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Transnational Citizenship Mobilization among Canadian Arab Youth: An Engaged Social Movement for Change in the Middle East

Abstract

In the wake of the Arab Revolutions, much has been said about the pivotal role that Arab youth played in mobilizing citizens against autocratic regimes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Less attention has been paid to the role played by engaged transnational Arab youth during this period. Canadian Arab youth offer an excellent case study to investigate the kinds of activities that youth social movements invest in to transnationally mobilize citizenship across borders, and in the process, how they expand forms of autonomy, solidarity, and mutual concern, and thus transform civil society and citizenship capacity-building among diverse networks in society. For this paper, we draw upon a cross-Canada survey conducted with Canadian Arab youth, as well as focus groups with Arab youth in Ottawa and Montreal. We argue, based on their work advocating, networking, educating, boycotting, and physically protesting, that Canadian Arab youth represent a highly diffused and engaged newly emerging social movement whose transnational activism with or for social movements and government, or multi-lateral institutions represent forms of cross-national citizenship mobilization. Canadian Arab youth, as a social movement, are emergent political subjectivities mobilizing citizenship capacities locally and in the MENA. Their impact is not large, right now, as upon supranational institutions, however, the breadth of their activities underscore their hope in their capacity to initiate meaningful change.

Keywords: Canadian Arab youth, citizenship, ethnic minorities, transnationalism, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), youth activism, social movements.

Résumé

À la suite du Printemps arabe, il a été beaucoup dit du rôle crucial que la jeunesse arabe a joué dans la mobilisation des citoyens contre les régimes autocratiques au Moyen-Orient et en Afrique du Nord (MENA). Cependant, moins d'attention a été accordé au rôle joué par la jeunesse arabe engagée et transnationale au cours de cette période. Les jeunes Canadiens d'origine arabe constituent une excellente étude de cas sur les types d'activités dans lequel les mouvements sociaux de jeunes s'investissent afin de mobiliser de manière transnationale la citoyenneté à travers les frontières et, ce faisant, sur la manière dont ils développent des formes d'autonomie, de solidarité et de préoccupation mutuelle, transformant ainsi la société civile et renforçant les capacités de la société et de la citoyenneté par le biais des divers réseaux sociétaux. Pour cet article, nous nous appuyons sur un sondage pancanadien mené auprès de jeunes Canadiens d'origine arabe, ainsi que sur des focus groups avec des jeunes arabes à Ottawa et à Montréal. En nous basant sur leurs travaux de plaidoyer, de réseautage, d'éducation, de boycott et de protestation physique, nous soutenons que la jeunesse arabe canadienne représente un mouvement social émergent très diffus et très engagé dont l'activisme transnational avec, ou pour les mouvements sociaux et les institutions gouvernementales ou multilatérales représente des formes de mobilisation transnationale de la citoyenneté. Les jeunes Canadiens d'origine arabe, en tant que mouvement social, sont des subjectivités politiques émergentes mobilisant des capacités de citoyenneté aux niveaux local et dans

la région MENA. Leur impact n'est pas important, à l'heure actuelle, sur les institutions supranationales. Cependant, l'ampleur de leurs activités souligne leur espoir de pouvoir initier des changements significatifs.

Mots-clés : Jeunesse canadienne arabe, citoyenneté, minorités ethniques, transnationalisme, Moyen-Orient et Afrique du nord (MENA), activisme de jeunesse, mouvements sociaux.



INTRODUCTION

In this study, we investigate the nature of Canadian Arab youth involvement in transnational activism. We define youth as a category of people under the age of 30 years who bear a unique set of capacities, challenges, and vulnerabilities. This research is informed by the insights of Canadian Arab youth aged 18-29 years derived from the findings of focus groups in Ottawa and Montreal in June/July 2016, and a nation-wide survey disseminated across 12 cities in 2016. We join Maira and Soep (2005) in seeing youth as a social achievement rather than a psychological state reducible to their status as people who are not yet classifiable as adult (and therefore of a less advanced state of [political and social] being-ness) (Larson 2000), a category/period of resistance (Hall and Jefferson 2005), or a category of those people most vulnerable to delinquency and failure (Elliott, Huizinga and Menard 1989). Likewise, we see the subjects of our study (Canadian Arab youth) as emerging from complex structural forces made possible through specialized forms of social and institutional coordination. The positionality of youth is “a condition that is produced, over and over again, by various parties and institutions participating—whether they know it or not—in the concerted activity of producing youth” (Maira and Soep 2005, xviii). The forces shaping Canadian youth populations include parents, peer groups, schools and school systems, juvenile justice systems, social welfare and labor policies, militaries and defense establishments and their priorities, marketing schemes, and media and entertainment industries (Maira and Soep 2005; Wyn and White 1997), as well as systems of immigration and citizenship.

Maira and Soep (2005) effectively summarize many of the assumptions that we seek to challenge about young people and their activities. Rather than being semi-citizens, young people, particularly ethnic minority youth in Canada, transfer skills and systems of mobilization online and offline. These activities, seen together, support the idea that they are an emergent or nascent transnational social movement engaged civically, and sometimes playing a role in the formal political systems of one or more countries. Further, their actions are critical for giving substance to what it means to be a citizen:

The most salient, and troublesome, of these social meanings [sic] is the portrayal of youth as inadequately formed adults, as subjects lacking in the presumably desired qualities of adulthood, rather than as subjects in their own right with specific (even if they are not always unique) needs and concerns. Much work on globalization and transnationalism has tended to focus largely or explicitly on adults, and youth are assumed to be incomplete social actors, or subjects less able to exert agency in the face of globalization that some scholars are, understandably, eager to document. To be sure, youth are engaged in an ongoing process of social and cognitive development and do, in fact, acquire more rights and responsibilities as they move into adulthood. However, there is often an assumption in traditional work on youth and citizenship, for example, that youth citizens—to the extent that they have rights, which are often limited—must be socialized into adult norms of political involvement rather than being thinking agents who may express important critiques of citizenship and nationhood (Buckingham 2000, 13; Maira and Soep 2005, xxi- xxii).

We would like to push this even further. Beyond “thinking agents who may *express* important critiques of citizenship and nationhood”, youth are powerful agents of social change whose particular actions and refusals substantively mobilize citizenship (see, for example, Maira 2008; Ní Mhurchú 2016). Youth are innovative, and they often employ discourses and practices that help to instill hope in others. In many cases, the politics of youth activists are pre-figurative insofar as they seek to assemble action on the basis of principles such as the unequivocal sanctity of human rights (Costanza-Chock 2012; Myers 2010). Of great importance, as well, is that youth *see/defend* their activities as building citizenship capacities among their cohort even if older segments of the society around them do not categorize these activities as such. Given their action of substance, coding youth activities as inconsequential to formal or informal political systems is a politics of disservice to democracy and citizenship, and also fits the narrative of authoritarian regimes that the ruling elite’s voices are the only ones worth hearing.

Despite their enthusiasm and commitment to a social whole greater than themselves, youth face structural inhibitors to their involvement in formal political institutions and large-scale social movements, and therefore tend to operate outside such formal channels, and/or conduct work that is widely overlooked by elite and grassroots power holders (Costanza-Chock 2012). Other impediments to youth involvement in formal political processes include systemic racism (for ethnic minority youth), agism, and classism. Many immigrant youth also feel pulled in multiple directions given their identification with two or more homes/homelands (Abu El-Haj 2007; Golbert 2001; Staeheli and Nagel 2006). In the wake of the Arab Revolutions, much has been said about the pivotal role that Arab youth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) played in mobilizing citizens against autocratic regimes (al-Momani 2011; Hoffman and Jamal 2012). Less attention has been given to the

role of engaged transnational Arab youth during this period. Canadian Arab youth offer an excellent case study to investigate how youth social movements transnationally mobilize citizenship across borders, and in the process, how they expand forms of autonomy, solidarity, and mutual concern, and thus transform civil society and citizenship capacity-building among diverse networks in society (Costanza-Chock 2012). Elites drive economic and political inter-dependencies through 'globalization from above', and the people, including ethnic minority youth activists, drive economic and political inter-dependencies from below in their advocacy for migrant human rights, and by building "transnational political communities" (Fox 2005, 171). We argue that Canadian Arab youth represent a transnational political community and social movement in development.

According to Jonathan Fox (2005), the concept of transnational citizenship aptly captures long-term global trends on transnational community relationship building and attempts among people (self-identifying as activists or not) to ensure that political and social equality, rights, and privileges are realized inside and outside of nation-state boundaries. Such transnational connections are frequently mobilized by ethnic minorities in western societies. The literature examining trans-border outreach among ethnic minorities has long recognized the pivotal role that western actors play in sustaining informal economies abroad through activities such as financial remittances, aiding in social and political emancipative efforts in homeland societies, and helping to bridge people and spin meshwork-type networks (Finn, Opatowski, and Momani 2018; Laguerre 2016; Langman 2005; Lipsitz 2013). While the literature on ethnic minority transnational activism is well-developed, what is less known is *how* and *why* ethnic minority youth, particularly Arab youth in the diaspora, connect across borders and what these connections mean to them (Aouragh 2011).

