SIX MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF SECOND GENERATION YOUTH IN TORONTO, WINNIPEG AND CALGARY*

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Six major characteristics of second generation youth can be identified on the basis of their graphic and narrative data, collected in high schools in three Canadian cities, Calgary, Winnipeg and Toronto between 2004 and 2007. Briefly put, these adolescents have strong attachments to home and school, a sense of being Canadian, a sense of locality and a mobility of mind that allows them to imagine and express cultural identifications as part of the process of integration. Moreover, most recognize the benefits and ideals of multiculturalism, although some of the youth are highly critical. Many, but not all, tend to be susceptible to consumerism. Each of the characteristics is discussed, drawing upon graphic data, including photos of places of inclusion and exclusion, urban maps of preferred places, cultural collages, narrative data from focus groups and written responses and interviews. For each characteristic, a general statement is presented in italics, then nuanced and illustrated with data. A critique of the façade of globalization and multiculturalism, from the voices of these youth, serves as a conclusion.

Second generation youth, born in Canada, whose parents moved across national and territorial boundaries to settle in this new world, are called upon to construct and situate themselves in terms of multiple frames of reference, thus revealing their sense of belonging to particular localities, globalities and mobilities. Second generation youth explore how they produced and maintained space for themselves and are, in turn, produced by public and private places. We pay close attention to the representational, relational and imaginary nature of their spaces and, above all, to the interrelationships and links with their social practice in the three cities. Examples are cited from the second generation participants shown in Table 1.

Strong attachments: *All participating youth have strong attachments to home and school, which serve as the heart of their identifications and provide them with human and social capital in the form of connections, support and sources of understanding themselves and the world around them.*

Second generation youth in this study demonstrated strong attachments to their homes, schools, places of worship, neighbourhoods, Canada and countries of their parents' origin through their photographs, drawings, writings and interviews. These multiple attachments enable them to navigate spaces for themselves in their globalized worlds. Speaking of Canada, Home Slice says:

> Being Canadian for me is important. I have advantages being Canadian. Canada is also where I grew up. It is important because I can learn about different cultures. I also have a strong education system, and safety.

Lue Rue, who claims she is proud of being Canadian, represents many aspects of "Leb Pride" in her cultural collage: flags of several Middle Eastern countries, a Christian cross and an Islamic crescent. The dominant Western discourse of binaries, which assumes an either/or position on national or cultural identification and attachment, is challenged by these youth, who are concurrently attached to multiple places and do not see a conflict among them.

Their attachments are not based on naïve imaginaries or memories. Strong as these attachments are, they do not prevent the youth from noticing the ugly and unsafe aspects of places they are attached to. Blue Flag Baron rages against the media that portrays his neighbourhood very negatively but also acknowledges that it is "a horrible community" where he is not the only one in his group who has not been "robbed, mugged, beat up…for no reason." Similarly, Shana is nostalgic about her parents' country of origin where her relatives' unconditional affection makes her feel much loved but also aware that violence is very common in the city she visits; she does not sleep well for fear of armed robbery.

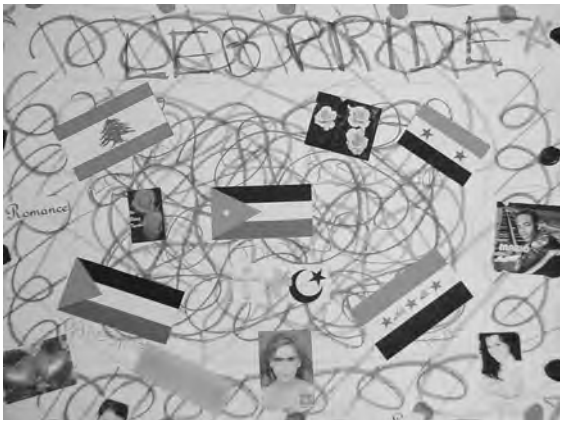
Table 1
Self-ascribed characteristics of selected second generation youth

