Local Community Care-based Activism and Civic Engagement Among Canadian Arab Youth

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Abstract. In this paper, we examine the local community care-based activism and civic engagement of a racialized youth demographic: Canadian Arab youth. Civic engagement refers to volunteerism and service-oriented activities and programs that expand community, ground social networks, help people, and make civil society possible. Focusing on the parameters and rates of Canadian Arab youth participation, motivation, and commitment, we examine the scales of their political interests, the degree of their involvement in volunteerism and social action, what sparks their activity in the civic realm, and how they imagine and attempt to improve the conditions for a better and more inclusive society. We find that Canadian Arab youth give considerable service back to their communities, especially to the communities of their own cultural milieu, but also significantly to service projects in their local municipalities.

Keywords: Canadian Arab youth, political participation, civic engagement, citizenship, social justice, ethnic minority youth, immigrant youth

Introduction

Civic engagement refers to volunteerism and service-oriented activities and programs that expand community, ground social networks, help people, and make civil society possible. Researchers in the field of youth civic engagement have found that youth in western democratic societies tend to be moderately to highly engaged in various community care-based activities that require volunteerism and collaboration from participants (Ekman and Amnå, 2012; Flanagan et al., 2011; Kirpitchenko and Mansouri, 2014; Lüküslü and Walther, 2021; Mansouri and Kirpitchenko, 2016). Debate persists about whether there is a plasticity or malleability in development of youth's political ideas or whether such ideas in fact crystalize over time (Sherrod, Torney-Purta, and Flanagan, 2010). However complimentary research has found that civic participation among youth via community-service initiatives led by schools or youth organizations tends to prime youth for and improve their receptiveness to involvement in politically oriented activities (McIntosh and Youniss, 2010). Continued associationalism sustains even after the passing of several decades and is important for the maintenance of a democratic ethos and practice over time (Wicks et al. 2014). Similar results are reported in the literature on racialized and migrant youth (Flanagan, Levine, and Settersten, 2009; Kirpitchenko and Mansouri, 2014; Mansouri and Kirpitchenko, 2016).

We examine the local community care-based activism and civic engagement of Canadian Arab youth. Focusing on the parameters and rates of Canadian Arab youth participation, motivation, and commitment, we examine the scales of their political interests, the degree of their involvement in volunteerism and social action, what sparks their activity in the civic realm, and how they imagine and attempt to improve the conditions for a better and more inclusive society. We find that Canadian Arab youth give considerable service back to their communities, especially to the communities of their own cultural milieu, but also significantly to service projects in their local municipalities (Marzana et al. 2018).

The Conditions for Youth Civic Engagement

Youth civic development includes the social relations, opportunities for practice, and values and behaviors that support *civic literacy*: knowledge of community affairs and political issues, *civic skills*: competencies in achieving group goals, and *civic attachment*: the feeling or be-

lief that the individual matters and can make a difference (Flanagan and Faison, 2001; Sherrod, Torney-Purta, and Flanagan, 2010). Debate continues on whether the proximal influences on youth for their civic engagement include the inputs from parents and family and participation in civic organizations and programs. Roth and Brooks-Dunn (2016) write that "Contemporary theoretical frameworks for understanding adolescent development share an emphasis on the bidirectional relations between a developing individual and the changing environmental contexts of which he/she is a part. These nested proximal and distal contexts include the family, peers, school, neighborhood, community, region, and country" (see also McIntosh and Youniss, 2010: 31 regarding the importance of youths' political discussions with their parents in priming them for political engagement). Sherrod, Torney-Purta, and Flanagan (2010), on the other hand, write that "…civic engagement results from the person's interaction with her society and its institutions, relying on underlying basic or natural development in cognition, emotion, or social competencies. Civic engagement is a set of behaviors that results from a process that is often called socialization…[from] civic education, school activities, youth programs, community service and service-learning programs" (11). McIntosh and Youniss (2010) note that "Acquisition of skills and attitudes that constitute the elements of citizenship occurs *in the doing* within a political context" (23; see also 28). Based on situated learning theory, we know that people *learn from doing* in a context that nurtures their activities and adopt habits and identities through meaningful involvement in a community of practice. This is especially the case in apprentice-like relationships and/or via scaffolding where step-by-step guidance is given by more experienced individuals or family members, and when real-life political system experiences, role-playing, and perspective taking are offered. Intergenerational exchange is core to political socialization (Ibid: 30-33).

Youth civic engagement refers to volunteerism and service-oriented activities and programs that "promote young people's participation in political and civic affairs" (Kahne and Westheimer, 2006: 289) expand community cohesiveness, ground social networks, help people, and make civil society possible. The free expression of thought and open discussion in schools are found to be the most important correlates of civic knowledge and engagement (Torney-Purta 2002; Sherrod). Sherrod, Torney-Purta, and Flanagan (2010) argue that civic engagement is determined by the type of community service, mandatory and/or volunteer activities, opportunities provided for reflection, and organizing group characteristics. Zukin et al (2006) examine civic engagement as those activities that create communal and individual benefits.

