From "in-betweenness" to "positioned belongings": second-generation Palestinian-Americans negotiate the tensions of assimilation and transnationalism

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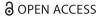
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ABSTRACT
In this article, I argue that second-generation migrants experience multiple tensions and exclusions as a result of the interaction of transnationalism, assimilation, diaspora and racialization in their lives. Yet, I suggest that they are reflexive actors who respond by crafting their own "positioned belongings". The paper draws on ethnographic research conducted with Palestinian-American second-generation interlocutors conducted in New Jersey and the West Bank in the wake of Donald Trump's election as President. It presents data regarding this understudied yet significant second-generation group and their relationship to their diaspora community, hostland and homeland. I argue that a feeling of exclusion and "in-betweenness" is navigated by the second-generation through discursive and material practices that centre the second-generation "self". In doing so, I give new insight into how assimilation and transnationalism interact in dynamic and plural fields and what is lost and gained amongst the children of migrants in the process.

Introduction

The children of migrants now make up almost a quarter of all youth in the United States (Nibbs and Brettell 2016). Termed the "new" second-generation, their parents migrated to the United States in the "post-1965 wave" that has since reshaped the nation (Portes 1996). A large body of literature has investigated the status of the second-generation in the United States, asking if they reinvigorate the nation or deepen its social problems, and how they relate to their hostland and homeland societies (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Through this research, the second-generation has become a group through which to

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refine the concepts of transnationalism and assimilation and to investigate the relative importance of, and relationship between, these two processes (e.g. Alba and Nee 2003; Levitt 2009).[1]

A number of Palestinian-American communities comprise primarily Muslim migrants from the West Bank and Jerusalem who left in the decades following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967, enabled by the change in US migration legislation two years before (Serhan 2015). Most fled the worsening economic and political situation in Palestine in the 1970s and 1980s, some later becoming exiles as Israel revoked their residency in the West Bank (Serhan 2015). They held the ethos of "remaining Palestinian against all odds" in the context of displacement and dispossession, which has since shaped the lives of their children (Cainkar 1994, 97). As a diasporic group with a homeland under occupation after waves of displacement and dispossession, and an ongoing struggle for an independent nation-state, Palestinian-Americans are in many ways unique in the context of the "new" American second-generation.

Research on this group, specifically the second-generation, is lacking and pressingly important. As Arabs and Muslims raised in the "post-9/11 era", they are often racialized as visible subjects (Jamal and Naber 2008). As Palestinians, they live in a nation that has a special relationship to their Israeli occupiers, which figures Palestinians as uncivilized barbarians culpable for the violence in the region or as a non-people without legitimate claims to nationhood (Feldman 2015). This has intensified with the US Presidential campaign and election of Donald Trump. His calls for a shutdown of "Muslim migration" and implementation of an executive order colloquially known as the "Muslim Ban" captured the Islamophobic and anti-migrant discourse underwriting his election. His decision, in 2018, to move the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem caused outrage amongst my Palestinian-American interlocutors, who argued that this revealed the Israeli bias of the US state and negated Palestinian ties to the city.

This study draws on an eleven-month research project conducted in New Jersey (nine months) and the West Bank (two months) between 2015–2017, focused on the second-generation's (dis)connections to Palestine and Palestinianness through ethnography in the hostland and homeland. My research comprised extensive participant observation with the Palestinian-American community in north New Jersey. The majority of Palestinian migrants to New Jersey arrived from a number of small *fellahi* (peasant) Muslim villages concentrated in the Jerusalem and Ramallah region. They created a strong diasporic community centred around the cities of Paterson and North Bergen.

At the heart of my ethnographic research were thirty-five key second-generation informants aged 18–40 of roughly equal gender split. These interlocutors emerged through my ethnographic emplacement in the community and a community centre. They represented the strong trend of structural

assimilation and upward mobility amongst Palestinian-Americans, in terms of educational attainment, economic success and residential distribution (Serhan 2015). First-generation parents raised them in Palestinian environments involving the (re)production of a cultural and political Palestinian identity through socio-spatial practices. For instance, many had grown up together, attending the Islamic and Arabic schools, mosques, and community events in the state. This led to strong Palestinian social networks between my interlocutors in which I became partially emplaced.

My research unfolded in social, cultural and political Palestinian spaces, from weddings to weekly American football games. I conducted forty-five semi-structured interviews lasting between half an hour and three hours and collected documents such as creative writing and poetry. Research in Palestine involved participation on a diaspora tourism project with twelve second-generation Palestinian-Americans and further research in significant villages of origin. In order to maintain anonymity, I have replaced their names with pseudonyms and removed potentially identifying information. The data collected through these mixed methods was transcribed and coded through NVivo.