In this paper, we provide empirical evidence to support the idea that Canadian Arab youth represent a fledgling, yet engaged social movement helping to reinforce democratic social movement fulcrums in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and argue that Arab youth's actions have broad citizenship import locally in Canada and abroad in the Arab world. We find from our research that Arab youth's transfer of critical political technologies including communications, skills, and behaviors designed to support mutual aid, express *communitas*, or build solidarities for peace, development, and democratization help mobilize citizenship transnationally (in multiple state locales). Arab youth's activism gives substantive meaning to exclusive understandings of citizenship-as-membership given through statuses endowed by the state where duties to the common good are fulfilled and rights are used as leverage, and inclusive understandings of citizenship-as-meritocracy mediated through political activism and civic engagement where solidarity to the common good is exercised for its own sake (Isin 2016a; 2008; Levy 2014; Tilly 1997), as well as post-

national understandings of citizenship that disregard the state as a target for action or which see citizenship actualized in global activism; in the last instance, support for the common good is actualized without the need to recognize or be recognized by the state (Isin 2016a; Maira 2008; Turner 2016). Arab youth's emergent political subjectivities and activities across borders support other well-established Arab activisms favoring ex-patriot voting and financial remittances, and established Arab activisms of youth seeking to expand, for example, Palestinian enfranchisement and mitigate the low rank of Palestinian human rights among policy circles within the Canadian, North American, and MENA public spheres.

In envisioning Canadian Arab youth as a fledgling social movement, it is clear that the cause of its emergence is neither entirely the singular result of MENA activist network(ing) or transformations in formal political structures in Canada or the MENA (for example, through activist actions engaging political institutions of the state); it is also not the necessary outcome of the Canadian Arab community's discursive treatment of particular social and political identities and ideas (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2009; Tarrow 2011). Canadian Arab youth are motivated by the profoundly inhibiting political structures in the MENA which they see as impediments to the expansion of rights among kin and family at 'home' and by their patriotic ties to this homeland, but they are also motivated by an intrinsic sense of duty beyond emotional and cultural bonds based on their imaginative sense of global concern, and frequently act based on a spontaneous desire to help those in need. John P. Myers (2010) captures how citizenship is mobilized through imagination, which, we argue, is where this spontaneous desire emerges:

The concept of a global imaginary helps to explain the ways that people give meaning to global citizenship.... From this perspective, a global imaginary is a system of meanings that social actors create to explain their role and experiences in the world in light of systematic transformations. One of the particular ways that globalization has altered individuals' sense of their civic role in the world has been through its effect of reducing distances and modifying understandings of self and others, which have heightened the development of moral concern for distant people (486).

In some cases, the actions of Arab youth activists are not directed towards the state or in support of MENA-based activism at all. Rather, Arab youth conduct activities based on a collective impulse that they must 'do something' rather than remain idle; in so doing, they violate long-standing stereotypes about youth as indifferent to their political realities. Arab youth are performing politics and citizenship "in and by saying things political", they are thinking politically, being political, and performing the political (Isin 2016b, 3). As political actors, young Arabs are often motivated by basic pre-figurative (or normative) principles about how the world ought to be that

are built from latent philosophies among activists in the MENA (thereby supporting the constructivist vision for how social movements emerge), but they are also motivated by principles not engendered specifically among such MENA activists, but rather among themselves in their navigation of hybridized identities (deriving inspiration from 'Canadian values' and seeking to transfer them abroad). To date, Canadian Arab youth have mainly micro-level (individual) and meso-level (society) impacts; their direct impact upon institutions has yet to reach fruition and their ability to have an impact upon small-scale and large-scale social and political structures is still nascent.

MEASURING YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

There are measures that researchers rely upon to assess youth political participation that are shared and agreed upon, and there are measures that are unique to a particular study at hand. Common measures of youth political involvement include attending political rallies, attending protests, working or volunteering for a political party or political candidate, and donating money to a political cause. Wicks et al. (2014) measure youth political participation in the United States according to several measures: attending a political rally, participating in a political protest, working for a political party or candidate, and contributing money to a political cause. Traditional media consumption has been found to be associated with higher levels of political knowledge, and higher levels of political knowledge are known to increase the propensity of political involvement (Baumgartner and Morris 2010; Wicks et al. 2014). Important measures for political involvement for Youniss et al. (2002) revolve around *knowledge* of elements tied to the political realm: government structure and functions and political behaviors, as well as the behaviors themselves such as voting, showing commitment to society, and participating in civil society.

In research on youth political involvement, there is great variation in the measures that researchers rely upon to capture youth investment in formal political processes: activities that have a direct impact on policy-making and policy-makers, and are distinguished from practices that expand civil society, the public sphere, or which represent forms of civic engagement. Dudash and Harris (2011) have found that youth between the ages of 18 and 30 years of age associated 'political involvement' with the act of locating information, increasing their knowledge about politics, knowing the platforms of major political candidates, and voting based on information acquired. They found that the young people they interviewed consistently focused on two narratives related to political involvement which included 'being knowledgeable' about politics (or being politically participatory) and 'finding information' about politics (being civically engaged). In their study, such knowledge

and information was frequently linked back to the formal system. One of their study participants regarded political involvement as being active in knowing candidate platforms and views on issues of personal concern, and most respondents indicated that “being politically engaged” was principally established through the act of voting (see also: Cooper 2000; Walker 2006).

The factors that influence youth involvement and participation in politics including formal political systems are multiple. Several socialization agents are found to be correlated with higher levels of political participation and civic engagement including demographic variables, the extent to which youth discuss news and politics with friends and family, youth participation in civic education activities in schools and extra-curricular activities, youth attitudes about citizenship, and the use of traditional and new media. Youth’s self-understandings about efficacy, their willingness to be civically engaged, and their individual efforts to expand their knowledge base about politics have also been found to be core precursors for political and civic participation (Wicks et al. 2014; Zukin et al. 2006).

Prevailing social attitudes view youth as apathetic to the processes of a democratic public sphere and dismiss the legitimacy of their civic engagement, collective actions, and protests in social movements for the purpose of influencing the policy-making process. Youth involvement in social movements can be demeaned and decontextualized by media coverage that devalues their actions and that adheres to childist attitudes undermining the significance of their contributions to public debate on core issues (Gulliver and Herriot 2015). Media reportage takes this tenor due to “mechanisms of institutional control, self-censorship by journalists, and marketization that result in the reproduction of dominant ideologies” (207) which see youth as a category of human being subject to rebellion or frustration and therefore not politically socialized (Gulliver and Herriot 2015). In fact, youth see political and economic benefits to engagement with the state: in Maira’s (2008) study of South Asian Muslim youth in Cambridge, Massachusetts, she looked at how young working-class immigrants navigate the benefits and drawbacks of being tied to two or more nation-states in their settlement transition in the United States. Particularly contentious in this study was how, post 9/11, such youth overcame systems of exploitation, exclusion, and manipulation in the state’s domestic and foreign ‘war on terror’ that included systematic surveillance, detention, rendition, and deportation. Despite feeling targeted, the youth of the study were motivated to become integrated and sought to enjoy the economic and political benefits of American citizenship. They felt that, despite the ideational and political war against them, they were protected by their material status and the legal system from policies that in fact pursued and terrorized them.

Canadian Arab youth similarly navigate the complexities of their ties to a Canadian state that has created policies designed to target, control, and manage

them, such as Bill C-24 introduced by the Stephen Harper government which made it possible to revoke the Canadian citizenship of a dual-citizenship holder charged with a terrorism-related offense,¹ and to authoritarian regimes of their home countries that target, control, and manage them in their own ways. Canadian Arab youth place value in being knowledgeable about Canadian politics and the politics of their home countries, and their sense of political mobilization is not tethered to the formal political sphere, but to action that intentionally or not implicates them as citizens of multiple nation-states.