Examining the impact of community service learning activities pursued by educational institutions, Kahne and Westheimer (2006: 289) note that such programs provide students with readily-accessible opportunities to clean local parks, feed the homeless, and volunteer at hospitals, elderly care facilities, and recycling centres. Such programs teach youth the value of giving back, create the conditions for their involvement in future civic engagement activities, and foster among them a greater sense of social and political efficacy. The General Social Survey (GSS) explicitly named the core voluntary or civic engagement activities of its study to include canvassing, fundraising, sitting as member on a committee or board, teaching and mentoring, organizing or coordinating activities or events, unpaid office, bookkeeping, administrative or library work, acting as a coach, referee, or officiate, providing counsel or advice, providing healthcare or companionship support, collecting and delivering food or goods, providing maintenance, repair of facilities or improvement work, providing driver's education, offering first aid, fire-fighting, or search/rescue aid, or engaging in conservation or environmental protection activities or work (GSS, 2018). Similarly, Wicks et al. (2014) measured youth civic engagement in the United States according to several forms of activity: raising money for a charitable cause, volunteering to help the disenfranchised, working in the community to solve a community problem, and participating in church-organized service projects. Turcotte (2015b) found that 82% of Canadians made a financial donation to a charity or non-profit and that 12.7 million Canadians (or 44% of the population) who are 15 years and older conducted volunteer work, however this rate was 3% lower than the rate in 2010. Turcotte's (2015b) report identified volunteers as people who have provided an uncompensated service for an organization or group such as religious groups and centers, schools, and sports and community organizations.

Civic engagement is facilitated through volunteerism, giving up time for a cause, social movement, or intervention, collaborating with others, negotiating with others on approaches and activities and properly anticipating and adjudicating on outcomes, obtaining various 'wins' from this work, building comradery and friendships in free associations that increase social trust between people, reciprocity, accountability beyond oneself, and developing a sense of belonging in one's community. These benefits are what Putnam (2001) calls 'social capital.' Mansouri and Kirpitchenko (2016) define social capital as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. These norms and network-building tend to produce self-reinforcing and cumulative benefits for a collective. Citizenship, they write, relies

on collective affective experiments. Where there is the foundation for social capital there is a critical mass to build more of it, and for people to further develop transferrable skills and knowledge in areas such as management, communication, teaching, health, and team-building (Turcotte, 2015a; 2015b). Tossutti (2005) found that volunteering with organizations helps to build political capacities and support network recruitment, and that community support activities act as incubators for the civil attitudes and skills required to build formal political institutions. She also investigated (2007) whether membership in voluntary associations shaped the types and degrees of youth political participation and civic engagement. She found that voluntary associationialism made youth more likely to sign petitions, engage in boycotts or demonstrations, write letters, attend meetings or rallies, or phone talk shows to contribute to discussions about a contemporary political problem or issue. Involvement in sports clubs, charities, and places of worship have long been regarded as ostensibly non-political voluntary activities that help bring people into political thinking, framing, and action for the collective public good, especially among those people brought into greater collaboration with government programs (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). Tossutti (2007) notes that civic associations can act as para-political mediators between individuals and political institutions because they lobby policy-makers and serve as channels of interaction between political elites and their constituents on key issues that matter to the constituents.

The development of academic knowledge on youth political participation and civic engagement unfolded in three stages: 1) participation as a form of decision-making (e.g., the study of youth expressing a political will and interest), 2) participation as a form of citizenship mobilization to enable rights and fulfil duties (e.g., the study of the political subjectivities and claims of youth), and 3) participation as the nexus between civic action, active engagement, and political beingness (e.g., the study of how political action mirrors and expresses youths' latent political power) (Martelli, 2013). Marzana et al. (2018) suggests that when youth transition into adulthood, one core lesson of this transition involves acquiring a sense of their civic identity which is developed in concert with others. Similarly, Flanagan et al. (2011) argue that beliefs and attitudes around civic engagement flow from social interaction and collective action, and therefore that enthusiasm for such activities is the result of joint action. Civic and political goals are achieved by collectivities of people rather than individuals; collective action assumes the expression of diverse viewpoints (a feature that uniquely distinguishes civic action from other forms of discretionary activity spent

doing the things they like to do) and therefore that youth are exposed to diverse counter-responses and begin to see political issues from other perspectives, particularly the perspectives of marginalized and racialized people to which they would not otherwise be exposed (Ibid). Collaborative action has profound psychological benefits for participants and helps transform the political culture for future generations of young people (Ibid). Relationships developed in different cultures and organizations will affect the development of civic skills, identities, and dispositions. Civic activities help break open spaces in a political environment for youths' creative and pioneering reasoning, create opportunities for interpersonal connections, create opportunities for decision-making in an organization or social movement, and improve their self-concept by giving them a sense that they are contributing to outcomes that might have transformative impact.

The civic perspective is built through grappling: gaining exposure to diverse perspectives, experiencing heterogeneous encounters, interacting with groups of people one seldom encounters in one's life, taking a stand on an issue and exposing one's views to the challenges of others, grappling with another group for enough time to problematize stereotypes and develop intergroup understanding. Other forms of grappling include challenging political stereotypes to expand political consciousness and to develop an awareness that equal opportunity does not apply equally to all groups despite social contract expectations. Grappling is also enabled through the process of entertaining imaginative possibilities and patiently allowing one's political ideas to crystallize over time, and, especially for racialized peoples, shifting an experience with individual or collective victimization into more empowering perspectives focusing on collective identity and intergenerational struggle. Numerous studies have found that civic involvement can be cultivated and nurtured through the building of social bonds, affiliation with others, and support from a community with shared commitments (Kahne and Westheimer, 2006: 294; Kirpitchenko and Mansouri, 2014).

Youth Civic Engagement: Declining or Evolving?

There is academic disagreement about whether youth involvement in community care work and informal political associationalism is in decline. Part of the debate has been prompted by seminal works noting a marked decline in social capital formation in American society (Putnam 2001). Researchers who have identified waning engagement among youth, have pointed to apathy and a feeling that there is no efficacy in

their efforts as prominent potential causes for this situation (Kahne and Westheimer, 2006). Widely accepted among scholars is the positive role that service-learning curricula have for young people. Such experiences provide students with experiential knowledge that is both memorable and salient to them, even when the programs are compulsory and for-credit.