Drawing on this data, the following article considers the tensions and navigations that result from the interplay of transnationalism and assimilation in their lives, whilst showing the intersecting importance of racialization and diaspora. Based on multi-sited fieldwork, the study takes a cross-border perspective (Waldinger 2017) that illuminates these lived dynamics in the triangular socio-cultural relationship between diaspora, host society and the homeland and how the second-generation create their own lives in and between these fields (Safran 1991, 91–92).

Taking an actor-centred approach that foregrounds second-generation individuals' own reflections and practices, it argues that they are figured as "others" in multiple contexts due to the tensions between their cultural assimilation, racialization, and diasporic transnationalism. In response, many articulated what I term "positioned belongings" to craft positive lives and identities. The paper thus contributes ethnographic insight into the dynamics of assimilation and transnationalism in the second-generation, considering how they were positioned in multiple ways as "other" and their creative responses to exclusion. This investigation is important given the contemporary context of Palestinian- and Arab-Americans in the United States and the growing debates regarding migrants and their offspring in academia, popular discourse and policy-making on both sides of the Atlantic.

Thinking through the second-generation

There has been extensive debate about the relationship between, and relative importance of, assimilation and transnationalism. The traditionalist conception

of assimilation held that migrants would have to choose between incorporation in their hostlands and the maintenance of homeland ties (Gordon 1964). However, studies of migrant transnationalism since the 1990s have challenged this "zero sum game" stance by arguing that assimilation and transnationalism are compatible and interwoven processes characterized by "simultaneity" (Kivisto 2001; Levitt 2001; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004).

Many have thus argued that migrant groups can retain material and emotional links with their homelands whilst also being deeply shaped by the hostland. Kivisto (2001, 571) suggests that "at the moment that transnational immigrants are working to maintain homeland connections, they are also engaged in the process of acculturation to the host society". Concluding his study of Mexican-Americans, Smith (2006, 279) argues that "transnational life is not an alternative to assimilation but is rather both a result of it and a context in which" it takes place.

The children of migrants have often served as a "litmus test" for research on transnationalism and assimilation (Skrbiš, Baldassar, and Poynting 2008). Quantitative studies drawing on large data sets have investigated the extent to which children of migrants are transnational and have sought to measure and categorize their incorporation in hostlands through examining rates of education, employment and language acquisition (e.g. Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2004). Ethnographic studies have highlighted the complex identities and belongings of the children of migrants as they navigate these multiple worlds (Nibbs and Brettell 2016).

Whilst arguing that transnationalism and assimilation are simultaneous, such research has also illuminated the tensions of this co-existence. Large N-studies continued to highlight the gradual decrease of transnational ties over migrant generations as they become part of the "mainstream" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Similarly, ethnographic research shows the difficult experiences of the second-generation upon their return to the homeland that results from their assimilation to the hostland (e.g. Wessendorf 2013). Waldinger (2017, 15) has recently drawn on such research to suggest that, contrary to much of the existing literature, transnationalism and assimilation are incompatible. He suggests that transnational ties become vectors of conflict due to the emergent differences between migrants and their homelands, whilst the existence of such ties and their provenance from elsewhere continues to mark them as "other" in their hostland.

This article builds on such contributions to explore the interaction of, and tensions between, these processes by taking an actor-centred approach. As Aarset (2016, 440) contends, "we need to explore what the relation between transnationalism and integration means in relation to specific practices and identifications among descendants of immigrants in specific life situations". Similarly, Erdal and Oeppen (2013, 875) call for research attending to

"actors' agency" in navigating assimilation and transnationalism. This article approaches second-generation Palestinian-Americans as actors with the capacity to reflect on, and respond to, their "multi-sited embeddedness" (Horst 2018). In reference to Gordon's (1964) seven stage model, this article foregrounds "cultural" and "identificational" assimilation.

Finally, work debating assimilation and transnationalism has often failed to disentangle concepts such as diaspora and racialization from this binary (Brah 1996; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2004). Whilst there are a number of competing definitions of the term "diaspora" (Brubaker 2005; Dufoix 2008), this article draws on definitions that foreground the maintenance of memories, identities and relationships with a lost or threatened homeland in the context of forced displacement (Safran 1991; Sheffer 2003). This approach has valuably explored how cultural and political connections to the homeland are reproduced and boundaries are maintained amongst Palestinians and other stateless groups (Lindholm 2003). Moreover, research focusing on race and racialization has been significant in understanding the subjectivities and experiences of Arab and Muslim second-generation youth in the "post-9/11 era" in both the US and Europe, and the "new" post-1965 migrants from Asia (Jamal and Naber 2008; Tsuda 2016). Rather than reducing such processes to products of assimilation or transnationalism, this article introduces them as independent and intersecting.