ETHNIC MINORITY YOUTH ACTIVISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CITIZENSHIP MOBILIZATION

The starting point for our analysis is to critically engage and assess the tenability of the concept of transnational citizenship vis-à-vis the political and social activism of Canadian Arab youth (Fox 2005). Jonathan Fox (2005) works to consolidate various understandings of transnational citizenship, and in the process differentiates two prominent approaches to citizenship, one which focuses on “institutionally guaranteed rights” (state-based; status-enabled) and one which focuses on collective action and shared identities (society-based; recognition-enabled). Fox clarifies that the concept of transnational citizenship resonates in processes that seek to expand rights and principles of political and social equality beyond state borders. He ultimately contends that transnational citizenship is useful as a concept to capture migrant civic and political participation, but that it falls short of the “category of citizenship” because such action may not involve the mobilization of rights (or duties) endowed by an actor’s formal membership to a state and recognition by society. Such individual and collective actions lack substantive weight to be called ‘citizenship’ because citizenship only has meaning when an actor can make an enforceable claim on the state, and/or when an actor can fulfill communitarian conceptions of citizenship made possible by formal membership and therefore acquire reciprocal recognition for their efforts from society. Fox argues that transnational action can influence balances of power, but does not necessarily create citizenship in multiple locales; he also argues that influence is not the same as rights, and not all rights are citizenship rights. Networks, he argues, do not constitute political communities and not all forms of community involve citizenship. In a paragraph that clarifies his point, he writes:

Empowerment, in the sense of actors’ capacity to make claims, is distinct from rights, defined as institutionally recognized guarantees and opportunities. They do not necessarily go together. Institutions may nominally recognize rights that actors, because of a lack of capacity to make claims, are not able to exercise in practice. Conversely, actors may be empowered in the sense of having the experience and capacity to demand and

exercise rights, while lacking institutionally recognized opportunities to do so. Rights and empowerment can each encourage the other, and indeed they overlap in practice, but they are analytically distinct. In other words, some must act like citizens (claim rights) so that others can actually be citizens (have rights), but acting like a citizen is not the same as being a citizen (Fox 2005, 176).

We argue the contrary, that citizens and non-citizens acting like citizens make citizenship meaningful, and that such action should afford people protections and inclusion in a social body or body politic. Citizens who do not involve themselves at all in the Canadian public sphere may be protected by the state, but they fail to make citizenship in that state meaningful. Arab youth from Canada who are aiding activists to expand democracy in the MENA are, in a substantive sense, citizens of both societies. Their civic investment creates opportunities in both locales that affords transnational actors rights by MENA societies regardless of whether the state recognizes their actions. Action, such as giving performed without formal status, makes citizenship real insofar as it demands a rights regime that complements and enhances the existing international human rights regime. People who act like citizens are citizens.

Researchers studying 'global citizenship' have argued that national civic affiliations do not necessarily represent the strongest forms of political belonging to a community, and that national citizenship as "the top of an unwritten hierarchy of citizenship" fails to capture strong transnational/cross-border affiliations, the rootedness people feel in multiple homes or locales, globalized solidarities and commitments, the ways that people route traditions and heritage to connect in global moral communities, the multiple affiliations that people hold, the flexibility of affiliations, and the ways that globalized inter-dependencies in communication and information exchange influence youth cultural identities (Myers 2010, 487). Myers (2010) argues that "[a]dolescents today are likely to feel a strong moral responsibility to address global problems through political participation in social movements that are global and separate from formal party politics" (487). In a study on youth in 28 countries, Torney-Purta et al. (2001) found that many youth express an interest in global social movements that address issues with transnational impact including human rights and environmental justice, and privilege such preferences over joining political parties (see also: Myers 2010). Several students in Myers' study regarded global citizenship (as a status) as dependent on an individual's commitment to social justice. As Myers notes, one student argued, in Myers' words that "global citizenship is different than national citizenship in the sense that its common ground is social activism at a global scale rather than membership by birth in a particular society" (495).

Traditional parameters for citizenship, understandings of what citizenship is, have also been challenged by critical citizenship studies scholars who seek to move beyond the membership, rights, duties, and recognition dimensions or pre-

requisites of traditional citizenship debates (Isin and Nyers 2014). Theorists taking a critical angle have pointed out that citizenship-as-membership or even citizenship-as-meritocracy miss countless acts of civil and civic action that are either conducted by people without formal membership endowed by a state, or motivated by reasons other than a concomitant expectation of membership recognition in return. Citizenship has meaning because of what people do, not necessarily by the status they hold or by the power divested to them by the state to make claims upon it (Isin 2009). In the traditional understanding of citizenship, the only thing making a citizen is recognition, but this obfuscates the imperative of being citizen which is to be political (Isin 2002). Citizenship can be mobilized horizontally across society in multiple locales when people emit, transfer, import and export political technologies that increase the power and autonomy in others, expand solidarity in society, and increase the relational interactions of movements with each other and with state institutions (Finn and Momani 2017). Outside of a polity being defined by particular membership protocol and rights-based claims and duties, a polity can also be defined by productive forms of interaction which improve the quality of lives of people and increase economic and political inter-dependencies for their own sake. Further, one does not need to be endowed with rights by the state by virtue of membership to gain or lose citizenship. Often people with membership are denied protections, and people with protections are denied membership. The exercise of rights by citizens and non-citizens that are not formally held helps to constitute and justify them for future generations. Transnational citizenship mobilization is not therefore about cosmopolitan or world citizenship based on a shared humanity, as helpful as 'global citizenship' is to help ground our discussion of 'transnational citizenship', but rather the cross-border exchange of organizational forms, skills, tools, behaviors, etc. (political technologies) that build the concrete basis of citizenship (the making of politically influential actors and politically meaningful action) in multiple geographical locales.

Canadian Arab youth's transnational connections-building in multiple homelands and their multi-faceted support of Syrian refugees help to capture transnational citizenship as the manifestation/expression and protection of mobility rights. Our national survey and focus group research clarifies the ways that Arab youth's activism supports citizenship mobilizations in multiple locales, cross-nationally, and by extension, how this youth demographic represents a fledgling social movement for change in the MENA. Canadian Arab youth's status as an emerging social movement is identifiable in its diffused protest mobilizations in a myriad of forms that we discuss.

CANADIAN ARAB YOUTH AS AN EMERGENT, YET ENGAGED SOCIAL MOVEMENT

There is no consensus on how a social movement can be best conceptualized or a single profile of a social movement. Manuel Castells described it as “purposive collective actions whose outcome” whether successful in achieving the goals of actors or not, “transforms the values and institutions of society” (Castells 1997, 3). Transformative and networked collective action(s)—global social movements—utilize diverse technical, communicative, and organizational skills, they frame their work and activism in syncretic ways, their internal relationships are diverse, they can be hierarchical or network-based, their rationalizations or ideological justifications for actions run the spectrum, some of them have traditions and some do not, some of their values may be shared, and yet, individual members’ motives might be distinct, and the historical trajectory and goals of social movements are multifarious and multi-faceted (della Porta 2013). Sidney Tarrow argues that social movements represent a form of contentious action that is mobilized when people lacking regular access to representative institutions, “act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and...behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities” (Tarrow 2011).

Social movements are distinguished from interest groups by their attempt to engage public and private actors through direct action tactics rather than conventional strategies such as lobbying governments or using monetary means (e.g., forms of patronage) to leverage their political priorities among policy-makers. Social movements often crystallize via decentralized activist networking that might be widely diffused, and thus connected in highly fluid ways without formal decision-making or organizational structures and cultures. This is the case of Canadian Arab youth, especially for those who are explicitly activist. Social movements might also be more concentrated such that a movement of ideas and values coalesces into group decision-making facilitated through direct democracy, rotating tasks, or consensus (Smith 2014b, xx-xxi). Social movements form when determined individuals use new resources to press their demands regarding older or nascent grievances, or when political cultures centered around identities and values take precedence over class-based politics to produce resistance action against capitalism’s alienating structures, or when structures of political opportunity external to a group (such as that provided by political and/or state institutions) “either encourage or discourage people from using collective action” (Smith 2014b, xxiii; Tarrow 1998, 18). As social movements cross borders, and leverage their influence upon other social movements and state institutions, they are making real the intrinsic features of citizenship mobilization.

Transnational social movements develop when events happening in one geographical locale produce local mobilization in another society. Transnational social

movements are produced through diffuse protest mobilization, by the increasing relevance and prominence of national social movements, and when sub-national and national social movements become involved in what Donatella della Porta and Hanspeter Kriesi call “a multi-level game” (1999, 6). Protest mobilization can be diffused in direct ways through formal organizational and informal ad hoc networks, and indirect ways through cultural and communicative exchange. Stephen Vertovec argues that transnationalism is multi-faceted and can express itself as a “social morphology” (produced by diffusion), or as a movement of “consciousness” and “capital”, the reproduction of culture, cross-border political engagement, and efforts to revision/reimagine a place or locality (or set of places and localities) (Vertovic 1999, 447).

Diffusion or the transformation of the social morphology of the nodes and hubs of networks can happen when politically engaged actors draw inspiration from influence-makers around them in elite hierarchies and their protest is adopted by people on the ground. Transnational diffusion can also occur through spatial proximity or cultural similarity where linkages between ideas surrounding a protest spread horizontally. Whereas vertical interaction or hierarchical influence is based on a process of emulation or cue-taking among the bottom rungs of actors (vis-à-vis the influence-makers), horizontal forms of diffusion are influenced greatly by “non-relational channels” such as via media and internet communication (della Porta and Kriesi 1999).