Code name	Gender	Ethnicity	Religion	City
Unicorn	F	Jamaican/Antiguan/Canadian	Protestant	**Winnipeg**
Malcolm X	M	Filipino	Roman Catholic	
Educ07	F	Filipina	Roman Catholic	
GCSPMEST	F	Filipina	Roman Catholic	
Rubber Duckie	F	Filipina	Roman Catholic	
Jil	F	Filipina	Roman Catholic	
LueRue	F	Lebanese Syrian	Christian	**Calgary**
Chickita	F	Mexican-Mennonite	Christian	
Ramel	M	Libyan	Islam	
Gonzo	M	English	None	
Captain Crack	M	White/Blackfoot/British/Romanian	Christian/None	
Meena	F	Sri Lankan	Roman Catholic	**Toronto**
Shana	F	Guyanese	Christian	
Dorissa	F	Portuguese	Roman Catholic	
Gelato	M	Italian	Roman Catholic	
4Lyfe	M	Portuguese	Christian	
Blue Flag Baron	M	Spanish; parents Chilean/Columbian	Catholic	
Home Slice	M	Italian	Catholic	
Vinyard	M	Portuguese	Christian	

Sense of being Canadian: *Most, if not all, participants are able to imagine themselves as Canadian and recognize that they are on a journey of life, moving across cultural and other spaces at home, school, malls and elsewhere, in youth-specific and friendly places.*

While the first generation youth in our study are not as likely to feel "Canadian" as subsequent generations, it has been assumed by many that, by the second generation, youth begin to feel an attachment to their birth country. This is certainly true amongst the majority of second generation youth in our study, as illustrated with three examples.

Redefining ancestral origins to create anew, Lue Rue is proud of being Canadian because "it accepts me in its country, especially because I am not from here. It accepted me for being Lebanese," as noted in her life story. In her urban map, Beirut is her preferred place outside of Calgary, without further explanation. In her photoscape, she stresses the importance of her computer in her room as the Internet makes everything accessible. Her cultural collage combines many elements of "Leb Pride": flags from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, a symbol of a Christian cross, the crescent moon and star symbol associated with Islam, connected with a + symbol, as well as pictures of Arab celebrities, the term "romance," a picture of some roses and a picture of two heart shapes and rings.



Lue Rue's cultural collage.

When queried about the Lebanese/Syrian/Middle East influences in her collage, she responded:

> I think that whole area is one and it will always be one, no matter whatever is going on…but we will always be one language, same culture, same people, like for me when people say that I am Lebanese, like, yeah, I am Lebanese but I am Syrian too, and I can say I am Syrian, I am Jordan, I am Lebanese, I can say whatever because I think they are all my people, they are all one.

Acknowledging all influences to the region, this redefinition of ancestral identification moves beyond boundaries – be they ethnic, country or religious – to create a new metaphor of identity attached to a general territorial identification.

The second generation is the most likely of all generation groups to value Canada for its multiculturalism and diversity. Rubber Duckie states that the best metaphor is: "a multi-coloured floral lei. It is the best way to express myself as a cultural individual living with so many different ethnicities in Canada." She expresses both individual and socio-cultural perspectives, taking up Canadian multicultural values, which she expresses as "diversity without losing the courage and value to be yourself."



Rubber Duckie's cultural collage in the form of a shoebox.

In terms of citizenship, the second generation is more likely to mention rights, responsibilities and to consider being Canadian citizens as a privilege than youth from other generations. Jil says, "I never realized what it meant to be a Canadian; then I thought it was a way to change and be different. As a Canadian, it gives people a chance to be free and we have so many different freedoms [that] I don't think many people think about."

This generation is also the most likely to mention tolerance and discrimination in their projects, as part of their sense of Canadian identity. Meena's views are consistent with her understanding of citizenship in a comparative context:

> To me, being a Canadian means to express my thoughts, being free to express my opinion. Rights to my own religion. The reason I think this way is because in Sri Lanka, there are many wars and I don't have the right to express my thoughts. It's a free country, I think it's good, like its freedom, like it's not like back home, teachers can't hit you or stuff like that.