Caveats remain about the launching, momentum, and effectiveness of such programs. The 'muscle' of being civically concerned requires regular training and exercise, including repetition and exposure to difficult situations. As Kahne and Westheimer (2006) note, while evidence points to the effectiveness of civic service-oriented compulsory programs in raising efficacy perceptions among youth, youth also benefit from programming that is fraught and frustrating because such experiences teach young people about power structures, political interests, and technical challenges that create barriers for citizens to create change. Moreover, teaching youth citizenship mainly through non-controversial charitable activities could produce the unintended effect of reinforcing the assumption that acts of kindness on their own are sufficient to create democratic dividends, social transformation, and social redress (Ibid, 290). Youth need guidance on *how* to be civically engaged, *why* it matters, and they need support when this work proves tougher than they expected (for example when they experience first-hand 'structural lag,' such as the mismatch between their competencies and needs and opportunities provided by social and political institutions (see Kassimir and Flanagan, 2010: 106; Hamilton and Hamilton, 2009)). School-based or alternative civic engagement programs therefore should not leave youth on auto-pilot to complete the work without reflection or involve activities that require simple box-checking tasks and do not challenge them or foster a state of liminality or discomfort.

Youth today are engaging in civic-oriented activities in ways that differ from previous generations. Wicks et al, (2014) note high school and college students were less likely to give to charity or volunteer than they were fifteen years ago, yet their interest in community engagement is the highest in over 50 years. Some of the increase in volunteerism rates can be attributed to school requirements. Canadian youth involvement in the informal political system has been identified as the highest in the country per demographic strata (at 20%). Youth who are 15-19 years of age were more likely to do volunteer work, but this tendency has been positively correlated to compulsory school-based course requirements. As Turcotte discovered, "1 in 5 youth in this age group were required to volunteer in order to graduate" (2015a).

Not all research has affirmed the commitment of youth to civic engagement and many express concern that rates of civic engagement are not increasing. Referring to the European context, Martelli (2013) argues that there has been a progressive decline in participatory action among all European youth cohorts. Researchers express cautious optimism about youths' interest in being participatory and question whether youth are only interested in 'being political' in politically unproductive ways. Delgado (2016) argues that research paradigms that focus on the apparent deficiencies of urban youth, or which evaluate their actions and efforts through the values and principles of charity-based activism are using deficit thinking. Such research presupposes a lack in youth because it only focuses on what is perceived to be wrong or because it advances decontextualized arguments that overlook the whole picture and youths' social-ecological circumstances, strengths, or "their ability to socially navigate their way through life's difficult terrain" (Ibid: xi). In some contexts, youth perform civic engagement, but do so in a way that is distinct from activism. In other contexts, that same action amounts to civic engagement and activism expressed in, for example, soup kitchen volunteering and street-level mobilizations for prison reform.

In Martelli's (2013) view, the concept of participation remains persistently impenetrable and/or excessively vague. Can a universal experience of youth participation be identified? There is conflict in the literature about whether "de-standardization" (atypical social engagement activities and practices) and "individualization" (the fact that life paths are highly particular) impede researchers' capacities to derive universal measures of participation. Second, to what extent does the categorization of youth experience undermine our capacities to interpret emergent forms of activism? In studies where there are specification and measures based on comparative parameters/variables, researchers tend to focus on forms that relate to institutions which can downplay, or impede observation and interpretation of emerging forms of participatory action in the unconventional conduct of youth. Third, Martelli asks whether a decline in youth participation can be identified, and if so, does this suggest that young people are necessarily being depoliticized?

A significant body of literature has identified transformations in youth political participation in the Northern hemisphere over time and particularly the weakening of forms tied to institutional engagement compared to adult participation (Furlong and Cartmel 2012).The corollary is that youth are participating beyond the political sphere in ways that are not traditionally categorized as participatory and this is happening because our social systems are not always well functioning, social

communities often take cynical view of the system (or are politically neutral towards them), or youth pursue alternative avenues because they have deemed those avenues better capable of expanding social bonds and belonging (Martelli 2013: 427).

Maira and Soep (2008) problematize the ambivalence that is projected on youth as a dual frame that sees youth as incapable of acting maturely and producing effective political action, and where they are capable of politically mobilizing, their chosen avenues for the political expression and participation are deemed to be of the kind that some people in society do not want (see also Shepard and Hayduk 2002). Maira and Soep (2008) write that "this kind of deep social ambivalence has, of course, long existed as moral panics about youth…these panics are projected onto young people because of the association of youth with liminality, in anthropological terms, so that societies both reject those who critique their norms as 'deviant' but also tolerate, and even incorporate, them as citizens existing somewhere between one space or status and another" (Maira and Soep, xxiii; Dannin, 2002). This toleration is regarded as necessary so that society does not abdicate responsibility for the next generation. Moreover, evidence indicates that racialized and immigrant youth receive comparatively fewer or more limited civic opportunities compared to youth from ethnic majority backgrounds. Diverse cohorts of youth are engaged to close this gap (Ballard et al. 2015).

Gulliver and Herriot (2015) find that social framings that delegitimize youths' political activities are correlated with social framings that delegitimize protest more generally. These social framings invalidate youth experience, maturity, and capacity to participate in rational arguments and to hold well-reasoned views. Researchers' reliance on information about youth from official sources such as federally funded social surveys rather than listening to youth speaking in their own voices undermines the perspectives of youth demographics that official sources do not access (208).

The civic apathy (e.g., valuing individualism) versus civic enthusiasm (e.g., valuing community) debate is, at its core, an untenable binary reductionism that neither aligns with or mirrors reality. Youth are currently creating new configurations, hybrids, and combinations of individual and community rights, expression, and claims. Studies of civic activity in the United States miss the larger picture of democratic development, usually treating the process in a piecemeal manner by examining voter turnout rates, assessing a polity's level of knowledge, studying core political messaging, and then using these attributes

to pinpoint the undercurrents of an already determined civic apathy (Dudash and Harris, 2011).