Being "other" in Palestine

To be a Child of Diaspora (Lina Abdul-Samad 2017)

To be a child of Diaspora is to sit at family gatherings and fervently pray that when your uncle speaks to you in your mother-tongue, the syllables don't get lost on the way from your throat to your lips.

They still snicker, with nostrils flared up, the laughter, choking on superiority and pride, when you switch the letters from their acquainted place.

Yet, they still call you "American".

To be a child of Diaspora is to walk with your cousins, your uncles, and your aunts, and feel like an imposter, and attempt to be more like them.

You mirror their exaggerated gestures and learn the taboos of society.

You nourish yourself with more figs.

Maybe eating from the land of your relatives will remind your tongue of who you were supposed to sound like.

You go back to America, the land of diversity.

Your olive skin and dark hair do not mix well with whiteness.

They tell you to go home.

You wish you knew where that was.

To be a child of Diaspora is to have to explain your hyphenated identity

to be an Earth that is made of two continents and the tectonic plates are always pulling

f u r t h e r and f u r t h e r

apart.

Lina's poem featured in a Palestinian community centre magazine edited by a committee of second-generation youth, which comprised contributions from second-generation Palestinian-Americans in New Jersey reflecting on their Palestinian identity. The opening lines of Lina's poem refer to her summer visit to Palestine. Such vacations, alongside return migrations for a period of years, were common amongst my interlocutors. Many parents ensured their children spent time in Palestine to instil the "culture, language, and religion", as many explained, of the homeland. Whilst being important moments in the intergenerational transmittance of Palestinianness, such trips revealed much about the relationship between the second-generation and their homeland. They were often moments in which my participants' reflexive awareness of their own positioning led to reflections about their own place in the world (Marschall 2017).

Homeland visits highlighted the extent to which the second-generation had been shaped by their upbringing in the US. Leila, who moved from the US to Palestine as a child, recalled her shock upon attending her village's school with a lunch of turkey and cheese sandwiches and a bag of American candy, only to find that her classmates did not share these luxuries. She said:

> It was a lot more money, to buy certain kinds from a certain store. So I was like, to my mom, "No! I don't want to take turkey and cheese anymore … Just make me the *zeit wa za'atar* (olive oil, thyme and bread) that everyone else is having!"

Another interlocutor recalled arriving in his village and having a long shower that emptied his family's water tank. He realized he was "American through and through", lacking the experience of everyday life under occupation into which the politics of water distribution play (Field notes 2017; Weizman 2007).

Their cultural assimilation was also recognized by Palestinians in the West Bank. Many interlocutors explained they were called "Americans" in Palestine, a term they felt to be teasing or insulting. Samer recalled being introduced as "the American" at a wedding. He said that "it stung. I didn't go home and lose sleep over it. But it stings". At the beginning of the same interview, Samer had passionately identified himself as a "Palestinian" rather than "Palestinian-American", reflecting a broader trend amongst my sample. The subsequent

foregrounding of their Americanness and denial of their Palestinianness upon their return to the homeland gave rise to feelings of alienation vividly captured in Lina's poem.

Studies of multiple diaspora and second-generation groups have noted their positioning as "Americans" upon their return to their homelands and a common set of cultural changes, such as language and dress, that marked them as different (Andits 2017). In Palestine, the term "American" also emphasized the second-generation's privileged lives in the US vis-à-vis Palestinian life under occupation. Imagined as living in peace and wealth, these "Americans" were seen as divorced from everyday struggle bound up with notions of authentic Palestinianness (Lindholm 2003). As Maysoon reflected:

> I don't know if they consider us being Palestinian, being [in New Jersey]. A lot of times they might think like "you don't really know, you have no idea, even though you are over there in America chanting for us, you aren't having to deal with the struggle, not being employed, or not being able to go to my mosque in Jerusalem" … they see [us] as more privileged.

