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## *Hybrid and Supra-hybrid Complex and Conflicting Identities of Immigrant Youth in the Canadian Nation-State*

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### **Abstract**

*This research analyses the question of identity formation with regard to an understudied ethnic group, Turkish immigrant youth, in Canada. The empirical data draw upon a critical ethnographic study with fourteen first- and second-generation immigrant youth between 15 and 25 years old. The findings of the study indicate that cultural practices, social institutions and emotional attachments are significant reference points of the cultural identity formation of minority youth. The study suggests that second-generation immigrant youth are supra-hybrid; they have the ability to live in-between lives; the capacity to switch between different settings; and the capability to liberate themselves from ideological impasses and religious orthodoxy in both their home and host countries. Youths' consciously achieved supra-hybrid identities elevate their positions in the host country. Their proximity to the host culture through accumulation of national capital confers advantages in terms of feelings of belonging.*



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## Introduction

Studying identity formation among immigrant youth is vitally important to social scientists for two major reasons. On the one hand, it helps researchers understand how immigrant youth form a sense of belonging (or not) based on their experiences in their host countries. On the other, it requires scholars to carefully study the host countries themselves: whether they are welcoming to immigrant youth and accepting of their self-identifications, or not.

Analysis of cultural identity formations of immigrant youth indicates that the most significant factors in their identity formation are narratives (national stories), collective images and symbols, language, religious affiliation, and the context of the home/host country (discriminatory/welcoming). Through these factors, young people construct their sense(s) of belonging and their multiple identities.

In this vein, this study examines Turkish immigrant youths' multiple identities, specificities and forms of differences in Canada. While initial assessments of this diasporic configuration in Europe have begun to expose issues about Turkish youth in host immigrant countries (Scheibelhofer, 2008; Song, 2011), very little sociological research has investigated these factors, such as the context of the country, affecting Turkish immigrant youths' cultural identifications and representations in Canada. As a response to this research gap, this study uncovers 14 Turkish origin female and male youths' (aged 15-25) identifications, multiple attachments, and multiple identities.

The exploration of multiple identities is related to my fascination with conflicting, hybrid identities of young people. The concept of hybridity, especially as articulated in Hall's (1996) work, is key. Turkish immigrant youth do not identify with their host society by adopting, say, a Canadian identity; nor do they fit into a simple Turkish identity. Their complex cultural identities, shaped by permanent uncertainties, consistencies and different expectations and norms, contribute to their multiple, conflicting identities.

In this study I also develop the idea of *supra-hybridity* in response to my data. I use the term supra-hybridity to refer to young people's *multiple-consciousness* (see DuBois "double-consciousness" in Gilroy [1993]). Their *consciously achieved* cultural and linguistic capabilities and advantages, their multiple-voices, and strategic choices in self-cultural identifications, and multiple attachments based on the diasporic identities stemming from pre- and post-migration histories. In this regard, supra-hybridity is about transcending the "constraints of ethnicity and national particularity" (Gilroy, 1993), and elevating youths' position and their sense of belonging (Thobani, 2007) in the host country. Unlike hybridity, supra-hybridity is a conscious status, it is an achieved, privileged position: Supra-hybrid, cosmopolitan identities' proximity to the host culture, their emotional and cultural ties to the home country, confer advantages in terms of feelings of belongings (Bhimji, 2008).

The disruptive nature of hybrid identities (i.e., hybrid identities put the nation-state and its nationalist and exclusionary discourses into question) was discussed by Bhabha and Hall over and over again (Shalini, 2004). *Instead, I focus on the power imbalances of hybrid (i.e., first-generation youth) and supra-hybrid identities (second-generation youth) in host countries. Second-generation immigrant youth leverage a range of different cultural capital (Grasmuck &*

*Hinze, 2016) which makes them economically and culturally more privileged than first-generation youth. In this regard, hybrid and supra-hybrid identities' position in the social hierarchy should be examined with regard to the context of the nation-state, cultural, political processes and inequalities in the host country: whether they are accepting of immigrant youths' self-identifications (Kayaalp, 2015).*

In what follows I begin with an examination of the landscape of immigration and the Turkish community in Canada. I then describe the methodologies used for the data I build upon for this paper. Drawing on my critical ethnographic research with Turkish youth, in the final section of this paper I show the identity formation of young people of Turkish origin in Vancouver. I investigate how the binaries of identity categories such as Muslim/secular, traditional/modern, Western/Eastern, European/Mediterranean/Middle Eastern and Turkish/Canadian manifest themselves in Turkish youths' notions of their identities. Most importantly, I explain how my data pushed me to move beyond the term hybridity to develop the idea of supra-hybridity to understand the realities of the immigrant youth I studied.