Many societies in the Northern Hemisphere express ambivalence towards their non-white and/or non-Christian populations. This ambivalence complicates the civic apathy and civic enthusiasm binary. Racialized youth palpably perceive the tension of a society hesitant about them, thus eroding a civic enthusiasm that might be nurtured in more supportive contexts. In this case, any discussion of civic engagement brings questions of belonging and inclusion into sharp relief as necessary conditions for social and political participatory action. Engagement is truly a reciprocal process. Freiler (2002) notes that migrant youth feel socially included when they are recognized and valued, there are opportunities for involvement and engagement, and they can enjoy material well-being. Jones (1994) argues that democratic societies send mixed messages about how to balance their value of inclusion *and* volunteerism in multi-ethnic contexts. The prospect of a common political identity, moreover, while galvanizing and a source idea for community and action, is also, in many respects, a mirage (see Jones, 1994) Kirpitchenko and Mansouri (2014) note, drawing on Kroger (2004), that adolescence is a time of heightened loss and creation and a time when young people discover new balances which are often made more difficult for migrant youth who face negative identity politics, neoliberal expansionism and heightened individualism mixed with retreating multiculturalism.

Interaction is a key nurturing condition for civic capacity development among youth. Positive youth development theory (PYD) is based on "relational developmental systems metatheory" that describes the civic engagement outcomes of mutually beneficial individual and context interactions and provides an instructive framework for studying youth civic engagement (Wray-Lake et al, 2015). From a PYD perspective, youth's positive contributions to society are seen to emerge from the ecological assets they derive from mutually beneficial, dynamic, and adaptive individual and social and community interactions, especially when they occur across a youth's lifespan, as well as through their individual competencies. These reciprocal positive interactions can develop from a youth's positive neighborhood culture, positive social connections, and from perceived neighborly trust (see also Kirpitchenko and Mansouri, 2014). In these circumstances, youth incline towards higher levels of civic engagement. The PYD theory supports the findings of social capital theory that reciprocity and solidarity emerge for hardened social bonds and networks and that from this reci-

procity and solidarity, the principles and practices of civic engagement emerge (Wray-Lake et al., 2015; Putnam, 2001).

Youth are not apathetic therefore to democracy and the public sphere. They invest widely and see legitimacy in civic engagement, collectivism, and social movement protests despite the ways that social discourse and media reporting scrutinize and decontextualize their efforts (Gulliver and Herriot, 2015). Media reports adopt discursive approaches to youth based on institutional priorities, journalist self-censorship, and the profit-driven benefits of recycling dominant social views (Gulliver and Herriot, 2015). Youth civic engagement is often pronounced in conditions of perceived threat. Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best, et al. (2002: 127) write that "When their futures are at risk, youth are apt to become participants and leaders in social movements aimed at reform." This motivation is highly evident in the youth-led gun-reform movements that have gathered considerable momentum since the mass shooting in Parkland, Florida in February 2018. This tragedy saw survivors emerging as gun-reform's most vocal, articulate, and impassioned proponents. Heightened motivation in at-risk contexts is also exhibited by impassioned youth climate activists across the world where they showcase their future-now vision, legitimate concerns, and reform recommendations across a host of platforms in ways that are difficult for traditional media outlets to silence.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES OF ETHNIC MINORITY YOUTH[1]

Multiple studies have found that the strength of ethnic minority youths' ties to their ethnic identity improves their ability to integrate in society (Degani et al., 2005). Such identity ties are sources of and reference points for positive connections with others, and help lower the propensity to be involved in less constructive or anti-social behaviors. Using their parent's or ancestral first language and building networks and relationships within their cultural milieus helps ethnic minority youth consolidate their identity and invest in activities that enhance their sense of personal well-being; neither of these factors inhibit their ability to develop connections and belonging within the larger society (Belgrave et al. 2000). Marzana et al. (2018) have found that ethnic minority youth often become initiated by and active in national and ethnic associations for similar reasons and are motivated by culture-related factors. They

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1. In this study, we make distinctions between 'immigrants' and current ethnic minority youth in Canada. If one is not from an autochthonous population, one is an immigrant or a descendent of a migrant to Canada.

also found that on a micro/individual level, activism in national associations expanded an individual's social networks with the larger population beyond their ethnic or national communities, and helped individuals develop "a sense of agency, bicultural competency, and a positive social identity," and that activism in ethnic associations helped individuals form "political thinking and intercultural competence" (Marzana et al. 2018, 1). Wray-Lake et al. (2015) argue that minority youth's civic commitments can be operationalized as social responsibility values and community engagement which they call "ecological assets." They suggest that community-focused forms of civic engagement are often very important to first- and second-generation immigrant and racialized youth who are otherwise socially and/or legally inhibited from participating in formal political organizational activities.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was designed around the indicators of political participation in Canada's General Social Survey (GSS). We relied upon several sources of quantitative and qualitative data to triangulate our findings that help us better understand Canadian Arab youths' civic engagement and care-based volunteering motivations and actions. The first source of data was obtained from a 2016 nation-wide survey that drew responses from Arab youth living in 12 Canadian cities (n = 879). This survey queried youth on several issues including their transnational connections, political participation, and social issues. Participants in the 2016 survey were not randomly selected, however they are generalizable to the general Arab youth population in Canada.

We sampled among youth populations by walking around hangouts, shish bars, cafes, restaurants, Arab supermarkets, and universities frequented by Arab youth by wearing t-shirts that said, "Arab and under 29? Earn $25." This drew participants to our assistants who explained the nature of the survey. As reimbursement for their time, youth were given a $25 gift certificate. To avoid selection biases, we did not approach places of worship; we preferred, instead, to frequent locations that would have the highest diversity of Arab youth and that might best mimic the identity representativeness of the larger youth population. We gathered nearly 1000 surveys, of which 879 were viable responses for a population size of 523,235 Canadians of Arab ancestry (Statistics Canada 2016). Factoring in our goal which was to speak with Arab youth, the representativeness of our sample size was extremely high.