Often, it was not so important that they had become American, but simply that they had become different. During the diaspora tourism programme, the group was called terms such as *"ajanib"* (foreigners) or *"say'een"* (those who have gone astray). Both terms implied they had strayed from "authentic" Palestinianness by virtue of their provenance from an "elsewhere" and had been morally, religiously, and materially spoiled by their lives in diaspora. The resultant feeling of inauthenticity is captured by Lina's reflection about who she was "supposed to sound like", in which she compares herself as a "child of the diaspora" to the person she would have been if her family had stayed in Palestine. Her sense of being "an imposter" trying to mirror the norms of Palestinian society captures her awareness of her distance and difference from the homeland.

In sum, as Carruters (2002, 429) argues, the national community "retains a monopoly over the right to define" who or what is authentically ethnic, and the second-generation faced their harsh judgments. Playing a similar role, first-generation members of the Palestinian-American diaspora community frequently commented on the Americanness of their children and the ways they departed from notions of "authentic" Palestinianness. Their cultural assimilation and dissimilation was therefore highlighted as a result of transnational and diasporic connections and relationships.

Being "other" in the US

Throughout our interviews, members of the second-generation articulated a lack of belonging to the United States. Raised in the "post-9/11 era" characterized by racist imaginaries of Muslims and Arabs and government policies

intruding on their civil liberties, they were the visible subjects of the US nation (Jamal and Naber 2008). As in other Arab-American communities, "a rich history of domestic integration and transnational connections [were] truncated, questioned, re-politicized, Americanized and selectively erased" and the "privilege of transnational identification" was increasingly denied in New Jersey (Howell and Shryock 2003, 444). Many of the community became warier of their cultural and transnational connections with Palestine, for instance avoiding public protests and cultural events after 9/11 (Serhan 2009). Whilst my interlocutors criticized American foreign policy, specifically with regards to Palestine/Israel, they felt they were politically marginalized due to stigmatization of the Palestinian struggle.

A large number of my interlocutors articulated their sense of not being fully American in the eyes of others. The dynamics of this racialized exclusion are captured by Lina's recognition that her "olive skin" and "black hair" mark her as foreign. Similarly, Amira explained that "I identify as American, but … for the most part … the general American community don't see me as fully American". "That is where the micro-aggressions come from" she explained. "Where are you from?" "Clifton, New Jersey." "No, where are you *really* from?" (her emphasis). Racialized second-generation groups, such as east and south Asians, have similarly found that their cultural assimilation as Americans is ignored and their racial otherness highlighted (Purkayastha 2005; Tsuda 2016). Women wearing *hijab* often felt this strongly given their visibility as Muslims and thus became "inadvertent and unwilling political symbols" that are the victim of the majority of Islamophobic incidents (Welborne 2018, 2). Amira explained that people often assumed her foreignness because of her *hijab* and conservative dress. Many other women expressed a feeling of being stared at when out in public, for instance at the gym or the shopping mall, aware that their Islamic dress marked them as "other".

The Presidential campaign and election of Donald Trump saw the resurgence of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab discourse and a spike in hate crimes against these groups (Gökarıksel and Smith 2016, 80). For Asad, as with many of my interlocutors, Trump's election showed that a large proportion of Americans agree with, or do not object to, his anti-Muslim and anti-migrant rhetoric and his exclusionary ethno-nationalist ideology. When I asked him in an interview about the extent to which he feels American, Asad replied:

> That is an interesting question, and I think if you asked that question previous to the time that we are living in, you probably would have got a different answer. For a while I thought I was pretty American, a regular Joe Schmoe … But the time we live in now … recently, the other side has exposed itself. A different part of America – the kind you had in the back of your head but which you never really faced has kind of brought itself to the forefront and forced itself

into the picture and then … you realize that you have kind of lived in a bubble and not everyone thinks like you are used to.

As Asad's comment makes clear, this realization was made from the context of north New Jersey, a diverse section of metropolitan New York. The "other side" of America was often spatialized as predominantly white, rural states in which they could never belong and, as Bashir said, "places where [they] wouldn't want to get a flat tire" (Field notes 2017).

However, many of my interviewees had previously avoided terming themselves as "Americans" to foreground their Palestinianness. They often figured Palestine as the "primary home of origin" to which they belonged and, in turn, Palestinianness as set of cultural, religious and transnational practices that had defined their upbringing in their diasporic families and communities (Mason 2007, 275). Many felt a duty to identify as Palestinians to continue the intergenerational transmission of memory and heritage in the context of diasporic statelessness and an ongoing struggle for liberation (Lindholm 2003; Sheffer 2003). My interlocutors regularly recalled the quote "the old will die and the young will forget" – which former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir is rumoured to have said about the Palestinians – to articulate the urgency of such memory work in the context of anxieties over the loss of Palestine and Palestinianness (Field notes 2016–2017).