In this paper, we make the case that Canadian Arab youth are a highly diffused newly emerging social movement whose transnational activism with or for social movements and government or multi-lateral institutions represent forms of cross-national citizenship mobilization. Canadian Arab youth, as a social movement, are emergent political subjectivities mobilizing citizenship capacities locally and in the MENA (Finn and Momani 2017). Their impact is not large, right now, as upon supranational institutions, however, the breadth of their activities underscore their hope in their capacity to initiate meaningful change.

METHODOLOGY

In this paper, we rely upon two sources of quantitative and qualitative data that help us to explain Canadian Arab youth transnational connections to the Arab world. 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 = 973).² Our second source of data was derived from focus groups that were held in Montreal and Ottawa in June/July 2016.

The survey instrument involved a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions, 47 in total. The purpose of the survey was to build social science data about

Canadian Arab youth attitudes, values, and perceptions with regards to living in Canadian society. This survey queried youth on a number of issues including their identity, transnational connections, political participation, campus life, education, and professional development (this survey instrument is provided under Appendix A). We recruited participants by going to places that Arab youth would frequent and informing them about the study. Selection was not random, but it was as close to random as we could get it. The method of advertising ‘on the street’ at key locales (described below) was chosen because there are numerous cultural and procedural impediments to random sampling of an ethnic minority youth population. First, many youth self-identify as Arab, but many others do not, even though they are Arab descendants. Second, the Arab community is not numerically homogenous vis-à-vis ethnic background. There are sizable populations of Lebanese and Egyptian immigrants in Canada, but immigrants from places like Yemen and Bahrain are much smaller. In the latter case of the vastly smaller populations, random selection, if it is even feasible, would have vastly increased the timeframe and costs of the study. Participants came from multiple ethnic and national backgrounds and youth were surveyed in English and French-speaking Canada. The percentage breakdown of ethnicities for Canadian Arabs, writ large, was similarly captured by the percentage breakdown of ethnicities for our survey respondents. Respondents are generalizable to the Arab youth population in Canada, with the exception of slight under-representation of Arab Christians who frequently self-identify as ‘Lebanese’, for example, rather than ‘Arab’ because their families have been settled in Canada for a longer period of time.

For the survey we sampled among youth populations by walking around hang-outs, shish bars, cafes, restaurants, Arab supermarkets, and universities frequented by Arab youth by wearing t-shirts that said, “Arab and under 30? Earn \$25”. This action brought participants to our assistants to fill out the survey. As reimbursement for their time, youth were given a \$25 Visa card. In order to avoid selection biases, we did not approach places of worship; we preferred, instead, to sample from locales that we ascertained would be populated with the most diverse sets of Arab youth. We gathered 976 responses for a population size of 380,620 Canadians of Arab ancestry and 661,750 of partial Arab ancestry (Census 2011). Factoring in our goal which was to speak with Arab youth, the representativeness of the sample size we attained was extremely high. One anonymous reviewer on a previous version of this paper asked if ‘engaged’ youth were over-represented by our methodology. In fact, we had difficulty recruiting youth for the survey and after attempting to recruit through their sheer potential interest in helping a social science study on Canadian Arab youth did not prove very effective, we had to offer a financial incentive to encourage participation.

Arab youth were recruited to our focus groups in Montreal and Ottawa through Facebook and other social media platforms; we sought focus group data to triangulate our findings. We advertised the focus groups as social events supporting discussion about recent research. To create incentives for participation, we offered dinner and raffle prizes such as gift certificates. A total of 100 youth participated in each city (20 focus groups per city composed of 7-10 youth per group) and focus groups participants were given gift cards to popular retailers. We do not have demographic data of attendees due to research ethics constraints, however our social media outreach messaging to recruit were composed in English and French and directed to Arab Canadians under 30 years of age. The topic of the focus group was revealed during the gathering of consent to participate. During the focus group sessions, we asked youth four questions, and discussions, conducted in French and English, lasted 60-90 minutes. The questions were designed to locate possible transnational connectivity among youth to Arab culture and values. Participants were asked about their connections to and consumption of Arab culture, the cultural values that they value, and the compatibility of Arab and western identities.

TRANSNATIONAL CITIZENSHIP MOBILIZATION AMONG CANADIAN ARAB YOUTH: AN ENGAGED SOCIAL MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Canadian Arab youth emit/bridge/diffuse/export/import various political technologies between Canada and the MENA such as communications, skills, and behaviors that have helped and continue to help sustain democratic social movement vitality in the Arab world. Arab youth's horizontally diffuse protest mobilizations (della Porta and Kriesi 1999) are enabled through its networking, through individual ties to organizations, and through cultural and communicative exchange. Thus, we find that through presencing (making their presence politically known in Canada and the MENA), networking among civil society actors locally and transnationally, advocating for disenfranchised and oppressed peoples, challenging misinformation and xenophobia, showing solidarity with other ethnic minority groups locally, challenging status quo assumptions, giving generously, educating peers, pursuing boycotts, consulting for supra-national institutions, building the political and physical infrastructure of hope, pursuing consciousness-raising activities, physically protesting in the streets, and participating in the activities of opposition groups, Canadian Arab youth give form, weight, and meaning to citizenship as the mobilization of membership and meritocracy, and post-national understandings of citizenship.

Canadian Arab youth originate from and identify with a large number of Arab countries and these origins influence the foci of their political activities related to Middle East politics. From the nation-wide survey, we found that the majority of

survey participants reported being born outside (58.9%; $n = 518$) as opposed to inside of Canada (33.6%; $n = 295$) [66 (7.5%) observations were missing]. Twenty-eight countries of origin were recorded and participants reported the following countries of origin most frequently: Lebanon (20.9%; $n = 184$), Palestine (12.4%; $n = 109$), Morocco (9.3%; $n = 82$), Syria (9%; $n = 79$) and Egypt (8.2%; $n = 72$) (see: Table 1). Ninety-nine (11.3%) participants didn't report any country of origin.

TABLE 1. Frequency of Country of Origin, by Response ($n = 780$)

Country	Frequency	Share of Total (%)
Lebanon	184	20.9
Palestine	109	12.4
Morocco	82	9.3
Syria	79	9
Egypt	72	8.2
Iraq	66	7.5
Jordan	52	5.9
Algeria	40	4.6
Yemen	40	4.6
Libya	27	3.1
Saudi Arabia	23	2.6
Canada	15	1.7
Kuwait	11	1.3
United Arab Emirates	8	1
Sudan	5	0.5
Bahrain	4	0.5
Somalia	4	0.5
Turkey	4	0.5
Tunisia	3	0.3
Pakistan	3	0.3
Iran	2	0.2
Comoros	1	0.1
Mauritania	1	0.1
Oman	1	0.1
Qatar	1	0.1
Afghanistan	1	0.1
Eritrea	1	0.1
Djibouti	1	0.1
Missing	99	11.3
Total	879	100

Regarding political activities related to Middle East politics over the past five years, our survey found gender differences among youth who are politically active. Female-identified youth were significantly more likely ($p < 0.001$) to be politically active in the past five years than male-identified youth (1.51 v. 0.98 forms of activity). We also found differences based on age: youth ages 18-to-24 were significantly more likely ($p < 0.01$) to be politically active in the past five years than youth ages 25-to-29 (1.29 v. 1.09 forms of activity). Our findings indicate important differences among ethnic identification and place of birth. When asked whether the respondent identified as “Arab”, “Arab-Canadian”, “Canadian-Arab”, and “Canadian”, we found that those who identified being “Canadian” participated in issues and activities related to Middle East politics significantly less ($p < 0.001$) than all other groups, however those who identified as “Arab” participated significantly less ($p < 0.01$) than Arab-Canadian, Canadian-Arab and “Other”. There was no significance difference in participation between “Arab-Canadian” and “Canadian-Arab”, though they both participated significantly less ($p < 0.01$) than “Other”. This other category might encompass those respondents who identified more globally and less parochially with specific national identifications. Arab youth who keep their identity in abeyance, or who avoid linking themselves in one way or another to an ethnic or national identity are more likely to be politically active in Middle East politics possibly by a sense of global citizenship and/or a globalized sense of social justice that supports pre-figurative (normative) principles for the Middle East.