Conceptualizing Canadian identity in terms of rights, responsibilities, privilege and multiculturalism is consistent with other studies on immigrant youth (Lee and Hébert 2006, Lévesque 2003, Hébert and Racicot 2001). Youth's voices reveal that, in practice, a diversity of ethnocultural identifications does not diminish association with national identity in Canada. For second generation adolescents, a positive interaction between national identity, equality rights, acceptance of others and specific group memberships influences the formation of complex identifications as Canadians.

Sense of locality: *The young people in question have a strong sense of locality, intuitively knowing that their local neighbourhood shapes them and that they contribute reflexively to shape the neighbourhood.*

How do second generation youth view their sense of place within the city? Youth participating in our project were asked to identify, on urban maps, places where they spent time and to trace their routes to and from these places. In another research task, participants were asked to take photos of the places where they are included or excluded and to comment on them. Similar approaches in Australia (Lynch and Ogilvie 1999, White et al. 1997, Wooden 1997) identified the geographic boundaries of youth and corrected stereotypes that held that places where youth congregate are dangerous and lead to criminality.

In terms of mobility within the city, second generation youth travel a great deal more outside the country than the third-plus generation. Table 2 shows the different travel modes of each generational status. The first generation showed the greatest geographical distance in their travels with just over one-third traveling outside the country, compared with 23% of the second generation and only 7% of the third-plus generation. Over one-third of the second generation does not travel outside their city of residence, the highest of any generational group. The differences are statistically significant, meaning that generational status does have an effect on travel pattern among youth in Canada.

Most of their preferred places included their homes, neighbourhoods, schools and other local establishments, such as malls, parks and recreation centres, which are youth-friendly or youth-neutral places. A small number defined their sense of place in relation to their ethno-cultural or religious affiliation. GCSPMEST explains:

> My house is important to me because this is where I live. I usually feel safe and comfortable here with my family. When I'm at home, I do my chores, eat, sleep, do my homework, watch TV or [use] the computer. I can relax here [in my sister's room] and talk to my sister at the same time because I feel wanted. [In my dining room] I'm surrounded by familiar things.

Mobility of mind: *The mobility of mind allows adolescents to think, imagine and experience cultural identifications as part of the integrative process. Immobility of mind with respect to change is central to the angst experienced around dual cultural attachments by a few second generation participants. Most participants do not appear to be experiencing the oft attributed angst of second generation.*

Table 2 Geographic mobility by generation status, Canada

	1st generation		2nd generation		Third-plus generation		Total
Does not travel	10	24%	21	37%	21	30%	52
Travels only in province	6	14%	9	16%	23	33%	38
Travels outside province	11	26%	14	25%	21	30%	46
Travels outside Canada	15	36%	13	23%	5	7%	33
Total	42	100%	57	100%	70	100%	169

P<0,01

For youth, mobility of mind includes being able to imagine oneself as another, as living elsewhere in another place or time, as being comfortable with having different references of identification, moving beyond tolerance and openness to the acceptance and negotiation of difference. This type of mobility also includes the ability to recognize, in one's local surroundings, symbols that have international, transcultural or global reference.

Of considerable interest are the use of symbols and the recognition of significant relationships within local spaces with global reference. Other forms of mobility of mind include the use of symbols or metaphors for living with many cultures and ethnicities, and thinking deeply about the problems of the world in a reflective public space. These approaches take up the metaphor of pilgrim searching for truth, while embarked on a long life journey for understanding of self, other and the world.

In Chickita's scrapbook, she comments that she has "the will to travel and the freedom to fly," and in her cultural collage she includes two flags symbolizing her connections to Mexico, her willingness to explore the world and imagining herself in more than one place of attachment.

Gonzo has travelled to the mythical "Desert" without specifying which one. He "loves it" and feels relaxed when he is there. When asked what he feels he could accomplish in this space, he replies: "I could hope for knowledge or enlightenment, but I don't really expect anything." Unicorn also reflects upon her journeys: "Where I live, I am very relaxed and the places that I have traveled [to], I am filled with energy and ready to go exploring."