### **The Canadian Context**

Exploring the realities of immigrant youth from Turkey offers a unique opportunity to illuminate how fragmented, complex, hybrid identities in one's home country are transformed into a "supra-hybrid identity" in Canada. This inquiry offers chances to explore the diverse experiences of Turkish immigrant youth in multicultural Canada, which differs in significant ways from Turkish immigrant experiences in Germany due to very different historical and contemporary immigration policies, and social practices.

The German state's official policies contribute to immigrant youths' exclusion from social institutions (Kastoryana, 2006). Similarly, despite the Canadian meta-narrative that welcomes immigrants/refugees to Canada, there is no Canadian exception (OECD, 2016). The Canadian hierarchical immigration policy, which classifies immigrants as "deserving" and "underserving," hardly makes Canada a refuge (Kayaalp, 2013).

For at least the last century and a half, immigration to Canada has been regulated to produce certain "ideal" subjects and to exclude non-ideal or inassimilable ones (Prestan & Murnaghan, 2005; El-Lahib, 2015). Canada's immigration policy has been based on the admission of people from Britain, Australia, the United States and France (and northern Europe more generally) and the exclusion of people from the Middle East, China, Japan, and India (Kobayashi & Preston, 2014). As Ash (2004) argues, "Canadian immigration law was Anglo-conformist, seeking to construct the new nation as predominantly British" (Ash, 2004, p. 404). In other words, Canada was populated through ideological state policies and practices on the basis of race and ethnicity.

The recruitment of immigrants according to the point system introduced in 1967 may have been an improvement to a blatantly discriminatory immigration policy, but it was also a very selective process since there is always a hierarchy among immigrants according to ethnicity/race, class and gender (Thobani, 2000). Research indicates that people who immigrate from poorer regions of the world are excluded on the basis of class, gender, and race, and when they are successful, are relegated to domestic service work where they receive low pay, little

recognition, and disregard for their basic rights and liberties (Inouye, 2012). Similarly, number of studies shows that “visible minorities” earn less than European-Canadians (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007; Hou & Coulombe, 2010) and that their income falls below the national mean in Canada (Palameta, 2004).

Immigration, then, appears to be an indicator for poverty. Surprisingly, perhaps, immigrants entering Canada through the business program also experience difficulties in the labour market, since they frequently fail in their bids to establish prosperous businesses (Ley & Hiebert, 2001). Although there are many reasons why immigrants are disadvantaged in the labour market, the implicit (and sometimes explicit) values held by Canada’s government leaders about what constitutes an ideal citizen (e.g., western European ethnicity and good English language skills) and the immigration policies that result are among the more significant reasons (Nakhaie, 2006; Lightman & Gingrich, 2012).

The barriers faced by immigrants go beyond the labour market, affecting the very identity of those who come to Canada. Research indicates that the Canadian nation-state is dominated by exclusionary racial, class, gender, sociolinguistic categories and regulations, in which immigrants from “Third World” countries, such as Asia and Africa, are constructed as outsiders and Aboriginal peoples are subject to ongoing repression (El-Lahib, 2015). According to Thobani (2000), as long as Canadian immigration policy and regulations are based on the dichotomy between “ideal” and “real” Canadians (i.e., White), Canadian values (i.e., whiteness, fluency in English and French and mainstream way of living) and “immigrant Canadians” (i.e., people of colour) and their “cultural distinctiveness,” the latter group will remain excluded.

Fleras (2004) criticizes Canadian official multiculturalism discourse and policy as mono-multiculturalism since it is not about “celebrating diversity, but primarily about neutralizing differences to ensure integration” (Fleras, 2004, p. 432). According to Fleras, a mono-multiculturalism imposes a single national cultural unity, including nationalist discourses such as national security; it also suppresses and excludes the identities, experiences and values of minorities. Mono-multiculturalism and its motto “we-know-what-is-best-for-you,” as part of ethnocentrism, castrates and de-politicizes differences and alternative thoughts and thus repudiates minorities’ power to challenge, resist and transform dominant ideology.