Their racialization in the US, combined with their diasporic ties to Palestine that imply a resistance to assimilation (Brubaker 2005), thus produced a reticence to explicitly claim "Americanness". Whilst again pointing to the tensions between assimilation and transnationalism, this time in the hostland, this analysis also highlights the importance of attending to the historically-specific process of racialization and Palestinian diasporic consciousness in understanding the Palestinian-American case.

In-betweenness

In response, my interlocutors frequently suggested they were "too American for the Palestinians and too Palestinian for the Americans", or similarly "not Arab enough for the Arabs and not American enough to the Americans", closely linked to a sense of being "in-between" (Field notes 2016–2017; Teerling 2011). Lina's poem articulates a sense of being caught between two "tectonic plates" that are stretching further and further apart. Similarly, Nadia noted that:

When you are in America, you feel like you want to go back – you want to be in Palestine, connect to Palestine – like you can't relate to everybody, but when you are in Palestine you also can't relate to everybody. So you are stuck in this weird space in-between.

These reflections are anticipated by research on the children of migrants that has argued that their position leads them to be caught between two worlds,

with feelings of not being wanted by either those in the homeland or the hostland (Potter and Philips 2006). Research on the Palestinian diaspora has often stressed the notion of *ghurba* (exile), encapsulating notions of estrangement, homesickness and lack of belonging amongst Palestinians exiled from their homes and homelands which, since 1948, have been destroyed, depopulated or occupied (Said 1984; Lindholm 2003). My data suggests that the second-generation's in-betweenness is the product of multiple historically-grounded processes and positionings that emerge from their "multi-sited embeddedness", both as a result of their multiple exclusions and their responses to them (Horst 2018).

Research has often highlighted the hybridity in the third spaces that diasporas and second-generations create in response. Yet, as Anthias (2001) argues, such approaches often overstate the transcendental cut and mix dynamics of diasporic identities and understate the ongoing importance of old ethnicities and power hierarchies. Hall (1995, 206) similarly suggests that identities emerge "within, not outside" of difference and that diasporas find ways of being both the same as and different from the others amongst who they live in their negotiation of their "in-betweenness".

Drawing on this literature, I suggest that the term "positioned belongings" is useful to consider how members of the second-generation have reworked and unsettled dominant ideologies and categorizations about their place in the US and Palestine and reconciled the processes that I have argued are at tension. The articulation of "positioned belongings" was one of the many, often simultaneous, responses that I recorded during my fieldwork. I choose to focus on it here as it was an inter-subjective discourse and practice that was prevalent in my ethnographic context. It emerged through everyday discussions about their own identities and the various groups of people through and against which they identified themselves.

Positioning the "self" amongst "others"

A number of my interlocutors shared a discursive landscape of "others" through which to articulate their own identities. These imaginaries were directly tied to the forms of exclusion they had experienced, pointing to the "internal-external dialectic of self-definitions and definitions imposed by others" involved in navigating belonging and identity in the context of multiple boundaries amongst members of the second-generation (Andits 2017, 297). Indeed, from Child's (1943) and Hansen's (1952) studies of early European migrants to recent research on the "new" wave of migrants (Tsuda 2016), scholars have highlighted the children of migrants' acute awareness of, and responses to, their multiple exclusions.

A number of my interlocutors regularly used the term "FOB", standing for "fresh off the boat", much like a number of other American and European

second-generation groups. Whilst previous studies of the "FOB" amongst diverse second-generation groups have found that the term had connotations with intra-ethnic disgust and internalized racism in response to negative discourses about their ethnic groups in their hostland (Pyke and Dang 2003; Charsley and Bolognani 2017), I also place it in the context of the "in-betweenness" of the second-generation and their multiple exclusions. In this light, "FOB" and associated labels can be framed as a creative response to exclusions that enable the articulation of a second-generation "self".

The term "FOB" generally referred to first-generation migrants in the community, including the second-generation's own parents. The imagined "FOB" was seen as too ethnic and inadequately culturally assimilated. Samira described "FOBs", as people who have "been here twenty years but still barely speak English, know no-one, and don't have a job". Maryam described "FOBs" as "125 per cent Palestinian", always eating Arabic food and playing Arabic music, explaining that "they have come to this country but they haven't adapted, they haven't even tried to change". Maryam positioned herself vis-à-vis this imagined "other", saying that she preferred to mix Arab music with other styles and "eat other things" given her upbringing in the US. The term "FOB" therefore articulated "dissonant acculturation" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) that created differences between the two migrant generations, leading the second-generation to "disdain their parents' clinging to the ways of the 'old country'" and demonstrate their own immersion in the "new" (Haller and Landolt 2002, 1189).