Keeping in line with this finding, we discovered differences in political activities based on place of birth: those born in Canada were significantly more likely ($p < 0.05$) to be politically active in the past five years than those born outside (1.38 v. 1.13 forms of activity). This is not a surprising finding: youth born in Canada have a stronger sense of what a socially and politically open society feels like and might have developed stronger skills and capacities to transform politics in the Middle East, and faith that their efforts would lead to positive change. Those born abroad might not have lived in the social and political conditions favoring participatory action, nor might they have developed capacities, skills, and fortitude that their actions can make a difference. Among those Arab youth reporting ethnic identification, there are great differences among them regarding activities related to Middle East politics. Only five reported countries of origin featured significantly different than average rates of political activity. Youth reporting an origin from Libya ($p < 0.001$) and Palestine ($p < 0.001$) reported significantly more than average political activity compared to the entire sample. This result might be explained by the particularities of political struggles in Libya and Palestine that have visceral impact upon youth that originate from these locales. Contrastingly, youth from Lebanon ($p < 0.0001$), Morocco ($p < 0.05$) and Saudi Arabia ($p < 0.05$) reported significantly less than average political

activity. Other countries featuring more but *not significantly more* activity with more than one participant included Sudan, Somalia, Turkey, Jordan, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Syria, Egypt and Iraq. Countries featuring less but *not significantly less* activity with more than one participant included Tunisia, Oman, Afghanistan, Comoros, Algeria, Pakistan, Eritrea, Iran, Mauritania, Kuwait, Yemen and Canada.

In terms of issue area concerns among Arab youth who are engaged in activities that have transnational scope, our study aligns well with the study by Myers (2010) that found that youth involve themselves in movements and activism that seeks to address global problems related to human rights and the environment. Arab youth have a sense of global citizenship and act on their commitment to social justice through horizontally diffused activities that transnationally connect relational and non-relational channels frequently through media and internet-based communication (della Porta and Kriesi 1999). Although social media engagement among Canadian Arab youth may not always seek to explicitly contribute to policy debates or involve formal political systems and institutions, it is, from our perspective, frequently a means for such youth to be civically engaged transnationally. From the nation-wide survey, we found that there were variations in likelihood to communicate about political issues among Arab youth with people living outside of Canada. Diffused horizontal communicative channel building is more likely to be built by Arab youth who are male-identified. They are significantly more likely than female-identified youth to discuss Canadian politics ($p < 0.01$), multiculturalism ($p < 0.05$) and environmentalism ($p < 0.001$) with people abroad. Among the two age categories in our study (18- 24 years and 25-29 years), youth ages 25-to-29 were significantly more likely to discuss environmentalism ($p < 0.05$), Middle East and North Africa politics ($p < 0.05$) and international politics ($p < 0.05$) compared to the younger cohort. We also found that whereas those born in Canada were more likely to be active in transnational activities related to Middle East politics compared with youth born outside of Canada, youth born in Canada discussed political issues with people living abroad significantly less ($p < 0.001$) than they discussed political issues with those born in Canada. Arab youth born outside of Canada appear to engage in less action, but more communication than youth born inside of Canada. Arab youth born in Canada were significantly less likely to discuss the following topics: multiculturalism ($p < 0.001$), environmentalism ($p < 0.001$), Middle East and North Africa politics ($p < 0.01$), international politics ($p < 0.05$) and "Other" ($p < 0.05$) compared to Arab youth born outside of Canada. An analysis of variance identified significant differences between ethnic self-identification and discussion of multiculturalism ($p < 0.05$) and environmentalism ($p < 0.001$). There was no significant difference between discussion of political issues with those living outside of Canada between Muslim- and Christian-identified participants.

TABLE 2. Summary of Difference-In-Means of Activity in Politics Topics, by Demographic Group (n = 879)

Topic	Sex	Age Group	Country of Birth	Christian/Muslim
Canadian Politics	-0.34**	0.13	-0.14	-0.03
Multiculturalism	-0.28*	0.14	-0.50**	-0.18
Environmentalism	-0.51***	0.31*	-0.38**	0.15
Gender Issues	0.10	0.00	-0.10	-0.57
Religion	0.10	0.09	0.09	-0.24
Racism	0.23	0.00	0.16	-0.10
Middle East and North Africa Politics	-0.13	0.30	-0.38**	-0.26
International Politics	-0.20	0.36*	-0.29*	0.06
Other	-0.18	0.26	-0.53*	0.44
All Topics (Index)	-1.42	2.67	-3.62**	-1.09

Notes: statistical significance beyond a critical value of- *: p=0.05; ** p=0.01; *** p= 0.001. Values on each topic range from 0 (Never active) to 5 (Active at least once a day); Values on the index of all topics range from 0 (Never active on all topics) to 25 (Active at least once a day on all topics).

Topic	Grand Mean	Arab	Arab-Canadian	Canadian	Canadian-Arab	Other
Canadian Politics	1.61	1.79	1.43	1.52	1.54	1.82
Multiculturalism	2.09	2.42**	1.93	1.95	1.85	2.26
Environmentalism	1.66	2.10**	1.54	1.37	1.46	1.34
Gender Issues	1.60	1.87*	1.43	1.15	1.59	1.62
Religion	2.46	2.56	2.43	2.12	2.36	2.71
Racism	1.97	1.98	1.93	2.03	1.88	2.27
Middle East and North Africa Politics	2.50	2.67	2.51	1.66**	2.24	3.00*
International Politics	2.37	2.42	2.39	1.42**	2.29	2.87*
Other	1.78	2.03	1.82	0.68**	1.32*	2.71*
All Topics (Index)	15.73	18.07	15.67	11.95	13.04	18.09

Notes: statistical significance beyond a critical value of- *: p=0.05; ** p=0.01; *** p= 0.001. Values on each topic range from 0 (Never active) to 5 (Active at least once a day); Values on the index of all topics range from 0 (Never active on all topics) to 25 (Active at least once a day on all topics).

Politically engaged Arab youth tie their political relevance to their ability to be present in the local, Canadian political public sphere and in MENA civil society. Part of the process of presencing locally and transnationally is through the consolidation and reconciliation of identity. Consolidating and accepting the hybridity of their identity and political and social identification with multiple geographical locales has played an important role in how Canadian Arab youth mobilize themselves as a transnational social movement for change in the MENA. One respondent expressed the hybrid consolidation in the following way: “Okay, here is my opinion, I am Arab, right? That’s my background. But part of it also is my Arab culture in Canada because some of my culture became morphed, so now I’m combining two cultures together, my Canadian culture and my Arab culture. I don’t feel connected with that. I feel connected with the mix of the Canadian-Arab.”³ Youth tend to see ‘home’ in very complex ways and this affects the issues that mobilize them to be politically active. For example, home is often either entirely here in Canada, or marginally in Canada and primarily in the MENA due to Arab descent, or by virtue of holding the MENA as the central cultural reference point. As one youth puts the ambiguity: “Canada is home. Yemen is home because it is where I grew up. However, I have accepted Canada as my primary home for the sense of belonging and the righteousness it represents. It aligns with my value system and ethics.”⁴ Another way that home is articulated is in terms of *where* one feels accepted by the society: “I don’t think I could find any other country [as home] than my country of origin: it is the only place where I’m not being asked where I was born!”⁵

In the 2016 focus groups and survey we found that Arab youth were strongly connected to their Arab homeland and supported continued ties to that homeland: “I feel like it’s also if you’re someone who is still truly connected, I personally am still connected with the Middle East because I go there every year and have family there, and friends, I do have a connection with the country. So that makes it harder to detach.”⁶ In the survey, a respondent said: “I would’ve said [that] Syria [is my home], but there isn’t much to go back home to now. Jordan is ‘back home’ to our family now and we are content with the fact that there is a place to learn about our roots and visit without disturbance [in Jordan], but we would also appreciate visiting our home country [Syria] more.”⁷

Camaraderie and solidarity for the MENA emerges from cultural commonalities. As one focus group respondent clarified: “Most Arab countries share the same cultural values, religion also plays a role since most of the culture is derived from the religion, either Christianity or Islam. So having very similar cultures, around 13 countries, first off, there is no language barrier between us. The culture is very similar to my culture so it’s easier to connect to those people.”⁸ Another said:

I live in a family where my dad brought us up to speak Arabic. So since I was born I've always spoken Arabic, I'm born in Jordan and came here when I was 5 years old.... My parents forced us to speak the [Arabic] language! And I feel like with the language, it's a source of relation between our culture and us. I feel if the ties of the language are dead, we have little connection with the Arab world. What prides us as Arabs. It's what makes us proud to be Arabs and connects our identities.⁹

The sharing of similar habits and values is what draws Arab youth culturally to the Middle East: "Yes, I do feel connected to Arab culture just because both of my parents are Moroccan. This is largely why I feel connected. I grew up in an Arab house and I always travel to Morocco. So, essentially, I do feel I am very connected on the basis of that level...I feel as though we share the same habits and values; therefore this is why I feel there is a connection amongst us."¹⁰

Canadian Arab youth's engagement with MENA political issues has been longstanding. The involvement and engagement of Canadian Arab youth in politics of the Arab world did not begin, therefore, with the Arab Revolutions, rather the Revolutions heightened and accentuated existing transnational outreach and protest. The Palestinian struggle and the US war on Iraq have been two particularly poignant issues of concern for Arab youth in Canada and the United States. To take one example, the Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM) was founded during a highly discouraging moment in Palestinian national resistance. In their study of PYM, Salih, Welchman, and Zambelli (2017) write of Sa'id, one of the founders of PYM who:

...recalled that the impetus for establishing that body had come from "a crisis within the Palestinian community" as a result of the intensifying factionalism between Fatah and Hamas in the occupied Palestinian territories and in other contexts, such as in Lebanese refugee camps. At that moment, there appeared to be no forms of collective political organizing that could include also the voices and sustain the aspirations of Palestinians living in the diaspora. After the first Intifada, the demands of the Palestinian national movement focused on Gaza and the West Bank, and in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords (1993), the right of return of Palestinian refugees de facto dropped off the negotiating table with Israel (6).