Given the state of world politics, it is not surprising to see negative attitudes and discriminatory practices against Muslim youth, in school and other social contexts because of their Muslim identity (Abdurraqib, 2009). Research indicates that there are tensions between the Islamic practices of the Muslim minority and the Canadian environment (Geddes, 2013). In addition, anti-Muslim sentiment is rising (Canadian Council of Muslim Women, 2005). Adelman (2002) points to a poll conducted for the Council for Canadian Unity which indicates that, “the support for reduced immigration rose after [the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Buildings] from 29 Per Cent to 45 Per Cent. However, an even larger percentage, 80 Per Cent, demanded strict controls over immigration” (Adelman, 2002, p.15). In both media and among the mainstream population, immigrants and refugees, particularly from the Middle East, are legally constructed as potential criminals in the name of security which is a new, legitimate way of exclusion of others (Sensoy, 2016). As a result, Muslim minority youth suffer from “Islamophobia,” xenophobia in Canada despite the multiethnic and diverse linguistic features of the country (Dossa, 2008). Many Muslim youth experience alienation in schools where the

explicit and implicit school policies and practices fail to acknowledge their knowledge, identity, history and language (Dei, 2003; Kayaalp, 2013).

If Muslim and ethnic minority youth face social and cultural challenges with regard to their distinct identities in Canada, we may ask whether the case is similar for Turkish immigrant youth, a relatively poorly known group. Turkish immigrant youths' (first-, 1.5-, and second-generation) social and cultural realities, lived experiences need further scrutiny if we are to understand their identity formations in Canada.

### **Turkish Community in Canada**

Researchers do not know much about the Turkish diaspora in Canada; it is one of the least studied ethnic groups in the country. Many Turkish immigrants to Canada between 1911 and 1921 were deported and classified as enemy aliens during World War I, not surprising given the role of the Ottoman Empire in the war (Abu-Laban, 1995). Similarly according to Ataca & Berry (2002, p. 16),

the general pattern of Turkish immigration to Canada has been such that it reached its peak before World War I, stopped until after World War II, and peaked during the late 1960s, again in the early 1980s, it has been increasing rapidly during the last few years.

According to Statistics Canada (2006), there is a growing Turkish population in Canada, particularly in metropolitan cities, namely Vancouver, Toronto, and Ottawa. There are approximately 50,000 individuals of Turkish origin in Canada and the Turkish population in Vancouver is 3,380 (Statistics Canada, 2006). Political uncertainties, occupational and educational inequalities and natural disasters (the 1999 Izmit earthquake) in Turkey are some of the reasons for Turkish immigration to Canada (Kayaalp, 2011).

Turkish immigrants comprise primarily two different social classes, professional and working-class, and these groups have different challenges after immigrating to Canada. People from the professional group, who comprise the secular group in Turkish community, experience difficulties in the labour market and often settle for jobs with low qualifications (e.g., taxi driver), since their diplomas and jobs experiences are not recognized (see also Aycan & Berry, 1996). Immigrants from working-class background, who comprise mostly the religious group, face difficulties with immigration procedures (such as paper work and family reunification), financial issues, educational challenges and cultural discrimination at schools and in the public sphere. Turkish youths' temporary and precarious status in the host country, as well as their parents' struggles in the social sphere and in the labour market, might negatively affect young people's identities and their sense of belonging in Canada. However, it should also be noted that unlike first-generation immigrant youth and their parents, second-generation immigrant youth do not confront many of these obstacles, especially in the education and labor market (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007), because of their linguistic and educational advantages in the host society (Kayaalp, 2015).

## Research Design and Analysis

This critical qualitative study examines multiple identity formations of Turkish immigrant youth in Vancouver. I conducted in-depth interviews and participant observations with 14<sup>1</sup> first-, 1.5- and second-generation immigrant youth (seven male and seven female) between 15 and 25 years of age in order to gain a full understanding of their social and cultural profile<sup>2</sup>.

The Turkish youth in this study come from either professional backgrounds who occupy white-color positions, or working-class families who do unskilled menial jobs. It should also be noted that some immigrant parents, including youths themselves, experience downward mobility from professional- to working-class as their parents' diplomas are not recognized (for more information about immigrant employment see [Reitz, 2000; Kayaalp, 2013]).

Finally, the youths' generational characteristics consisted of: 1) the first-generation Turkish immigrant youth, comprising participants who were born outside of Canada but immigrated to Canada at age 15 or later; 2) the 1.5-generation Turkish immigrant youth, consisting of participants who were born outside of Canada but immigrated to Canada before age 15; 3) the second-generation Turkish immigrant youth, comprising participants who were born in Canada (Boyd, 2002).

Youth were recruited through advertisements within Vancouver's Turkish Community Centre. Also, I contacted people I already knew and asked them to refer me to youth who might be interested, i.e. by means of snowball sampling. In order to be able to meet young people from diverse backgrounds such as immigration status, gender and class backgrounds<sup>3</sup>, I participated in religious and non-religious events in the community centre and at mosques in Greater Vancouver.