Rubber Duckie reveals a particularly strong attachment to two Filipino shops: the Tindahan Food Mart and Myrna's Café and Catering, in her photoscape. "This place is important to me because it is one of the first popular Filipino restaurants in my neighbourhood. I have a lot of good memories here. This photo represents good friends and my culture." Local spaces are more meaningful for her than ubiquitous shops found in almost every mall in every city, because personal relationships play out there within her ancestral cultural group.

Mobility of mind for self-confident Captain Crack focused on the school as a micro-society, using some of its spaces to think about world problems and to observe struggles for power. He credited the Relaxation Space for



Chickita's cultural collage.



Rubber Duckie's photoscape images of multiple attachments.

providing an opportunity for reflection at global levels and across boundaries. Very politically minded and philosophical, he disagreed with democratic systems and preferred a more socialist/communist system. He writes that these approaches are more effective and work quickly versus a democratic system that involves long, drawn-out voting processes. "This place, I just do nothing and just think of the problems of the world."

For second generation adolescents, being comfortable with multiple attachments is particularly salient, as is being able to symbolize, to think deeply about world problems, to imagine being in other situations and to cross over.

Recognition of multiculturalism: *Most participants recognize the benefits of globalization and the ideals of multiculturalism.*

Reflecting upon multiculturalism, Gelato writes:

> I'm in favour of multiculturalism because we are all multiculturals. I'm not going to be a hypocrite and say that I don't like immigration when my parents were immigrants, and I wouldn't be here if they didn't immigrate….I like how we are all different – something interesting.

Going beyond duality to multiplicity, he reveals that he is familiar with his parents' journey and aware of its meanings for him and for his appreciation of difference around him. Significantly, he puts an airplane in his cultural collage to represent immigration, thus modernizing the metaphor that immigrants come by boat, landing in yesteryear at Pier 21 in Halifax.

Finding multiculturalism to be advantageous, Gelato explains his thinking:

> I don't think anything bad could come of it. Maybe more people, more culture. I don't have any bad feelings toward it. I like how the different cultures are here. It's welcoming. It's free. You can express all your views and opinions without anybody putting you down. There's mosques, there's temples, there's churches, there's everything.

When asked about equity issues, he replies tentatively, relying on his own personal experiences, "At



Captain Crack's Relaxation Space.

my job, we have plenty of people that don't speak English, and we're welcoming to them but…maybe in…higher levels – a job, like…if you don't speak English, it would be very tough. It is a free place. I don't think they are judged upon the colour of their skin."

Meena disregards boundaries in choosing her friends, "If I look at my school, no one cares what colour skin you are, or what religion you are. They don't care about that. Like, when I met my friends, that's not the question I asked them or they asked me." She holds similar beliefs about the labour market: "I think if you're going for a job, then I don't think people look at skin colour here 'cause everyone's from a different culture, a different country, no one is Canadian here, original Canadian, so really, very few people…"

Whether male or female, these youth blend in identifications to create anew, beyond cultural, racial and religious boundaries, thus developing commonalities based on interests, gender and activities. These examples of civic pluralism provide ample evidence of the engagement and awareness of these Canadian youth in transcultural processes of creating new modes of belonging. All is not sweetness and agreement, however, for ideologies are not the same as realities.

Susceptibility to consumerism: *Many, but not all, second generation youth in this study tend to be susceptible to the intense messages of the market, taking up the identification of "shopper." Second generation adolescents are particularly susceptible to being concerned with fitting in and being accepted.*

The shopping malls were places of great interest among youth. One-third of all preferred places were shopping malls and stores. Some are youth friendly, like those stores that catered specifically to young people, such as urban or hip-hop clothing stores. Others are youth neutral, such as food courts and department stores. Youth identified these places as central areas for meeting, hanging out and socializing. For some, however, the lure of consumerism is significant. Educ07 commented, "I feel glamour and happy, sophisticated clothing shop, I consider it to be "my" store. When I shop for jewellery, I feel like I am on clouds, a breathless scene." Moreover, the cultural collages produced by the youth were replete with images of electronics, jewellery, designer clothes, shoes and cars. Many were not able to acquire the objects they desired but engaging with them was still possible. Dorissa said:

> I usually go to every store to try something on and if it's okay, I tell them to put it on hold for an hour and I say this, like, every store and they get really mad – over and over!

