Transnational Belonging among Second Generation Youth: Identity in a Globalized World

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ABSTRACT Based on interviews with second-generation Indo-Canadians, this paper argues that communication with family in the homeland leads the second generation to construct their identities through a series of material and symbolic flows across the borders of India and Canada. Through the consumption of cross-border shopping, fashion, advice, and interactions, the children of migrants develop identities within a transnational social field that includes people, information and goods in both Canada and India. For the second generation, their sense of self is inherently located within and between national borders, and they express this multi-belonging through emotions, appearances and allegiances. This paper concludes that transnationalism is not a one generation phenomenon. A series of informal family networks are developed between second generation Indo-Canadians and kin in the country of origin, which act as conduits for identity construction. These identities are malleable and further modified through ongoing transnational interactions. Findings provide insights into the self-expression of migrant youth in today’s globalized world.