In-depth interviews were conducted with young people in order to address the research questions and capture young peoples' multiple attachments and identities. All interviews were conducted by me in various informal spaces such as the participants' homes and cafés. The interviews were conducted in English and at times in Turkish and themes of the interviews included young people's binary identity categories (such as Turkish/Canadian, Muslim/Secular), class backgrounds, their cultural and social experiences in the host country.

To supplement interview data, I took ethnographic field notes on personal (e.g., parties), social and community events (e.g., celebration of religious festivals or national events) or any venues and meetings (e.g., the Turkish coffee house) that Turkish immigrant youth might be involved in during the length of my research project. I also recorded field notes in which I recorded my feelings, impressions, reactions, questions and problems regarding the settings and

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<sup>1</sup> During my fieldwork I interviewed approximately 30 young people, but only 14 interviews were included in this research.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that selections of randomly chosen participants are not representative of all Turkish youth in Canada. Similarly, the findings of this research cannot be generalized to identity constructions of Turkish immigrant youth in other countries or youth of other ethno-national origins in other countries.

<sup>3</sup> With regard to class positions of my participants, their parents' occupational position was the main criterion, i.e., whether they have professional or unskilled menial jobs.

the participants. This helped me to realize my own biases and became aware of potential gaps in my inquiry.

For my data analysis I used a computer program called NVivo. In this process I would read the text, then assigned a category to it, either by using the words of my participants or creating my own categories. Here, I followed the “constant comparative method,” in which I examined the similarities and differences of the coded data from other data (i.e., my other interviews, including my observations) (Glaser & Strauss in Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Interview data were analysed by reading each youth’s transcript and then looking for patterns across youth. Some of the questions were used as categories for identifying and explaining identity: How do first- and second-generation Turkish immigrant youth describe their lives in the host country? How do their class and cultural identities fit into their immigrant experiences? How can their “Muslim/non-Muslim,” “traditional/modern,” “western/eastern,” “European/Mediterranean/Middle Eastern” identities be explored?

Interpreting the data brought up the issue of reflexivity once again. How much was my own personal experience (i.e., cultural background) shaping my interpretations on young people’s personal experiences, and their self-identifications? Would my participants approve of my perspective? Would they agree with my choice of theories? While I tried to capture multiple truths of their identities and “ethnic-nuances” of immigrant youth throughout my critical qualitative approach, I also wish to acknowledge the partial, subjective nature of this written product: I spoke from “somewhere,” instead of from nowhere (Bettie, 2003).

### **Identity Formation of Turkish Youth in Vancouver**

The existence of the single, homogeneous cultural identity central to many illusory nationalist movements has been called into questions by scholars in Social Sciences and Humanities. It is in question not only because it is “invested” in “regimes of representations” (such as dominant cultural codes, images, values, rituals of everyday life, constructed distinctive cultural characteristics; Hall, 1997a, 1997b, 2000), but also “new times” marked by globalization and migration have led to new formations of cultural identities (Hall, 1989, 1996). Now sociologists and cultural studies scholars are talking about “new ethnicities” (Cohen, 1999; Tyler, 2011) and multiple, hybrid identities (Hall, 1990; Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992; Bhabha, 1996; Drew, 1999; Brettell & Nibbs, 2009) which challenge the Enlightenment’s traditional narratives of essentialism, including constructed cultural identities (Solomos & Back, 1996).

Similarly, Bakhtin (in Bhabha, 1996) emphasizes the ability of the hybrid as having double-lives and abilities:

The... hybrid is not only double-voiced and double-accented ... but is also double-languaged; for in it there are not only (and not even so much) two individual consciousnesses, two voices, two accents, as there are [doublings of] socio-linguistic, consciousnesses, two epochs... that come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of the utterance.... It is the collision between differing points of view on the world that are embedded in these forms ... such unconscious hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically.

Inspired by Bakhtin's notion of "unconscious hybrids" and Hall and Bhabha's concept of "hybrid and diasporic" identities, in this study I develop a concept "supra-hybridity" to examine Turkish youths' identity formations. *Accepting that nobody is "pure" and thus everybody is unconsciously hybrid, I think that we need an alternative term which describes supra abilities and thus privileges of immigrant youths, particularly 1.5- and second-generation youth, in the host country.*

While the definition of supra-hybrid identities is based on the notion of hybrid identities, *consciously achieved* supra-hybrid identities are separated from *unconscious, ascribed* hybrid identities in many ways, that is, the assumption is that *hybridity is a human condition* which is assigned by birth. Supra-hybrids' "multiple consciousness," i.e., their dominant national traits, their linguistic and cultural abilities, their full access to institutions, their sense of belonging to multiple "homes," histories and cultures exalts their status in the host country. Their "higher" status makes them more privileged and culturally more powerful than hybrid identities. While supra-hybrid identities are not fully "exalted subjects," i.e., the nation's insiders as Thobani (2007, p. 20) puts it, they have the *ability to seek inclusion* in the nation-state. In this regard, they occupy an in-between category between insiders and outsiders in the nation.

