.ca/Encyclopedia/A-Z/14/2>
- Portes, A. 2001. “Introduction: the debates and significance of immigrant transnationalism.” *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs*, 1(3): 181-193
- Portes A., Zhou Min (1993). The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*. 530:74–96
- Portes, A. (1999). Conclusion: Towards a new world- the origins and effects of transnational activities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22(2): 463-477

- Portes, Alejandro, Luis E. Guarnizo, and Patricia Landolt (1999). The study of transnationalism: pitfalls and promises of an emergent research field. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 (2). 218-237.
- Rambaut R. G. 2002. "Severed or Sustained Attachment? Language, Identity and Imagined Communities in the Post-Immigrant Generation", (pp. 43-95) in P. Levitt and M. Waters (eds.), *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*: New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Sam, L. David (2006) Acculturation: Conceptual Background and Core Components. *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation Psychology* pp 37-52
- Simmons, A.B. (2010a). *Immigration and Canada. Global and Transnational Perspectives: Ethnic Identities*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press. Chapter 8
- Simmons, A.B. (2010b). *Immigration and Canada: Global and transnational perspectives: Transnationalism*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press. Chapter 9
- Somerville, Kara (2008). Transnational Belonging among Second Generation Youth: Identity in a Globalized World. *Journal of Social Science Special Volume No. 10:23:33*.
- Smith, Robert C. (2002) Life Course, generation and social location as factors shaping second-generation transnational life. In *The Changing Face of Home: The International Lives of the Second Generation*. Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters Eds. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Pp 145-167
- Statistics Canada (Jan, 18, 2014) Immigration and Ethno-cultural Diversity in Canada. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.cfm>. Retrieved Nov 1st 2014.
- Statistics Canada (2013). London, CY, Ontario. National Household Survey (NHS) Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE. Ottawa.
- Statistics Canada (2007). The Lebanese Community in Canada. Retrieved March 4<sup>th</sup> 2015. Web. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-621-x/89-621-x2007015-eng.htm>
- Tastsoglou, E. & Petrinioti, S.(2011). Multiculturalism as Part of the Lived Experience of the "Second Generation"? Forging Identities by Lebanese-Origin Youth in Halifax. *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 43(1), 175-196. Canadian Ethnic Studies Association. Retrieved January 25, 2015, from Project MUSE database.
- Teske et al. (1973). Two scales for the measurement of Mexican-American identity. *International Review of Modern Sociology*, v.3, p.192

Tuan, Mia (1998). *Forever Foreigners or honorary Whites: The Asian Ethnic Experience Today*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Vickerman, Milton (2002). *Second-Generation West Indian transnationalism*. In the *Changing Faces of Home: The Transnational lives of the Second Generation*. Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters Eds. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Pp. 341-366