At this time, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had been subjugated and made subservient to Israeli security priorities. Palestinian youth organizing found renewal in diasporic Palestinian organizing (Salih, Welchman, and Zambelli 2017). According to Sa'id, the PYM project in 2007 gathered Palestinians from Palestine to discuss who PYM was and what its priorities were. In November 2007, over 100 Palestinian politicians, activists, and scholars from 28 countries convened in France to talk about their collective history and identity.

Things that emerged went beyond our expectations: being in a room with 100 Palestinians with different origins not only geographically but also culturally, socially

[...] released such an energy, realizing that all of us were for Palestine, all determined to do things and we should not leave with nothing in our hands or just coordinating some activities. So we began saying that we should create a common vision (Salih, Welchman, and Zambelli 2017, 6-7).

Salih, Welchman, and Zambelli (2017) write that, as “Sa‘id recounted, factionalism initially constrained the energy unleashed in and through this transnational meeting, as people looked for hints of secret, partisan agendas in one another. Slowly, however, they managed to overcome this initial diffidence and create an organization which aimed to recreate/reinvigorate forms of pre-Oslo Palestinian political organizing” (6-7).

The fact that this sense of camaraderie has critical citizenship uptake in the host country is captured by Staehli and Nagel who found in 2008 that transnational connections among Arab populations can frequently reinforce an individual’s commitment to be integrated in their host country. Arab youth are an engaged social movement involved in two kinds of international interactions: 1) transnational interactions between themselves and social movements local to Canada and social movements in the MENA; and 2) cross-level interactions between social movements in Canada and the MENA and MENA governments (della Porta, Kriesi, and Rucht 1999). Canadian Arab youth show higher interest in Middle Eastern and international politics than local and national politics in Canada, but they have been highly affected by the Syrian refugee crisis which has instigated greater political outreach and activism locally. Canadian Arab youth helped to reproduce the transnational public sphere that emerged during the Arab Revolutions insofar as a bounded “Arab-Canadian”/“Canadian-Arab” community or localization gave way to more pronounced forms of solidarities, networks, and identities that moved beyond the contiguous appropriation of space and physical protest (as it often does in the case of pro-Palestine political activism) (Gupta and Ferguson 1992).

We find, thus, that Arab youth political subjectivity is in flux and in development; it is emerging as political events in the MENA transform expectations, experiences, and people’s hopes and dreams for peace and stability. The fledgling, yet engaged Arab youth social movement for change in the MENA often mobilizes itself spontaneously in response to tragedies and in response to increased confidence of Arab youth to mobilize in Canada. The fact that much of the transnational political activism of Arab youth is about raising awareness, advocating, and protesting in the MENA, and not as frequently petitioning the Canadian government indicates that it is a political subjectivity that seeks to disturb the MENA political infrastructures without seeking assistance from the Canadian political establishment (Critchely 2007; Levinas 1999; Turner 2016).

Canadian Arab youth’s activism adds substantive meaning to exclusive understandings of citizenship-as-membership, inclusive understandings of citizenship-as-meritocracy (Isin 2008; Levy 2014; Tilly 1997), and post-national understandings of

citizenship motivated by a sense of global social justice and citizenship despite borders. From the national Arab youth survey,¹¹ we found that between 2011 and 2015, Canadian Arab youth were active in a myriad of diffuse forms of mobilization. Arab youth were active on Twitter, posting videos and images online, and blogging. Tweeting covered a range of issues including raising awareness about the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza (or the Israeli occupation of Palestine generally) or the Syrian people during the then on-going civil war and the Syrian refugee crisis, supporting the #YesAllWomen Twitter hashtag and social media campaign wherein Arab women shared personal experiences of discrimination and harassment, tweeting about the education system in Kuwait while in high school, raising the profile of Rohingya suffering in Myanmar, or tweeting with great frequency about Islamophobia and sexism in the Middle East and ISIS' narrative and propaganda, its hijacking and violent co-option of the parameters of Islamic resistance against state hegemonic violence. Youth posted videos and images online about killings in Gaza, Syria, and Yemen. A great deal of activity involved active engagement on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. In terms of MENA politics, Arab youth were highly interested in raising awareness about and challenging corruption and infrastructure neglect in places like Lebanon, the promotion of 'illicit' material in the Maghrib, and expressing frustration about human and refugee rights in the Middle East. One participant in our survey mentioned promoting MENA tourism videos. Blogging focused on xenophobic attacks in Canada or writing about the differences between life in Canada versus life in the Middle East.

In support of protest mobilizations that arose prominently during the Arab revolutions, which drew their inspiration from principles built from latent philosophies expressed by MENA revolutionaries, Canadian Arab youth traveled to Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya to actively protest the Ben Ali, Mubarak, and Qadhafi regimes in the streets. They were also active in Canada protesting Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria. Other forms of activism centered around physically protesting the plight of Palestinian self-determination and human rights (or in support of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions [BDS] Movement), holding or attending vigils after terrorist attacks, protesting the deaths of political activists in the Middle East, supporting the Libyan resistance against Muammar al-Qadhafi, the Tunisian resistance against Ben Ali's regime, and the Egyptian protests against the Mubarak government. Some protested at the doorsteps of Parliament to encourage the Canadian government to help stop the war in Syria, or in the streets to support #BlackLivesMatter. A large number of activities during this period centered around pro-Palestine activism with people attending rallies in support of Palestinian human rights, and against the Gaza blockade. As one survey respondent explained: "I protested for Palestinian lives being killed mindlessly. I am not necessarily with Palestine on a lot of issues, but I am always going to take the side of victims when it comes to war crimes, regardless of where they're from." Some respondents said

that they had participated in “protest against the Zionist genocide in Gaza in 2014”, supported Palestinian refugee support groups and/or the “Free Palestine Movement”, or had been involved in “Students for Palestinian Rights.”

In an effort to build political infrastructure, Arab youth supported and participated directly in MENA oppositional movements in Egypt such as the Al-Dostour Party which was founded in April 2012 (with chapters in Canada) by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mohamed El Baradei. The Al-Dostour Party was created to fulfill the ends of the Arab Revolutions of “bread, freedom, and social justice” against Mubarak, or the Tamarod Party, a grassroots movement, founded to oppose the political platform and decision-making of former President Mohamed Morsi. Some actively supported the political ambitions of the Tunisian politician Mohamed Moncef Marzouki in his presidency bid.

A great deal of political infrastructure building has been facilitated through youth participation in development and outreach activities in the MENA. For example, one youth said that “I have volunteered with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and I am willing to volunteer [again] soon. I think volunteering is a very good thing because it makes you feel good about yourself knowing that you are doing something useful to society”.¹² Other individuals described volunteering in the MENA (and beyond):

I volunteered in Saudi Arabia in my high school (more or less 300 hours in total). I also did humanitarian work in the Philippines in 2011 (building houses for locals). But all of this volunteer work was done during my high school years in Riyadh and not in Canada and in university.¹³

One person mentioned fundraising for Palestine and Syria on behalf of the solidarity group Students for Palestinian Human Rights, and another person noted that he/she had volunteered “with the organization ‘Le Nid’ in Meknis to help abandoned children [and] with a sustainable development organization ‘Avalon’ in Barcelona.”¹⁴ Another survey respondent said that “due to the vast amount of construction back home, as a way to give back to the laborers, I have often participated in care packages initiatives during Ramadan and Eid.”¹⁵ In order to transform public opinions on Arab society and governments, and to expand local political infrastructure in Canada in support of the MENA, youth described volunteering at Arab-Canadian networking and lobbying events or at the Egyptian-Canadian Association of Ottawa.¹⁶

In other forms of activism, Arab youth organized a 5k run for Palestine and started an Israeli brand boycott in their school, attended a youth forum in Morocco, acted as an election observer at a MENA polling station, and one youth worked in North Africa in 2012 for the European Union as a consultant to local governments. One survey participant described actively informing others about the health benefits of cultural foods from the MENA region.

CONCLUSION

This paper has outlined several ways that Canadian Arab youth, as an engaged social movement, invoke emergent forms of political subjectivity, and mobilize citizenship across borders in multiple locales. Some of their work is in support of societal connections and civic capacity building in Canada, and some of it is supporting movements working to enhance mutual aid, solidarity, and *communitas* in the MENA region. Their work and activism builds transnational citizenship through horizontally diffused networks and interactions. It involves the emission/transfer/export/import of critical political technologies such as skill-sets, communications, and behaviors and these actions help buttress civic capacity-building and, by extension, citizenship mobilizations in multiple geographical spaces.