Exaltation delineates the specific human characteristics said to distinguish the nation from others, marking out its unique nationality. As such, it invokes a particular subject position that can be inhabited only by the nation's insiders, or those who seek inclusion by effacing their difference from this position.

Hybrid identities, on the contrary, occupy the minority status, "the outside of the inside: the part in the whole" (Bhabha, 1996, p. 58) due to their linguistically, culturally underprivileged position in the nation.

As a result, Turkish immigrant youths' identity formations have various readings as a result of the processes of hybridization (Hall, 1996) and supra-hybridization. Their imagined realities, diasporic habitus, and emotional ties with the past create different, diverse relationships, hybrid and supra-hybrid identities.

Accordingly, young people identify themselves as Turkish-Canadian, Western, Mediterranean, Middle-Eastern, non-religious, culturally Muslim, white-washed, and in-between. Dominant social and cultural values, national stories, collective images and symbols, memories, norms of behaviour, religious affiliation, and emotional ties with home/host country are the most significant reference points in the identity formation of youth from Turkey<sup>4</sup>.

The statements of Mehmet indicate clearly how youths' cultural, social and emotional attachments to their home country affect their sense of belonging, including their self-identification. Mehmet explains his Turkishness:

I am not confused [about my identity] because I am 100% Turkish. Immigrating to a country and feeling like you belong are very difficult. [...] My parents'

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<sup>4</sup> In this paper I will focus on national, hybrid, in-between and religious identities, as they are the most often repeated themes in young people's reports.

decision to immigrate was to have better opportunities but not to become a Canadian. [...] I would continue my life here as a Turkish person.

This statement shows a young man's pride in asserting his Turkishness. In fact, it is a common phenomenon for most of the first-generation youth to express pride in being Turkish as a result of the Turkish state's nationalistic and authoritarian education system. Turkishness, as an ideological theme, i.e., the realization of an ethnic belonging, goes back to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkishness has continued to be one of the basic elements of the dominant republican ethos with the impact of some nationalist thinkers, such as Ziya Gökalp, on the identity politics of the state.

The hegemonic Turkish state and its social-engineering project sought to create a homogeneous population with a single shared identity which resulted in increased inequality and marginalization (Anahit, 2014). Turkish society simply was/is not homogeneous due to its ethnic, religious, ideological, and regional diversities (e.g., Kurdish, Alawi, Islamists, Kemalists, rural, Eastern). During the nation-building project, many rural Turks and non-ethnic Turks and other minorities, e.g., Kurds, were alienated since they were ethnically unlike those who had power in the state and its apparatuses (Ergil, 2000; Yegen, 2009). The identity transformation of the society fomented ideological and ethnic conflicts between secularist, modernist, mainstream Turks and the traditional, religious population and Kurdish minority.

Consequently, the dominant ideologies of the home country (e.g., secularism, modernism), and important figures in the state's version of Turkish history (e.g., Atatürk, the secular reformer of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) are still reference points for some of the youths' self-identification. For example, Ahmet's report indicates the interplay between the constructions of the Turkish identity through ideologies of the home country. Ahmet states,

to live in Canada I didn't distance myself from Turkishness. While I am listening to the Turkish anthem, I still get goose bumps. That's weird. I mean how can I still have this feeling? [...] maybe it is in my blood. I was very young I don't remember anything maybe because my father was telling me stories about Atatürk. They have been asking me who my role model is since primary school. Atatürk is my first and foremost role model. He is my unknown, first role model.

Ahmet's case indicates that immigrant youth's sense of belonging and the construction of their identities often occur through childhood stories, memories and maybe fantasies. Ahmet's father's stories about Turkish national figures are a way of constructing Ahmet's identity. Hall argues (2006, p. 253), "[national identities] are not literally imprinted in our genes, [...] but are formed within and in relation to representation," that is, through images and stories.