CANADIAN ARAB YOUTH STUDY

Demographics

We conducted descriptive analysis on seven demographic variables of this sample: gender, city of residence in Canada, born in-/out-side of Canada, ethno-cultural identification, sense of belonging to Canadian society, comfort and happiness living in Canada, and religion. Non-response rates for these variables varied between 4.3 to 20 percent (Table 1), translating into a sample size between 703 and 841 participants.

Table 1. Summary Statistics of Demographic Variables in Analysis

Demographic Variable	n	% Reporting	Non-Response Rate
Gender	837	95%	4.78%
City of residence in Canada	703	79.9%	20.02%
Born in-/out-side Canada	813	92.5%	7.51%
Ethno-cultural self-identification	829	94.3%	5.69%
Sense of belonging to Canadian society	840	95.6%	4.44%
Comfort and happiness living in Canada	841	95.7%	4.32%
Religion	831	94.5%	5.46%

Source: Arab Youth Survey (2016)

Our analysis included 429 men (51.3%), 406 women (48.1%) and two others, residing in Ottawa (n=125), Toronto and Calgary (n=119 each), Montreal (n=62) and Quebec City (n=57). Other cities with at least 1% of the sample include Edmonton, Kitchener-Waterloo, Moncton, Vancouver, Fredericton, and Guelph. There were 518 (or 63.7%) participants reporting being born outside of Canada, with the rest (or 36.3%) being born in Canada.

By ethno-cultural self-identification, 504 (or 60.8%) of participants reported being 'Arab' or 'Arab-Canadian,' 277 (or 33.4%) being 'Canadian' or 'Canadian-Arab' and the rest (5.7%) as 'Other.'[2] The average participant reported living mostly at home and being comfortable and happy living in Canada. Regarding religious affiliation, 526 (or 63.3%) of participants reported being Sunni Muslim, Shiite Muslim (n=77),

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2. The Arab youth survey (2016) asked the question: 'How do you self-identify?' And the response categories provided were: Arab, Canadian, Canadian-Arab, Arab-Canadian, and Other.

Other (Muslim) (n=62), Other (Christian) (n=29) and Roman Catholic (n=26). Other religious groups with at least 1% of the sample were Other, Atheist, Maronite Christian, Coptic Christian, Greek Orthodox Christian and Agnostic. According to Wray-Lake et al. (2005), immigrant youth's 'ecological assets' or connections between themselves and their cultural communities act as a predictor for hopeful attitudes about society. Arab youth who identify as 'Arab' first can still develop strong ties to Canada and hope for greater connection to Canadian society, even if the Canadian part of their identity is secondary during their youth.

Civic Engagement Analysis

Involvement in Political/ Civil Society Groups

Regarding participation in political/civil society groups, 576 (65.5%) youth participants reported participation in political/civil society groups over one year. The highest reported participation by group type was cultural, educational or hobby organizations (34.2%), school group, or neighborhood, civic or community organization (22.6%), union/professional association (14.9%), youth organization (14.1%), political party or group (8.3%), service club (7.5%), and religious-affiliated group (0.2%). Participation of all group types was significantly ($p < 0.05$) greater than zero except for religious-affiliated group and sports or recreational organizations.

Canadian Arab youth's participation in political/civil society groups in the past 12 months[3] included significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between the provinces. Examples of groups included unions, political parties, sports groups, cultural organizations, community organizations and immigrant associations or clubs. In an index of aggregate group involvement, Quebec youth (1.29 groups per person) had higher average participation in these groups than Alberta youth (1.09 groups per person), Ontario (0.91 groups per person) and British Columbia (0.86 groups per person). Youth in Quebec must overcome forms of discrimination that are common in all of Canadian society, but in Quebec, anti-Muslim sentiment is often particularly heightened due to hostility towards cultural markers such as the hijab. Arab youth in Quebec have to work harder to be get involved, but may also be more actively

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3. Due to lack of observations for other provinces, only Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec are included in the following analysis.

motivated to end discrimination against Arabs and Muslims. The existential nature of these challenges, as well as the historic vibrancy of youth resistance in that province, might account for their higher involvement. Arab youth in New Brunswick (1.18 groups per person) and Alberta had higher average participation than Ontario and British Columbia. When these measures of participation in political/civil society groups are compared against ethnic self-identification, we find that self-identification produces significant ($p < 0.05$) intra-group differences. Canadian Arab youth who self-identify as 'Other' participated in more civil society groups (1.73 groups per person) than any other self-identification groups. Young Arabs who identify as 'Arab' participated in more groups (1.14) than those who identified as 'Arab-Canadian' (1.02). Those Arab youth who self-identify as 'Canadian' (1.16) and 'Canadian-Arab' (1.11) were not statistically different from the average Canadian-born youth of the larger Canadian youth demographic (when compared against the findings of the General Social Survey [Statistics Canada 2015; 2017]). Those youths who identify as 'Other' see connection in more cosmopolitan terms and may be seeking to transcend labels entirely, implying a desire to associate with their community regardless of identity and are thus likely pursuing civitas for its own sake.

