VISUALIZING CANADA, IDENTITY AND BELONGING AMONG SECOND GENERATION YOUTH IN WINNIPEG*

LORI WILKINSON[1]
University of Manitoba

In 2007, an analysis using the *Ethnic Diversity Survey* conducted by Jeffrey Reitz and Rupa Banerjee made national headlines. One of the major findings was that racialized second generation youth experienced the highest rates of racial discrimination. Among all visible minority second generation youth, 42% reported experiencing racial discrimination. When racial groups were examined separately, it was revealed that 61% of Black second generation youth had experienced some form of racial discrimination compared to 11% of White second generation youth (Reitz and Banerjee 2007). A more detailed regression analysis revealed that racialized second generation youth are far less likely to feel like they belong in Canada and that their sense of Canadian identity is diminished as a result. This pattern was repeated when youth were asked about life satisfaction, voting patterns and trust. Taken together, these results reveal that racialized second generation youth have the lowest rates of social integration among young people in Canada. This observation was not affected by income. As a result, racialized second generation youth with low incomes were just as likely as those from higher income brackets to feel socially excluded.

Reitz and Banerjee's findings are contrary to "conventional wisdom" with regard to our knowledge of the second generation and their place in Canadian society. Two bodies of theory try to explain the life trajectories of the second generation. One is more optimistic arguing that by the second generation, youth would feel a stronger sense of belonging and a greater sense of Canadian identity than first generation youth. This theory postulates that as time in Canada increases, a sense of Canadian identity would develop. This idea has been buttressed by research identifying the successes of the second generation. For example, they are more likely to be upwardly mobile in both education and income than their first generation peers (Boyd and Grieco 1998, Hum and Simpson 2007). Another theoretical tradition, however, argues that the process of integration is not so seamless. Min Zhou (1997), Gans (1992) and others have argued that while a significant number of second generation youth would follow a classical assimilation trajectory resulting in higher rates of economic success and social integration, there are instances where poverty and maladaptation are the result, particularly among racialized groups. This second group is disadvantaged by poverty and, as a result, an oppositional culture forms where the values of the dominant society are rejected. This group is most likely to experience racial discrimination and low levels of social cohesion.

We decided to examine this phenomenon in greater detail. Much of the published research on second generation youth involves large-scale quantitative analyses with large samples. While very useful in determining general trends, this type of research does not provide much information on individual lived experiences. The following discussion is based on results from a three-year study of high school students in Winnipeg using the methodology described in an earlier article in this volume (see Hébert, Wilkinson and Ali 2008). Using a variety of different qualitative methods, we asked a number of second generation high school students in an inner city high school in Winnipeg questions about their experiences fitting in, growing up, discrimination and identity. This article is based on the responses given by a small group of second generation females as we followed them through their high school years.

How can we link identity of the students in our study to their views on Canada? Waters (1994) identifies typologies of identity among second generation youth in the U.S. including American-identified and immigrant-identified typologies. Those who are American-identified will ascribe to both ethnic and American identities. Those affiliating with an immigrant identity will conform mainly to their heritage identity, to the exclusion of their American identity. In our study, students who are Canadian-identified should display commitment to both their Canadian and ethnic

identities. They would also feel more connected with the country and express stronger social ties than those with other identities. Students who are immigrant-identified may not have as strong ties to their Canadian identities and may feel looser attachment to the country. Like Water's students, these students will be more marginalized and express a more pessimistic view of Canada.

Jil, a second generation Filipina youth, describes her experiences of racism in Winnipeg. She reflects on her experiences as a child growing up in the inner city:

> I was teased a lot because I was probably the only Filipino in my community. I only had a few friends. It made me feel a bit bad about myself because I never understood why I was teased. It was only recently that I began to feel confident in myself and have forgotten the mean things people have said to me.

Despite her early experiences of racism and in contrast to the research conducted by Reitz and Banerjee, Jil now describes life in Canada positively. She identifies as Canadian and when asked about her thoughts on the country she replies:

> I think that Canada is a place where people can begin new lives and have a better future. To me, it's a place for cooperation. A lot of my family came to Canada to start a future. I think that having so many different cultural backgrounds is good because it lets people get along with people outside their own cultural background. I think that it probably helps get rid of the prejudice and discrimination we may think at first.

Despite experiencing racism, Jil is positive in her assessment of Canada and living in a multicultural society. In this regard, she exhibits the characteristics of Canadian-identified. It is a theme reflected by other students in our study. Educ07, a female Filipina student replies, "I am very open so I talk to anyone I need to. I am very familiar with all the different races in Canada and I know that the colour of their skin or traditions doesn't define who they are as a person. I would not want anyone to judge me completely, so I try to so the same thing." While she too experienced racism, she claims it has not played a significant role in her life. Ballhettawsomodd has similar views on Canada stating, "Our multicultural society allows people of different races to appreciate each other and who they are." Larissa, a second generation female, who identifies as Haitian, Jamaican, Dakota Sioux and Swampy Cree, agrees. Paraphrasing her multiple responses, she believes that ethnic background does not matter. She feels Canadian and though she experiences racism, she feels she is relatively insulated as she has a number of friends of different races, cultures and religions. Although all racialized students in our study had experienced racism at one time in their personal histories, overall, the young women exhibited the characteristics associated with the Canadian-identified typology.

Racism and fitting in remain sources of concern for the second generation's vision of Canada, despite their positive outlook. When asked to identify the most important issue facing Canada today, GCSPMEST replies:

> There is a lot of discrimination in our country that goes on whether it is about religion, race or culture…In a country like ours we need to work together and accept one another to build a stronger and more diverse country. If we all cooperate with one another, we can live in a peaceful and strong country.

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A similar sentiment is shared by Lynn, a second generation Spanish-Filipina female. When asked to identify the most important social issue for Canada, she indicates it involves "cooperat(ing) with each other together whether or not we are different cultures…" When compared to other countries, however, she states, "I like living in Canada because we are multicultural and we don't have to be afraid of being different." Thus, the students in Winnipeg feel that cooperation, recognition and appreciation of difference are key issues for social cohesion and, in this way, also exhibited the characteristics associated with the Canadian-identified typology.

The results of the Winnipeg study reveal that most second generation students coincide with the Canadian-identified group. Even though they are unsure about their place in Canadian society, their unease about their position in Canadian society is likely due to their status as teenagers rather than as marginalized youth. Even the young women who were more pessimistic in their outlook about Canadian society would be best categorized as Canadian-identified more than ethnic-identified. Is this a consequence of our sample being drawn ten years after Waters' study? Is it because the study was conducted in Canada? Perhaps it is a combination of these factors. It is interesting that none of the second generation students in our study revealed any tendencies toward the ethnic-identified category; however, since the sample is small and not random, it is not appropriate to generalize these results beyond the participating high school. It is also important to note that Waters' (1994) model indicates that social class of parents and type of school attended help shape identity. Because all the participants attended the same high school and live in the same neighbourhood

(thus having similar socioeconomic statuses), we cannot generalize to other youth.

Despite the limitations, there are interesting parallels between the two studies. Like Waters' working-class students, the youth in this study were most likely to be located within the Canadian-identified category. While this article discusses only the responses of second generation students, our study includes immigrant and third-plus generation students – and their identities tend to correspond with the youth in her article. In fact, students with the most positive outlooks on Canada looked more favorably on their future prospects than those students who conformed to immigrant-identified categories only. It is important to remember that identity is dynamic and changes over time. For this reason, their largely positive outlook on Canada and the reduced significance of racism may change as they grow older.

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Notes

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