In fact, the relationship between identity and imagination leads us to consider Hall's theory on the interrelationship between identity and the unconscious: "Identity is itself grounded on the huge unknowns of our psychic lives" (Hall, 1989, p. 5). Here, while Hall's statement describes the power of the unconscious over identity construction, it also explains Ahmet's identity construction through the national anthem, his unknown, unseen role model or his psychic imagination. On the other hand, the significance of heroic figures for Ahmet shows how patriarchal, collectivist features influence Turkish youth. The ideologies of the Turkish Republic,

such as supra-nationalism, authoritarianism and heroism (Bozkurt, 2014), function/ed “as an identity-anchoring mechanism” (Mardin, 1978) for young people. It is fascinating to see how these permanent attachments –heroic figures or ideologies- work by binding immigrant youth to their homelands, despite the fact that identities are “temporary attachment[s] to subject positions which discursive practices construct for us (Hall, 2006, p. 9).” So, while space is important in transforming identities, some identities may stick to their “original” starting point (e.g., “siege mentality” and “frozen clock” among Turks in Germany<sup>5</sup>; [Sardar, 1995]).

Similarly, Leyla’s case offers fascinating example showing that memories, objects and self-identification can be interrelated. Leyla recalls her childhood in Turkey:

when I was 18 I remembered everything when I was 7. I still knew my ways around the street...I still remember how to go to my aunt’s house. The streets and everything. I knew where the coffee shop was, I knew where the bakkal<sup>6</sup> was. It is huge city and in a couple of days still I knew how to get from my aunt’s house. You still have that memory. [...]And you still hold those things.

Objects and places are connected to memories and memories remind them of where they come from even where they come from is “only imagined” (Hall, 1996). Memories may also cause emotional attachments between immigrant youth and their home country. Leyla states that her childhood memories of Turkey make her feel she belongs in Turkey, and help her make connections between her current identity and her past.

While sometimes the region and geography of the country (the region that their parents are come from and their place of birth) are reasons for self-identification; sometimes Turkish youths’ memories, as part of their dispositions and habitus (e.g., life style and tacit knowledge), are linked to their identity formations, i.e., their own strategic personal choices in self-identifications (e.g., being Turkish-Canadian). Memories, including emotional attachments, are significant reference points for immigrant youths’ self-identification, particularly when memories are associated with positive perceptions and experiences (such as the feeling of being accepted and included, feeling comfortable, and making friends). Emotional aspects of not/belonging affect youths’ self-identifications and attachment to the home and host country.

Similarly, my data indicate that the dominant values and norms of the host country, namely Christianity, and events such as thanksgiving, negatively affect first-generation Muslim Turkish youth’s sense of belonging in Canada. Melek’s Muslim identity goes parallel with her Turkish identity in her rejection of Canadian values and self-identification (e.g., her detachment from Canadian holidays). Melek thinks that these holidays are not part of “her” religion, so there is no reason to celebrate them. Melek reports, “We don’t celebrate them, because those are their holidays, they are not related to us.”

Cultural values, and dispositions of a first-generation immigrant youth (language, ways of living, habits) will lead to different national capitals, and a different sense of belongings than

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<sup>5</sup> Sardar’s (1995) uses the concept “siege mentality to describe immigrants” refusal to accept problems within their own communities, and “the frozen clock syndrome” to describe a failure to adjust new conditions (vs. acting as though they are still in the “old country”).

<sup>6</sup> A small market.

the dominant culture and second-generation immigrant youth. This in turn makes first-generation youth culturally, linguistically disadvantaged compared to second-generation youth in Canada.

While some first-generation Turkish youths' self-identification is constructed through religion, imagined Turkishness, un/consciously learned social and cultural norms and practices, memories and the state's ideologies, some second-generation youths,' including 1.5-generation, identities are constructed through more complex, transnational ways such as being born in Canada, then being raised in Turkey, getting along well with both the Canadian and Turkish culture and finally being more equipped to succeed.

Accordingly, the results indicate that young people are successfully living in different cultures with their in-between, transnational, supra-hybrid identities, though it may lead to some challenges with regard to their multiple belongings. Ahmet explains:

Both of them [Turkey and Canada] are two different worlds. Here my friends call me Turk, in Turkey they call me Canadian. I always feel myself in-between. You live like a Canadian here, and you miss Turkey. But when I am in Turkey, I think 'Oh I am really part of Canada' and I am really proud of being Canadian in Turkey.