Prevalence of Community Volunteering

Regarding community volunteering, 793 participants (90.2%) reported whether they had volunteered in their community.. For community volunteering among Canadian Arab youth, we found significant differences ($p < 0.05$) among youth rates by provinces. British Columbia had a higher incidence of volunteering (80%) than Alberta (54.8%), New Brunswick (41.1%), Ontario (52.5%) or Quebec (56.8%). Quebec, Alberta and Ontario had higher incidences of volunteering than New Brunswick. When we analyzed distributions of Canadian Arab youths' declared interest and participation in community volunteering against their claimed ethnic self-identification, we find some striking differences that were significant ($p < 0.05$) from each other. Canadian Arab youth who self-identify as 'Canadian-Arab' had higher incidence of volunteering (60.2%) than those self-identifying as 'Arab' (53.4%). Those youths who identified as 'Other' (62%), 'Arab-Canadian' (56%) and 'Canadian' (55.8%) youth were not statistically different than any other groups in terms of incidence of community volunteering. We interpret from these findings that youth who identify as 'Canadian' first before 'Arab' in being 'Canadian-Arab' (and therefore volunteer the most) likely associate their activities with a 'Canadianness' while find-

ing motivation for participation in being 'Arab.' This would explain why just being 'Canadian' or 'Arab' are not sufficiently motivating for volunteering specifically in Canada, and when reversed in 'Arab-Canadian' (putting 'Arab' first before 'Canadian'), such youth classifying themselves as such, associate their activities with their 'Arabness but find less motivation for volunteering in being also 'Canadian.' Our results found that Arab youth typically participated in one type of civil society group, with highest participation in political parties or groups. Women were significantly more likely to engage in volunteering in civil society compared to men. Martelli (2013) similarly found that women in Europe tend to be more involved in cultural activities than in political activities, even if their rates of voting are comparable to that of men.

Most of the Arab youth reported volunteering in their local community at a rate (56.2%)[4] that was higher than the Canadian youth population's reported volunteering as a whole (52%) (Statistics Canada 2015; 2017). It is important to note that our survey data was not collected through random sampling, and that the Office for Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo prevented us from replicating the age categories followed by Statistics Canada. Instead, we collected data in two age categories, 18-24 and 25-29 years. That said, we replicated Statistics Canada's same questions and the reliability of our data is high. The mean Arab youth was slightly more interested in politics at a given scale, with general interest increasing as scale got bigger. Participants were consequently most interested in international politics. Generally, the stronger the sense of belonging and happiness and comfort of Arab youth in Canada, the more interested they were in politics (more specifically, measures of belonging produced bifurcating effects: those Arab youth with a weaker sense of belonging participated in politics at all levels [especially outside of Canada, focusing particularly on international and Middle Eastern politics], and yet, at the same time, those who had a stronger sense of belonging participated more often in Canadian politics). Muslims, Atheists and Agnostics tended to be more interested in politics than other religious groups. We conducted descriptive analysis and hypothesis-testing on three variables: participation in civil society groups,[5] community volunteering, and general interest in

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4. Canadian Arab youth ages 18-29.

5. Groups included union/professional association, political party, sports or recreational organization, cultural, educational or hobby organization, religious-affiliated group, school group, or neighborhood, civic, or community organizations, service club, youth organization, ethnic or immigrant association or club and other type of organization.

politics at different scales.[6] Arab youth participated in a mean of one civil society group out of a possible nine groups. The three group types with the highest participation were: 1) cultural, education, or hobby organization; 2) school group, or neighborhood, civic, or community organization; and 3) union/professional association (Table 2).

Table 2. Participation in Civil Society Groups by Type (n=576)

Civil Society Group Type	n	Share of Participants (%)
Union/professional association	86	14.9
Political party or group	197	34.2
Sports or recreational organization	48	8.3
Cultural, educational, or hobby organization	0	0
Religious-affiliated group	1	0.1
School group, neighborhood, civic, or community organization	130	22.6
Service club	43	7.5
Youth organization	81	14.1
Ethnic or immigrant association or club	79	13.7

Source: Arab Youth Survey (2016)

The highest volunteer rates by demographic group are detailed in Table 3. When considering demographic groups, we found that Canadian Arab youth women volunteered significantly more than men, and youth from Guelph and Vancouver reported significantly more volunteering.

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6. Scales included Local/Municipal Politics in Canada, Provincial Politics in Canada, Federal Politics in Canada, Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Politics and International Politics.

Table 3. Demographic Groups with Highest Volunteer Rates (n=793)

Demographic Category	Demographic Group	Volunteer Rate (%)
City of residence	Guelph	88.9
City of residence	Vancouver	81.5
Religious group	Muslim (Other)	70.7
Happiness and comfort in Canada	Mostly unhappy and uncomfortable in Canada	66.7
Religious group	Agnostic	66.7
Gender	Women	63.9
Religious group	Other	63.6
Religious group	Maronite Catholic	62.5
Ethno-cultural self-identification	Other	62
Sense of belonging in Canada	Somewhat not belonging in Canada	60.9

Source: Arab Youth Survey (2016)

Those Canadian Arab youth who self-identify as being from a minority Muslim group (neither Sunni, nor Shi'ite), reported significantly higher volunteering than most other religious groups. The other Muslim groups were not significantly different from each other. We observed no significant difference in Arab youth participation in volunteering by birth in-/out-side of Canada, ethno-cultural self-identification, sense of belonging in Canada, or happiness and comfort in Canada.

Interest in Politics

We combined general interest in politics at five different scales to form a simple index: the lowest possible score was 0, or extreme disinterest on every scale; the highest possible score was 20, or extreme interest on every scale. The 759 respondents to the question reported a mean interest of 11.02, which represented slight interest in politics for the scale used. Interest was highest in international, Middle East and North Africa and Canadian federal politics (Table 4). In short, the larger the political scale, the more interest Arab youth expressed. Arab youth strongly identified with global issues and issues in the Middle East, which evinces a sense of their cosmopolitanism.