We found that Canadian Arab youth are working to protect Syrian mobility rights, building civil society networks locally in Canada and in the MENA, advocating for disaffected people, educating and challenging misinformation, showing solidarity with non-Arabs, challenging status quos, donating money, pursuing boycotts, acting as consultants, building hope infrastructure, raising public consciousness, protesting in streets, and joining opposition movements. Their work gives substantive weight to the idea that citizenship is not reducible to the capacity of people to make claims on a government because of their membership to a polity.

Our research supports the work of Myers (2010) and Torney-Purta et al. (2001) who found that youth civic participation is not focused on formal political institutions, but rather on the social movements and non-governmental organizations that are addressing transnational issues such as environmental justice and human rights. Formal politics, writes Myers, “does not capture the universal and moral ideals that meet young people ‘where they are’ in terms of their political language and lore” (2010, 498). Some Arab youth sought to actively engage in campaigning or advocacy for MENA politicians, however the vast majority were concerned with issues of human rights and social justice, with ensuring that MENA issues and voices being denied a prominent platform were given their solid backing. Canadian Arab youth became a voice to speak the views of MENA activists, hands to intervene for their activists’ safety and interests, and bodies to walk the streets against dictators in solidarity with them. We argue that as a horizontally diffused social movement, such actions make citizenship in Canada and in the MENA meaningful. Such actions, ‘being political’ (Isin 2002) in multiple geographical spaces and places, and engaging in actions that have global scale rather than always and explicitly a scale related to birth in a particular society (Myers 2010, 495), also give substantive weight to Arab youth’s claims as transnationally and globally engaged citizens.

APPENDIX A: (SURVEY INSTRUMENT; SPACES BETWEEN QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN REMOVED):

Canadian Arab Youth: Civic Engagement, Belonging, and Empowerment**SURVEY**

I have read and understand the above information and consent letter and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

- Yes
- No

I agree to having anonymized quotes from this survey included in researchers' publications.

- Yes
- No

Demographic Questions

1) What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other

2) What is your age range?

- 17 and under (Thank you for your time, however we are not surveying Arab youth under 17 years of age. You are free to destroy this survey or take it home with you.)
- 18 - 24 years of age
- 25 - 29 years of age
- 30 - 34 years of age
- 35 - 44 years of age
- 45 - 54 years of age
- 55 years or older

3) Where do you live in Canada?

- Calgary, AB
- Charlottetown, PE
- Edmonton, AB

- Fredericton, NB
- Halifax, NS
- Kamloops, BC
- Kitchener-Waterloo, ON
- London, ON
- Moncton, NB
- Montreal, QC
- Ottawa, ON
- Québec City, QC
- Regina, SK
- Saskatoon, SK
- St. John's, NL
- Thunder Bay, ON
- Toronto/ GTA, ON
- Vancouver, BC
- Victoria, BC
- Whitehorse, YT
- Windsor, ON
- Winnipeg, MB
- Yellowknife, NT
- Other: (Please name:) _____

4) Were you born in Canada?

- Yes
- No

Identity and Transnational Connections Questions

5) What is the country of your family's ancestry? Please check all that apply.

- Algeria
- Bahrain
- Canada
- Comoros
- Djibouti
- Egypt
- Iraq
- Jordan
- Kuwait
- Lebanon

- Libya
- Mauritania
- Morocco
- Oman
- Palestine
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- Somalia
- Sudan
- Syrian Arab Republic
- Tunisia
- United Arab Emirates
- Yemen
- Other: _____
- I do not want to respond

6) How do you self-identify?

- Arab
- Canadian
- Canadian-Arab
- Arab-Canadian
- Other _____

7) How would you rate your sense of belonging to Canadian society from 1–5 (when 1 = not at all ‘at home’ in Canada, and 5 = completely ‘at home’ in Canada)? Please circle appropriate number.

Sense of belonging:

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not at all ‘at home’ in Canada</i>				<i>Completely ‘at home’ in Canada</i>

8) How would you rate your comfort and happiness living in Canada from 1–5 (when 1 = completely uncomfortable and unhappy living in Canada, and 5 = completely comfortable and happy living in Canada)? Please circle appropriate number.

Comfort and Happiness:

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not at all 'at home' in Canada</i>			<i>Completely 'at home' in Canada</i>	

9) How important is a wide social network of family, friends, and colleagues to you from 1—5 (when 1 = completely unimportant, and 5 = completely important)? Please circle appropriate number.

Importance of Wide Social Network:

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not at all 'at home' in Canada</i>			<i>Completely 'at home' in Canada</i>	

10) If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be, and why?

11) From your perspective, when you think of 'going back home' to somewhere other than Canada, which country or countries in the world come to mind?

12) Explain why the country or countries listed in Q#10 are 'home' to you.

13) What, if any, is your religion?

- Jewish
- Druze
- Sunni Muslim
- Shia Muslim
- Other Muslim: _____
- Roman Catholic
- Greek Orthodox
- Protestant
- Coptic Christian
- Other Christian: _____
- Agnostic
- Atheist
- Other (Please Specify): _____

14) What are your views on the following social/political issues? Please state your position on the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Canadian society supports multiculturalism	•	•	•	•	•	•
Arabs should marry within their own cultural communities	•	•	•	•	•	•
Arabs should marry within their own religious communities	•	•	•	•	•	•
Learning English or French should be a requirement for immigrants to Canada	•	•	•	•	•	•
Arab Canadians face greater discrimination than other minority communities	•	•	•	•	•	•
Arab men should not have sex before marriage	•	•	•	•	•	•
Arab women should not have sex before marriage	•	•	•	•	•	•
There is racism in Canada	•	•	•	•	•	•
I support same sex marriage	•	•	•	•	•	•
I am comfortable if my neighbour is LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender)	•	•	•	•	•	•
I am comfortable working with a person who is LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender)	•	•	•	•	•	•
Women should have the right to wear a hijab in public	•	•	•	•	•	•
Women should have the right to wear a niqab in public	•	•	•	•	•	•
I feel comfortable being seen with a woman wearing a niqab	•	•	•	•	•	•
Women should have the right to pursue all jobs and professions in Canada.	•	•	•	•	•	•

15) How often do you use these communication tools to connect with individuals from your home country/countr(ies) not living in Canada?

	At least once a day	At least once a week	At least once a month	On Special Occasions	Yearly	Never
Skype	•	•	•	•	•	•
Phone	•	•	•	•	•	•
Facebook	•	•	•	•	•	•
Text or BBM	•	•	•	•	•	•
FaceTime	•	•	•	•	•	•
Email	•	•	•	•	•	•
Tango or Viber	•	•	•	•	•	•
WhatsApp	•	•	•	•	•	•
Instagram	•	•	•	•	•	•
Snapchat	•	•	•	•	•	•

16) When communicating with individuals from your home country/countr(ies) living abroad, how often do you discuss:

	At least once a day	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once year	Never
Canadian politics	•	•	•	•	•
Multiculturalism	•	•	•	•	•
Environmentalism	•	•	•	•	•
Gender issues	•	•	•	•	•
Religion	•	•	•	•	•
Racism	•	•	•	•	•
Middle East and North Africa (MENA) politics	•	•	•	•	•
International politics	•	•	•	•	•
Other (Please Specify):	•	•	•	•	•

17) If you want to be involved with your home country, please check the areas that apply.

- Investment
- Employment
- Retirement
- Purchase of property
- Political life
- Education
- Tourism
- Marriage
- Support development initiatives
- Other (Please Specify): _____

18) How often do you visit countries in the Middle East-North Africa (MENA)?

- Multiple times a year
- Once a year
- Once every 2 years
- Once every 5 years
- I have never been to a MENA country
- Other: _____

19) What is your position on the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment in Canada because of my Arab identity	•	•	•	•	•
I have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment in Canada because of my religious identity	•	•	•	•	•

20) Have you ever faced racial discrimination in the following situations?

	Yes	Unsure	No
Making new friends	•	•	•
At a retail store	•	•	•
At a restaurant	•	•	•
Applying for a job	•	•	•
With a professor or teacher	•	•	•

21) If you feel that you have experienced discrimination, please provide an example. Please do not volunteer the names of the people involved or information about any possible illegal activities.

Political Participation Questions

22) In the past 12 months, were you a member or participant in any of the following types of groups?