Ahmet's statement shows us that living in-between may create impasses when he needs to choose only one place, while he wants to live in different places at the same time: Canada or Turkey? However, Ahmet's in-between experience is paralleled with an appreciation for living in different worlds with different lifestyles, and having friends with various cultural backgrounds. In this regard, Ahmet's case illustrates that although some youth feel ambiguous with regard to their sense of belonging, this feeling does not always lead to marginalization and disconnection from society. Rather, the feeling of in-betweenness turns into a feeling of affirmation and maybe pride in their capacity to adjust to various milieus. In other words, Ahmet's in-betweenness makes him a cultural, supra-hybrid who belongs to multiple homes, rather than "a nomad within two worlds" (Abadan-Unat, 1985). Ahmet goes on describing his supra-hybridity well:

as a Turkish Canadian it is deeply complicated to relate your experiences but the simplest way of explaining what I have endured is by saying, 'we are different and similar all at once.' I have friends in both countries that I can compare, I can speak both languages, I know both cultures and most of all I know what it means to be a Canadian and a Turk at the same time. I tend to use them everyday throughout my life. [...] We have a very close Canadian family who invite us to their family dinner every Christmas and Thanksgiving. *Can you imagine that? We hang out not only with Turks, but also with Canadians (my emphasis).*

Osman's report verifies that young people enjoy the privileges of supra-hybridity which gives them the ability to live in, and adapt to different cultures at the same time, with multiple attachments or in some cases *without any particular attachment*. Osman argues,

I consider myself not European, not Middle-Eastern, not North American. It is just a mix. A mix of North American, European, Middle-Eastern....Turkey itself is

sort of European and Middle-Eastern sort of mixed together...so I believe I am all three put together.

Youth show that meta-narrative assumptions of one, single identity, based on binary oppositions, is false. Young people have multiple consciousness, they develop skills which fit different time, place and space.

While the dominant norms, popular hegemony, contextual, psychic and emotional belongings are the significant factors in identity constructions of young people, Muslimness, an ideological category representing world-views and practices, is coded as one of the most controversial youth identities.

Research indicates that throughout Europe Muslim immigrant youth hold their Islamic identity only at a symbolic level (Sardar, 1995; Kaya, 2005). Most of them do not fast, they adopt a secular approach, and even some define themselves as “Atheist Muslims.” Although according to Islam it is not possible to be an “atheist Muslim,” the category of Muslimness suggests a cultural as well as a religious background. Kaya calls this process “symbolic religiosity,” in which “religiosity gains a more symbolic than instrumental function in people’s lives, and loses its importance ...[and] becomes a leisure time activity” (Kaya, 2005, p. 9).

This perspective calls for a critical reconsideration: one that takes into account the fractured diasporic identities of Turkish immigrant youth, their identity transformations, their constantly changing perceptions and experiences of “Muslimness” and “Turkishness” and “our,” that is the researchers,’ tendency to make problematic *a priori* assumptions about “Turkish and Muslim” immigrant youth without considering their self-identifications.

Similarly, my data indicate that young people negotiate, reshape, and redefine their religious identities; they create alternative definitions about Islam, its practice, and interpretation. *Consequently, they create their own religion, a supra-hybrid belief system.*

Leyla’s argument shows the dominant group’s stereotypes and assumptions on Muslimness and young people’s responses to these:

when I say I am Muslim they are like what do you mean, no you are not, no you are not. Yes, I am Muslim Turkish. People are ‘Muslim?’ So it is kinda shock to them. And they are like you don’t wear hijab or headscarf. And I am like ‘do I have to? To be a Muslim?’ That is my choice as someone who is a Muslim I wanna wear what I want to wear.

This finding is similar to Khan’s (2009) discussion about the essentialist meta-narratives of western ideologies which read Muslims as a homogenous group, and therefore assume anyone from a predominantly Muslim country as an authority and representative of Islam. It overlooks differences between and within Muslim groups and individual differences (e.g., ways of living and social class) of those (e.g., culturally Muslim or atheist Muslim) whose self-identification does not fit into these monolithic assumptions of Muslim identity.

In this regard, Leyla and Ayşe's reports confirm that Turkish youth resist standardization (e.g., orthodox Muslimness) which leads to complex, supra-hybrid Muslim identities, and new versions/readings of Islam. Leyla states,

In the summer I can't fast. It is impossible like sun goes down at 9 o'clock it is not gonna happen. I talk with Allah 'sorry man it is just not gonna happen'. When it comes back to December again I am back on it. [...] Summer time is party time. [...] I don't think I will burn in hell. My mom says cause my belly is pierced it is gonna hung by your belly when you are hell. I am like ok I will deal with that later when I talk to God. [...] I know certain things. I drink. I don't smoke cigarettes. I go out. I don't eat pork. I hate that I pick things cause it is like if you [do] all these bad things why you are not eating pork? If I am hammered why I am not eating pork?