Table 4. Interest in Politics by Scale[7]

Scale of Politics	n	Average Interest	Standard Error
Local/Municipal Politics in Canada	783	1.79	0.04
Provincial Politics in Canada	783	1.96	0.04
Federal Politics in Canada	783	2.35	0.05
Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Politics	793	2.39	0.05
International Politics	802	2.40	0.05

Source: Arab Youth Survey (2016)

Canadian Arab youth from three cities were significantly more interested in politics than all others: Hamilton, Moncton and Quebec City. There were no significant differences amongst all other cities. Participants self-identifying as 'Arab-Canadian' were significantly more interested in politics than most other ethno-cultural groups. Among those Canadian Arab youth self-identifying (in the question on ethnicity) as 'Other' and 'Canadian-Arab, these youths were also significantly more interested in politics than those self-identifying as 'Arab' and 'Canadian.'

Generally, the stronger sense of belonging a participant had with Canada, the more interested they were in politics, especially Canadian politics. Participants reported that their personal connectedness to a community or national identity while living in Canada gave them a sense of contentment with their lives (integration into both the ethno-cultural community and wider Canadian society were found to produce a grounded sense of contentment). It is likely that their socio-economic privilege, or material comforts living in Canada and ability to pursue their career aspirations gives youth the confidence to throw themselves into civically-oriented activities.

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7. For this scale, the higher the level of "average interest," the more the average participant expressed interest in a particular level of politics.

This seemed to be especially the case for youth of Egyptian ancestry who, on average,[8] originate from homes with higher than national average annual incomes,. We observed no significant difference in Arab youth interest in politics by gender or birth in-/out-side of Canada.

A Summary of Canadian Arab Youths' Civic Engagement Activities

From our survey results, we found that Canadian Arab youth are more like the Asian American youth studied by Ballard et al. (2015) who work on local community-level issues rather than the Latino American youth they studied who focus on immigration reform. Our fieldwork with Arab youth occurred during the height of the Syrian Civil War. After the election of Justin Trudeau in October 2015, Canadian government policy became more receptive to Syrian refugees. Many Arab youths were galvanized by the 2015 federal election due to the xenophobic and Islamophobic rhetoric of the then-Harper government.

Arab youth from our Canada-wide survey describe acting as translators at elementary schools to help school staff communicate with Syrian refugees, advocating for Syrian families' rights, helping refugees with special needs kids, and supporting immigrant children. A respondent wrote that he has been aiding newcomers to Canada for three years at a job center and volunteering as a ball hockey league president. One Iraqi man noted: "I went to volunteer as soon as I heard about the Syrian refugees coming to Canada and I couldn't wait to be part of it. I always like to be part of any activity here to show the Canadians we are so thankful."[9]

One of the most significant ways that Canadian Arab youth get involved is through volunteering in their cities and communities which takes many forms. Youth describe working in a welfare centre to complete secondary school service-learning credits and being active in university clubs. One youth described how they volunteer at a local community health center on education equity initiatives, advocate for the

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8. In 2010, the average annual income within the Canadian Arab community was at $32,653 in comparison with the national average annual income of $40,650 per annum. The only exception to this trend is found among the Egyptian Arab community in Canada, whose annual income averaged $43,521. Somali Arabs had the lowest average annual income ($24,182), among the Arab community. The 2011 census shows that the vast majority (74%) of the Canadian Arab community, aged 25 to 64, has completed postsecondary education, compared to 64% of the general Canadian population.

9. Arab youth survey, 2016.

rights of disabled people at the provincial level, and volunteering as a political advisor on youth affairs to their Premier. An Egyptian woman wrote about working at her local police station and acquiring training on how to work on their crisis line and act as a court accompaniment for victims of crimes. A significant area of Canadian Arab youth civic engagement involves participating in activities that expand the Arab community's presence in Canada. A woman respondent describes volunteering at the Canadian Arab Institute to become more involved in the community and to advocate for its position in society.

A feature of Canadian Arab youth's civic engagement is that it frequently requires a lot of juggling. One Palestinian youth mentioned that he volunteers 20-20 hours per week with the E-Nable Foundation, making mechanical prosthetic hands for children. A Syrian woman notes that every summer, she volunteers her time at a children's soccer camp, supervising and leading. She also volunteers at her school for cancer fundraising, and helped Elections Canada monitor the vote count and helps a political party with their campaigning. One participant mentions her civic contributions in multiple venues: at the student success office as a volunteer, collecting research data for a pediatrics clinic, and acting as a translator for Syrian refugees. Another survey respondent describes helping organize the Fredericton marathon and volunteering for a multicultural association. Another talks about participating in the town's Boys and Girls club as a peer mentor, making lunches for children in city schools and helping refugees at the multicultural association. A woman originating from the United Arab Emirates calculates that she has spent nearly 1000 hours volunteering at charity-based organizations and at her university's Muslim Students' Association. Many Arab youth make very strong associations between electing specific leaders, being involved in the democratic process and their pro-Palestinian rights activism.

WHY ARAB YOUTH GET INVOLVED

In the Arab youth survey (2016), we included several open-ended questions, including "Do you volunteer in your community? Please explain," and "If you are politically engaged, what motivates you?" Based on these participant's responses, we have identified 14 prominent reasons that Canadian Arab youth become civically engaged and politically participatory. We call these reasons the 'power logics of Canadian Arab youth' (Finn and Momani, forthcoming). These power logics aim to: 1) have a voice and speak for the marginalized and the communities

to which one identifies and belongs; 2) increase the visibility of Arabs and immigrants; 3) shape the direction of Canadian foreign policy; 4) have an impact of domestic policy decision-making; 5) keep the government in check; 6) keep oneself responsible; 7) transform society for the better and fulfill one's obligation as a citizen; 8) pursue one's genuine interest in politics and social justice; 9) support boycotts and challenge political consumerism; 10) improve one's local community; 11) gain knowledge and opportunities for career advancement; 12) do good and give back; 13) feel connected to others and make friends, and 14) fulfill the obligations of tradition. In the section below, we provide a brief snapshot of these power logics.