Yet, the term was often used endearingly, even in the company of first-generation people seen as "FOBs" and lacked the evident disgust identified in other migration contexts. A prominent second-generation comedian used the term often in his performances and defended the term against accusations of internalized racism (Harb 2014). As used by my interviewees, it focused on cultural practices that were considered comical and excessive, such as the way in which "FOB" parents decorated their houses or how they struggled to pronounce the letter "*p*" given their first language of Arabic. As previous studies of second-generation groups have suggested, my interlocutors saw their families and communities "through the gaze of their assimilated selves" (Hall 2002, 192). But rather than react with shame, their responses were characterized by humour and mystification (cf. Maghbouleh 2013).

The term *biladi* (person from the homeland) was used interchangeably with "FOB" to describe those in the diaspora community who were seen to be "too" Palestinian or Arab. Moreover, it was also used to refer specifically to Palestinians living in the homeland, thus drawing a further boundary between the second-generation and Palestinians in the homeland. Together, these terms were ways in which the second-generation differentiated themselves from the first-generation in New Jersey and homeland Palestinians, whilst distancing themselves from certain aspects of ethnic culture they identified as undesirable.

As my interlocutors were often reticent to describe themselves as "Americans", the terms "FOB" and *biladi* were important ways to subtly signal their assimilation. By invoking their "right" way to dress and ability to speak English without an accent, the second-generation articulated their cultural assimilation in the US; the mastery of a code that the "others" in their migrant community and homeland lacked. Previous studies of migrant generations similarly highlight how second-generation groups distance themselves from aspects of their ethnic heritage to avoid being seen as foreign (Pyke and Dang 2003) and use linguistic tropes that "tacitly concede the power of the American environment" (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2004, 6).

Crucially, however these terms did not call into question their Palestinianness. In contrast to studies predicting the decline and rejection of ethnic distinction and identification amongst second-generation migrants premised on classical "straight line" assimilation theory (Hansen 1952; Alba and Nee 2003), my interlocutors continued to strongly identify with Palestinianness. When I asked Maryam if she was "less Palestinian" than the imagined "FOBs", she replied sharply:

> No … like I am 100 per cent Palestinian, it is just that for me, I am not extra with my culture. Like it isn't everything for me. But that doesn't mean I am not any less Palestinian. I was just raised in America, I have more of the American side of things. I was born in this country.

The notion of the "FOB" therefore allowed Maryam to position herself as "100 per cent Palestinian" whilst also recognizing that she was raised in the US. Against the multiple tensions and exclusions they experienced, such terms enabled members of the second-generation to naturalize their own generational and diasporic position to Palestine and to articulate ways in which others, rather than themselves, were lacking. When the second-generation termed themselves Palestinian, therefore, they referred to the Palestinianness they learnt as a diasporic second-generation in New Jersey. This identity itself established discourses of Palestinian authenticity which circulated amongst the children of migrants. Markers such as Arabic language ability and participation in ethnic and religious practices were important axes of difference through which notions of (in)authenticity were debated within their own migrant generation (Abu El-Haj 2015).

The naming practices of the second-generation were also important in marking themselves apart from an imagined white American mainstream. Following a broader trend of the "new" second-generation, Palestinian-Americans are excluded from the privileges of whiteness that continue to define American society and, arguably, American identity itself (Alba and Nee 2003; Rodriguez 2017). Indeed, the racialization of Arab-Americans over the last several decades has increasingly distanced them from the whiteness to which they earlier had a degree of proximity (Gualtieri 2009). This "American = White" distinction is drawn by both non-whites and whites in New Jersey, a

state in which the white suburban picket fence imaginary continues to be the marker of authentic Americanness (Rodriguez 2017, 10, 120).

Many interlocutors reported that parents and other first-generation Palestinians used language to divide their society into two groups, the first being "us", often grouping together Palestinians, and Arab/Muslims, and the second being the "Americans", or "white people" (Serhan 2009). This discourse enacted a "bright boundary" (Alba 2005), separating "an inner-familial-communal Arab domain and an external-political-public American domain" (Naber 2012, 8). The American domain was often closely coupled with discourses of whiteness, for instance as the term "Americans" was used interchangeably with the term "white people". A number of my interlocutors contested this coupling of Americanness and whiteness, suggesting this racialized discourse inherently excluded them from being "Americans" and obscured the "blurred boundaries" (Alba 2005) through which they identified as both Palestinian and American. Simultaneously, many interlocutors uncritically reproduced a "bright boundary". For instance, Osman told me that:

> My mom is more in the cultural state of mind, where she will be like "you can go to your Arab friend's house, or Muslim friend's house, but I don't know how I feel so much about the American friends."