Similarly, Ayşe's case indicates that supra-hybrid Muslim identities have the ability to negotiate, and experiment with different ways of life; they may pray five times a day and fast but at the same time they adopt western taste in their lives. Ayşe reports, "I really like live music. [...] I like rock a lot. I like to go to concerts but I don't know. I have never had nightlife like Canadian students have here. I think because I am really religious."

Correspondingly, Emel states that she created her own hybrid belief system, her own Muslim identity. Emel reports,

Although in my id it is written 'Islam,' I do not believe certain things in Islam. For example, I don't understand why eating pork is forbidden in Islam. When they ask my religion I tell them spiritual Muslim. I believe in spirituality but I don't care about other stuff, like if I have to believe in the prophet Mohammed or Jesus Christ. My coping mechanism is to believe in god and to live in the moment. I don't categorize myself [as Muslim or something else]. *I learned something from every kind of religion, and eventually created my own religion (my emphasis).*

Young people's interpretations and approaches towards religion and its practices are complicated. They cannot be explained either through orthodox religious terms or scientific rationalizations (such as, "pork is not a clean or healthy meat"). Young people show that their religiosity or religious practices include a mixture of spiritual, symbolic and cultural expressions, their parents' pre- and post-migration histories, including the youth's multiple attachments (emotional/psychic, cultural and social) and their own everyday experiences in a predominantly Christian country. So this supra-hybridity makes their symbolic religiosity unique. Their interpretation and practice of Islam not only contradicts the dominant, mainstream practices which assert certain rules and regulations, but also with the host culture's assumption about Muslim youth and their "radicalism." In other words, by identifying themselves as secular and religious at the same time young people use these two exclusive categories as complementary and create new alternative identities in Canada and challenge their secular/religious parents' and grandparents' ideological dogmas.

Consequently, immigrant youth's supra-hybrid identities should not be considered as a static phenomenon that reflects a singular experience, but a process that indicates multiple experiences.

## **Conclusion**

As lived experiences, perceptions, places, spaces and time determine young people's cultural identities, cultural practices (such as narratives, norms of behaviour), social institutions (such as religion), emotional and physical attachments (such as memories and objects) are reported as significant reference points in identity formations of Turkish minority youth in Canada. As a result of these multiple reference points, young people identify themselves with multiple, and constantly changing identities.

Despite these conflicting and complex identities, for some young people, however, some of the identities can be more dominant than others. For example, most of first-generation youth report that their Turkish cultural identity, i.e., their fixed "shared history and ancestry," is the most important identity determinant. Social and emotional gap (wherein minority youth do not obey the dominant cultural norms) is one of the reasons for the disconnection of first-generation youth from the dominant culture and it may account for their feelings of attachment to their home culture. In other words, for first-generation youth, there is a significant difference between the emotional and social sense of belonging to Canada (being comfortable with cultural practices, habits, ways of living, body language) and official/institutional belonging.

Despite first-generation youth's feelings of not "fitting in" with the host society, second-generation youth feel at home in Canada. Second-generation youth's accumulation of the host society's cultural values, practices and dispositions through the socialization process causes them to develop skills to switch between different settings and to create a strong sense of belonging. In other words, their proximity to the host and home culture through accumulation of national capital (through socialization and education) confers advantages in terms of feelings of belonging. Second-generation youth, in this regard, underline the fact that they accept "Canadian traditions" and they feel they belong to Canada "100%."

As a result, young people, particularly second-generation immigrant youth, have the ability to use exclusive categories (such as ideological, religious, ethnic) as complementary. By identifying themselves as culturally supra-hybrid, and in-between selves such as "religious-seculars," and "a mix of North American, European, Middle-Eastern," young people create new alternative identities. While sometimes the feeling of in-betweenness leads to the state of liminality and feeling of suspension which may cause the feeling of uncertainty about their identity, they are also aware of the fact that they are beyond the norm.

Consequently, they are supra-hybrid because they challenge the structured and structuring orthodoxy. I report that young people, who are in-between selves, are able to liberate themselves from the ideological impasses of secularism and religious orthodoxy. Despite the dominant cultures' values about "purity," sameness, standardization, traditionalism and masculinity, young people are generating supra-hybrid, inconsistent, unorthodox human spaces. They embrace multiple conflicted identities; they are North-American-European-Middle-Eastern who have the courage to negotiate between old and new, east and west, modern and traditional;

they are “Muslim atheists,” hip hop and rock fans with colorful headscarves and cultural conservatives with body piercings.

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