For some, it was more the environment in which the objects were showcased that attracted them. Shopping malls offered novelty, in contrast to the monotony of their lives, safety from natural elements and dangerous streets and no-cost or low-cost entertainment. Meena comments:

> You wake up, you go to school, you come back home, do your homework, you watch TV, you go to sleep, and then you wake up again. Same process. But when you go to the mall, there's, like, events, and Christmas and Santa Claus.



Gelato's metaphor of airplane for immigration.

Objects and environments served primarily as topics of conversation and destinations with friends and family. Dorissa said, "I usually hang out at the malls because there is a lot of people to interact with, and it's like just a social place to be." Several others mentioned that they went shopping with their parents to purchase groceries, appraising and comparing costs, variety and quality of the available merchandise.

Nevertheless, the pressure to possess "cool stuff" was mentioned by several youth, and some critically analyzed their subjectivity as consumers. Vinyard said:

> I worry about how I look because I believe nowadays people judge you on how you look….Looks matter now, and you don't look a certain way, people won't accept you, so I believe you have to keep up. Especially clothing, if you don't have the *right clothing*, I think, people don't think you are cheap, but they just won't like you….I don't really like that, but I try and keep up because at the same time I don't want to be left out….It does not make me feel appreciated. It makes me feel angry because who are they to tell me what am I supposed to be, how am I supposed to look, or…that's the way it is nowadays. I guess I just have to go along with it.

Façade of local spaces: *Some are highly critical of globalization and multiculturalism, seeing beyond the façade and the ideal to recognize the unpleasantness behind the scenes. These youth are more likely to strongly and critically identify the issues of over-consumption, racism and human rights inherent in the human and environmental exploitation that sustain current approaches to globalization.*

These young people reflect on multiculturalism and democracy, finding them both laudable for their human rights, but mostly also decrying the shortcomings of multiculturalism and democracy, as there is still racism and discrimination in Canada.

Malcolm X emphasizes nationalist and environmental issues while revealing his façade. An underlying tone of sarcasm apparent throughout his activities supports his self-doubt and uncertainty. Malcolm X is "uncomfortable, quiet and lonely" in new places; he shops infrequently and centres himself on his home area where his friends are, where he attends school and where his recreational activities take place. When referring to international issues, Malcolm X responds by taking up nationalistic perspectives. In his written responses, he sees Canada's role in environmental issues as needing to protect its own environment and to act as a role model for the rest of the world. Entitled "Politics," his cultural collage focuses on politicians in Canada and in the United States, indicative of a heightened sense of Canadian nationalism in a globalizing world.

Another participant, Ramel, has traveled extensively, in the United States, Italy, England, Germany, Africa, Holland and different parts of Canada, as indicated in his urban mapping, and yet he feels "like a tourist and a foreigner in each country I have visited. My favourite places outside of Calgary are the Red Deer soccer field and the West Edmonton Mall."

Captain Crack sees no hope for removing racism from the world: "Multiculturalism is great, but even if you educate them, there will always be someone who will teach their children to fear and hate. And it will be forever, we will never be a non-racist world." Having been subjected to racism, this is for him a fact that cannot be avoided. Commenting on the power of globalization, he further explains:

> I believe that there is not real culture any more. It is all media and corporations tying to vie for business. There are religions but they don't really contribute to culture much any more, nobody really cares about that, everybody's trying to get away from religion and everybody's trying to make their own culture, but really they are following the same culture, which is advertisements.

More cynically, he comments that "jewellery is hip hop's hold on culture" and that "people define you by what kind of car you drive. So if you drive a sports car, you're a rich person. If you drive a truck, you're a working guy."

Expressing discouragement and even despair, these Canadian youth are astute thinkers. They tend to prefer local and national attachments, while worrying that society is too far gone to retreat from the internal impact of an overwhelming global consumer economy upon Western civilization.

Thus, the complex portrayal of second generation youth brings nuance and subtlety to the concerned conversation regarding their integration. These young people are aware of the processes, places and images involved in creating new belongings, not easy but mostly satisfying.



Malcolm X's cultural collage.

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Notes

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