- Union/professional association (e.g., trade union or Ontario Society of Professional Engineers)
- Political party or group
- Sports or recreational organization (e.g., sports league or health club)
- Cultural, educational, or hobby organization (e.g., theatre group, book club, or gaming club)
- Religious-affiliated group (e.g., church/mosque, youth group, or choir)
- School group, or neighborhood, civic, or community organization (e.g., PTA, alumni, block parents, or neighborhood watch)
- Service club (e.g., Kiwanis, Knights of Columbus, or the Legion)
- Youth organization (e.g., Scouts, Girl Guides, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, or YWCA/YMCA)
- Ethnic or immigrant association or club
- Other type of organization

23) Do you volunteer in your community? Please explain.

- Yes _____
- No _____

24) Generally speaking, how interested are you in the following levels of politics from 1–5 (when 1 = extremely uninterested, and 5 = extremely interested)? Please circle appropriate number.

Local/Municipal Politics in Canada

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not at all 'at home' in Canada</i>				<i>Completely 'at home' in Canada</i>

Provincial Politics in Canada

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not at all 'at home' in Canada</i>				<i>Completely 'at home' in Canada</i>

Federal Politics in Canada

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not at all 'at home' in Canada</i>				<i>Completely 'at home' in Canada</i>

Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Politics

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not at all 'at home' in Canada</i>				<i>Completely 'at home' in Canada</i>

International Politics

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not at all 'at home' in Canada</i>				<i>Completely 'at home' in Canada</i>

25) Over the past 12 months, how frequently have you done any of the following?
Please check all that apply.

	At least once a day	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once this past year	Never
Searched for information on a political issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteered for a political party	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expressed your views by contacting a newspaper or politician	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expressed your views on a political or social issue on an Internet forum or news website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signed a petition on paper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signed an Internet petition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boycotted or chose a product for ethical/political reasons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attended a public meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spoke at a public meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participated in a demonstration or protest march	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worn a badge, T-shirt, or displayed a lawn sign in support or opposition to a political or social cause	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Picketed during a labour strike	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

26) If you were politically active over the past five years, please indicate if you engaged in any of the following activities (check all that apply):

	Municipal Level	Provincial Level	Federal Level
Campaigned for a political candidate for office	•	•	•
Acted as an assistant/intern in a political office	•	•	•
Participated in a public debate	•	•	•
Wrote a letter to or visited your official representative	•	•	•
Attended a public meeting to discuss a political issue	•	•	•
Attended a peaceful rally or march	•	•	•
Other	•	•	•

For the following questions, please answer without volunteering information about any illegal activities or specific names.

27) If you are politically engaged, what motivates you?

28) If you are not politically engaged, please explain why.

29) To which Canadian political party do you most identify?

- Conservative Party
- New Democratic Party
- Liberal Party
- The Bloc Quebecois
- Green Party
- Other (Please Specify): _____

30) If you are eligible to vote, did you vote in the 2015 Canadian Federal election?

- Yes (If yes, please proceed to Q#31)
- No (If no, please proceed to Q#32)
- I do not want to answer
- I am not eligible to vote

31) In the 2015 Election, what motivated you to vote?

32) For the 2015 Election, can you please explain why you did not vote?

33) Which news sources do you trust and frequent the most?

- Online news (e.g., Huffington Post, Foreign Policy, Independent, etc.)

Please list the sources you read/watch:

- Newspapers, in print or online (e.g., The Toronto Star, The National Post, Globe and Mail, etc.). Please list the sources you read:

- Broadcast news (e.g., CNN, Al Jazeera, Russia Today, Democracy Now!, Vice News, etc.) Please list the sources you watch:

- Articles posted on Facebook, Twitter, or other social media feeds. Please list the sources you follow:

- Other. Please list and describe:

34) How would you rate your confidence in the following from 1–5 (when 1 = no confidence at all, and 5 = a great deal of confidence)? Please circle appropriate number.

Federal Parliament

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No confidence</i>				<i>A great deal of confidence</i>

Banks

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No confidence</i>				<i>A great deal of confidence</i>

Major Corporations

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No confidence</i>			<i>A great deal of confidence</i>	

Canadian Media

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No confidence</i>			<i>A great deal of confidence</i>	

35) Over the past year, how frequently have you done any of the following?

	At least once a day	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once this past year	Never
Watched satellite television programming originating from the Middle East-North Africa	•	•	•	•	•
Read or watched news originating from the Middle East-North Africa	•	•	•	•	•
Watched/listened to music, film or other cultural products originating from the Middle East-North Africa	•	•	•	•	•

36) If you were politically active over the past 5 years, please indicate if you engaged in any of the following activities related to Middle East politics:

- Participated in protests or demonstrations

- Participated in opposition movements

- Tweeted about the protests or related events

- Posted or linked videos/images online sent from the region

Blogged about politics in the region

Other means of participation

I did not participate in anyway

37) With whom do you discuss politics? Check all that apply and rank the people with whom you communicate (with 1 = most frequent, 2 = second most frequent, 3 = third most frequent, etc.)

_____ Parent(s)

_____ Sibling

_____ Immediate family member

_____ Extended family member

_____ Friends

_____ Friends on social media

_____ Peers/colleagues

_____ Online discussion group

_____ Teacher

_____ Community leader

_____ Religious leader (e.g., priest, pastor, imam, etc.)

_____ Sports Coach

_____ Other

Campus Life, Education, and Professional Development Questions

38) Are you currently attending, or have attended college, university, or any post-secondary institution?

Yes (If yes, please proceed to Q#39)

No (If no, please proceed to Q#46)

39) What college, university, or post-secondary institution are you, or did you attend?

40) What faculty/program are you, or were you in?

Arts and Humanities

Biological Sciences

Medical or Health Sciences

Education

Engineering

- Physical Sciences
- Business, Management, Marketing
- Mathematics and Statistics
- Professional
- Social Sciences
- Computer or Information Technology Sciences
- Undecided
- Other (please specify): _____

41) Please check all that apply. During your studies, are you/did you...

- Complete a program-based co-op/internship
- Take a course that included team-based activities
- Take a course that included community service-oriented activities
- Take a course that included lab work
- Take a course that included active engagement (e.g., class where professor is not lecturing and students are interacting)
- Other form(s) of interactive experience: _____
- I did not have any interactive experience during my studies

42) Can you explain whether being of Arab descent affects or affected these learning experiences?

43) From your experience, what is your position on the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
People are free to express political views on my campus, even if contentious	•	•	•	•	•	•
People are free to spearhead, launch, and manage clubs with a political mandate on my campus	•	•	•	•	•	•
People are free to spearhead, launch, and manage clubs with a social mandate on my campus	•	•	•	•	•	•
My post-secondary institution's policies are not discriminatory	•	•	•	•	•	•
My post-secondary institution's protocols for addressing incidents of racism are effective	•	•	•	•	•	•
My post-secondary institution and campus culture are open and inclusive	•	•	•	•	•	•
Campus political groups at my post-secondary institution are open to electing representatives from ethnic minorities	•	•	•	•	•	•
It is likely that a qualified candidate of Arab descent would be elected at my post-secondary institution	•	•	•	•	•	•
Professors at my post-secondary institution express concern for the well-being of minority students	•	•	•	•	•	•
Other:	•	•	•	•	•	•

44) If possible, please share a story about any past experience(s) related to the above points on campus life.

45) What can your post-secondary institution do to improve Canadian Arab youth life on campus in terms of providing opportunities to participate and/or belong?

46) Do you think being of Arab descent has an impact upon your career opportunities? Why or why not?

47) What is your outlook for your future in Canada?

	Very positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Strongly negative
Career aspirations	•	•	•	•	•
Building a home	•	•	•	•	•
Starting a family	•	•	•	•	•
Having financial security	•	•	•	•	•

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1) Do you feel that you are connected to culture in the Arab world? If so how?

2) Do you consume Arab media, film, music, theatre, literature or art? If so how do you access this?

3) What Arab cultural values do you want to retain in the diaspora or pass on to your children? What Arab cultural values do you not want to pass on?

4) Can your Arab identity be compatible with Western identity (in any way you would interpret either)?

NOTES

1. Amery (2013) goes into substantive detail about how Arab Canadians are securitized and racialized by Canada's immigration policies.
2. This survey is available in Appendix A of this paper.
3. Ottawa, Focus Group, June 20, 2016.
4. Arab Youth Survey 2016.
5. Arab Youth Survey 2016.
6. Ottawa Focus Group, June 20, 2016.
7. Arab Youth Survey 2016.
8. Ottawa, Focus Group, June 20, 2016.
9. Ottawa, Focus Group, June 20, 2016.
10. Montreal, Focus Group, July 18, 2016.
11. Due to concerns raised by the Office for Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo concerning the vulnerability of Arab youth to surveillance activities supporting anti-terrorism laws in Canada, specifically the Anti-Terrorism Act, we were required to be very constrained in the types of questions we could ask Arab youth, especially as they relate to activism.
12. Arab Youth Survey 2016.
13. 2016 Survey.
14. 2016 Survey.
15. 2016 Survey.
16. 2016 Survey.

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