Later in the interview, he reproduced this idea of "American friends" when describing his social circle and positioned the social practices of his Palestinian-Arab family as different to the "American" way of doing things, for instance contrasting Palestinian *azayem* (family dinners) with the imagined social practices of American families. In such ways, my interlocutors positioned themselves apart from a racialized American mainstream.

Lastly, my interlocutors often articulated their belonging to north New Jersey rather than the American nation. Asad said that:

> New Jersey – that is my home … the fact that I was born here, the whole way of life. More so New Jersey, not American. I have travelled the US and I didn't feel at home in other states. Like New Jersey is home.

My interlocutors often felt a lack of belonging in large swathes of the US. This led to a geographically-situated sense of belonging in which New Jersey was figured as "home". New Jersey was a highly diverse state which afforded my interlocutors a sense of inclusion and participation. For instance, at a community event held on the evening of Trump's inauguration, the host suggested that "if you look at the national, it is easy to get depressed" and suggested instead that they focus on the "small victories" won in their New Jersey towns. He concluded that "it really isn't easy being Arab or Muslim at the moment … but it is easier to be Arab or Muslim in Clifton and Passaic County [two north New Jersey towns]" (Field notes 2017). Their identification with New Jersey shares similarities with the identity "New Yorker" which second-generation youth use to "side step"

their ambivalence about being American and refer to a diverse cultural milieu rather than the "larger white society" often implied by the term "American" (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2002, 1034).

Positioned belongings

Responding to the exclusionary processes they encountered in their transnational lives, they crafted a discursive landscape of imagined "others" to articulate what I would term "positioned belongings". This term captures the process by which the second-generation have positioned themselves vis-à-vis a number of "others" to implicitly articulate their own identities (Hall 1994). It also captures the reflective and situated belonging that they have claimed. My interlocutors articulated a positioned belonging to Palestine that acknowledged their generational and diasporic distance without compromising their authenticity as Palestinians. They articulated a positioned belonging in the US as a racialized and diasporic group with strong transnational ties to their homeland but shaped by their upbringings in the US. By articulating belonging to New Jersey, they added a geographical and racial positioning that further distanced them from broader notions of white Americanness.

The tensions between diaspora, transnationalism, assimilation, and racialization discussed in the first half of this paper are thus reflexively reconciled and held together through such identity work. This process of "self" and "othering" is closely tied with the ways in which they were excluded in their transnational contexts. Aware of the tensions and limits of their membership in both Palestine and the US, and their difference from the various "others" who excluded them from both imagined communities, my interlocutors articulated their own situated and partial inclusion in Palestine and the US that did not aim for inclusion in the "mainstream" of either or both societies. Similarly, King and Kılınc (2014, 132) suggest that second-generation Turkish-Germans create their own socio-cultural fourth spaces – positionings amongst the homeland, hostland, and migrant community – that emerge partly of their own making and partly imposed on them by the exclusionary mechanisms they face.

The second-generation enacted these "positioned belongings" in practice, for example through diaspora mobilization. Previous research has shown the importance of political, economic and military interventions by diasporic groups who identify with a homeland in conflict (Smith and Stares 2007). This was captured by the post-trip plans of a group of second-generation participants of a diaspora tourism project. Although they were often confronted with their "otherness" in the homeland, they nevertheless felt a deep affinity with and commitment to Palestine. Upon their return to the US, they

discussed the ways they could mobilize in the context of the Palestine/Israel conflict.

A number of participants planned to act as "mediators between two worlds" (Marino 2018, 12). Older participants, with established careers in the US, reflected on the ways they could educate Americans about the conflict in civil-society spaces to which their cultural and structural assimilation gave them access. Together, they sought to use diaspora lobbying and advocacy (Adamson 2013) to increase American understanding of and support for Palestine. Participants argued that it was important to move beyond symbolic claims to Palestinianness and become "active". Moreover, a number suggested that it was important to avoid "preaching to the choir" and instead reach a diversity of American audiences. As Hess and Korf (2014) argue, this goal is particularly significant for second-generation diaspora activists who want to address the population, media and government of the country in which they were raised.