Human Rights, Social Justice, and the Right of Free Expression

Canadian Arab youth's commitments to human rights, social justice, and the right of all people to enjoy freedom of expression animates their actions. Arab youth get involved based on inspiration, often voting for leaders that inspire them and show the greatest commitment to concrete action. A Levantine youth writes that political figures who "make a difference and speak passionately [about] what makes *them* stand out [motivate] me to vote for them and act upon being politically engaged" [emphasis added]. One survey respondent writes that, "What motivates me is the fact that I want my community to do better. I want people at every level, whether it was provincial, municipal, or federal, to speak about issues concerning human rights and not be afraid to speak up if they feel a certain way." At the heart of their focus on human rights, social justice, and the right of free expression is a desire to support the conditions and infrastructure needed to create a healthy democracy. Canadian Arab youth believe in democracy and the rule of law as political imperatives. A Jordanian woman respondent, for example, explained her motivations for getting involved: "I try to speak out and advocate for human rights in regards to food, water, healthcare, discrimination, LGBT, bullying and specifically in regards to the Syrian refugee crisis." She advocates for these causes at "fundraisers, events and protests." Gender inequality figures prominently in the minds and activism of many Arab youth, especially women, as one woman respondents notes that the reason she gets politically involved is because of "Inequality! Mainly gender inequality…in the past year I've been involved with issues relating to Syrian refugees and missing Native American women."

Cosmopolitan Impulses

We noticed that several Canadian Arab youth did not self-identify as 'Canadian' or 'Arab but as 'Other,' meaning they were nationalistically anchored nowhere, but were rather a global citizen. The prevalence of this type of self-categorization evinces a central motivation of many youths to be cosmopolitan in orientation. A woman with roots in Algeria writes that "There's a Muslim club in our college, and sometimes I even see non-Muslims entering the room and engaging with the Muslims. I really like these types of encounters." As if continuing this thought to its logical conclusion, a Palestinian woman writes that what motivates her to volunteer and be engaged is that "It opens many doors for me, to make new friends, meet new people, and to be a part of good community." A Tunisian woman summarizes the cosmopolitan impulses implied in the comments of her peers when she writes, "I don't consider it essential to participate in projects that benefit only our community. We must help everyone without making a difference of race or religion."

Helping the Arab Community and Arab Youth Reach Their Full Potential

Many Arab youth are driven to create a world or conditions that unify Arabs and help them gain the support they need to prosper. One youth writes that they are volunteering to support refugees and be involved in "something that brings Arabs together." This drive to help people in their community emerges from a self-awareness and empathy to help other people avoid the pain that they experience. This sentiment is expressed by a Lebanese woman who writes that "yes, I volunteer with the Catholic Centre for Immigrants [CCI] to help orient newcomers [and refugees] to Ottawa/Canada. I did it because I know how alienated it feels to be in a new community/culture/country." Part of the motivation to help others was borne out of a passion to help young people access all opportunities available in Canadian society. An Iraqi woman said that, "As a part of a growing community (Arab/Muslim), I volunteer to help grow and inspire youth to seek their full potential here in Canada."

Interest to Do Good, Give Back, Belong, and Build Community

The grand, and one might argue, existential motivations previously described are accompanied among Canadian Arab youth by a simple interest in doing good, giving back, and building up their community.

A Lebanese man respondent writes "I love doing community services. I am planning a project for the community called paint therapy for mental illnesses." A woman of Syrian and Lebanese ancestry notes that she likes "to volunteer…to give back to the community as much as possible. I believe in order to make a change and leave an impact; people need to use their free time to volunteer and spread awareness." A big part of getting involved for Arab youth is to create a feeling of belonging and to make friends with people from different walks of life. One Moroccan woman writes that "I volunteer my time to contribute to the community and to foster friendships. It's an excellent way to develop oneself and have a sense of accomplishment." A Palestinian man suggests that he is motivated by being grounded in tradition that obligates him to give back, and by a desire to belong. He writes that "Volunteering and helping the community are traditional things that give me a sense of belonging and community."

Conclusion

Ethnic minority youth face a complex array of challenges in exercising civically-oriented and political action. These challenges include identity politics that render them suspicious for their apparent differences, democratic individualism, stodgy institutions that stultify the meaning of both membership and legitimate political agency, inter-cultural conflict, and exclusionist policies. All such issues could potentially hamper the integration and political enthusiasm of youth (Martelli, 2013; Wray-Lake et al. 2015). People who feel excluded are less likely to identify with societal norms and less likely to feel responsible for contributing to and protecting the social and political order (Wray-Lake et al. 2015). Youth with politically and socially engaged parents become socialized by their exposure to these activities to want to pursue similar work and activism as they grow into adulthood (Young and Cross, 2007; 2008).

Canadian Arab youth are found to be significantly invested in volunteering. This is particular true for women, and for volunteer work that is outside their ethnic milieus. Research on activism among immigrant communities finds that it has many positive consequences for individuals including increasing bicultural skills; enhancing bond-making within cultural communities; building civic and citizenship capacities; challenging societal prejudices against one's ethnic group; helping empower their communities which leads to reciprocal capacities of the community to increase social justice awareness and motivate change among members; transforming community narratives which leads to a

reciprocal impact on the community to improve member's integration into society, develop shared meanings and identify shared histories; and helping break down cycles of oppression by empowering immigrants to resist conditions that are socially regressive and inhibitive for them, and thus enhance their agency in being self-determined (Marzana et al., 2018). We have found that Canadian Arab youth are deeply invested in bettering the lives of Canadians of all stripes and that they are energized by duty and a sense of intrinsic love for Canadian society as something worth protecting, building up, and improving.

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