Whilst, as Waldinger (2015, 83) predicts, the majority of their diasporic mobilization unfolded "in the place of destination but orientated towards the place of origin", a smaller number of interlocutors planned transnational connections. For Jenna, the trip redoubled her desire to be a journalist "based in Palestine", writing "for an American audience". Nadia identified a need for people like her with an "American way of thinking" to work in Palestine and was encouraged by seeing how other Palestinian-American women had found work in Ramallah, a city which served as a key destination and socio-cultural space for Palestinian-American returnees and visitors (Field notes 2017; Hammer 2005).

Even as many of these post-trip aspirations of the diaspora tourism group did not immediately materialize in the months following the trip, most individuals within my broader sample evidenced diverse forms of participation in the political struggle. For instance, most engaged in some form of lobbying, protesting and organizing in New Jersey. The majority actively developed and maintained transnational relationships to Palestine, for instance in the form of frequent return visits and charitable giving. Making use of their Americanness in Palestine, and their Palestinianness in America, they enacted and aspired to enact their "positioned belongings" to craft their own transnational lives and mobilizational strategies. Their "multi-sited embeddedness" – belonging to and engaging in multiple communities – enabled them to strategically deploy "positioned belongings" in different contexts (Horst 2018).

These mobilizations constitute the reflexive positionings and practices that the second-generation crafted in response to multiple exclusions that, often, were crystallized at moments of transnational engagement with the homeland such as the diaspora tourism trip and the return visit captured in Lina's poem. As Teerling (2011, 1080) argues, therefore, it is important to consider not only "what is lost" through such transnational connections, but what is

"gained and created". As I have suggested, these processes are closely inter-twined. Researching them together enables a more complete understanding of the lived experiences of the second-generation and how they "find their space" against, and through, their exclusion (Nibbs and Brettell 2016).

Conclusion

Recent work has highlighted the complex relationship between transnation-alism and assimilation and questioned the widespread assumption that they are compatible. I have built on this by arguing that these processes inter-sect with diaspora and racialization in the historically and geographically specific Palestinian-American case. The multiple tensions that emerged pro-duced a sense of "in-betweenness" amongst my interlocutors. They responded to these landscapes of exclusion with their own discourses and practices that creatively re-centred the second-generation "self".

The term "positioned belonging" captures these reflexive responses and the contingent, situated forms of belonging that they claimed with regards to their hostland and homeland in light of their multiple exclusions. In particu-lar, the figure of the "FOB" served to position members of the second-gener-ation in relation to their diaspora community, hostland, and homeland.

This revealed the intimacy between the processes through which the second-generation were figured as different, and their own constructions of "others" in response. Often othered in Palestine due to their differences from those living in the homeland, they differentiated themselves from "FOBs" defined through similar cultural referents such as language and dress. Yet, despite their cultural assimilation, they remained highly committed to their Palestinian identities in the context of diasporic statelessness. Finally, excluded from "Americanness" due to their ethnic and religious heritage, they responded by differentiating themselves from "Americans" on the same terms.

However, the notion of "positioned belonging" was not the only response developed by the second-generation. Many who articulated "positioned belongings" reflected on the ways in which they created and occupied spaces of "hybridity", mixing together aspects of Americanness and Palesti-nianness. Others did not articulate these multiple relationships and rejected belonging, or even trying to belong, in certain contexts.

Moreover, the data presented here emerges from a limited sample drawn from a single community in the Palestinian-American diaspora. My sample comprised middle-class adults who were raised in a strong diaspora commu-nity with dense transnational connections to the West Bank that formed in the wake of the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank in 1967. Palestinian-American generations embedded in other spatio-temporal contexts may exhibit widely different connections, identifications and negotiations.

This material reflects the value of an actor-centred approach that focuses on the lived practices and reflexive negotiations of the second-generation as they experience exclusion in the hostland and the homeland. Indeed, my interlocutors' "positioned belongings" are only fully comprehendible by taking a cross-border perspective that illuminates tensions and navigations at both ends of the migration chain (Waldinger 2017). By examining how exclusion emerges and is navigated in these fields – particularly through attention to linguistic tropes and the articulation of "selves" and "others" – this approach enables novel insight into how assimilation and transnationalism interact and what is "lost" and "gained" amongst the children of migrants in the process.

Note

1. I use the term "assimilation" in the following article as I primarily draw on fieldwork conducted in the US, whilst recognizing that the term 'integration' is preferred by European scholars.

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