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# A HYPOTHESIS: (LEBANESE) MIGRANTS WITH HIGH EDUCATIONAL/PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS SENSE MORE DISCRIMINATION BY AUSTRALIANS THAN OTHER LEBANESE GROUPS

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## INTRODUCTION

The hypothesis forms part of a thesis entitled, 'The Lebanese Community in Melbourne' which was completed in January 1979 and submitted to the University of Melbourne.

The Lebanese minority in Australia is perhaps one of very few national minorities which have not been studied in any form: as yet, no research has been carried out in a systematic and methodical manner.

The thesis is thus intended to examine the structure of the Lebanese community as an autonomous ethnic group, the distinctive features which make it different from other ethnic groups, and the extent of its acculturation in Australian society. In addition it attempts to explore the extent to which the community has been able to perpetuate a native cultural tradition.

### *Methodological Procedures*

A structured questionnaire of 146 items was designed and subsequently administered to persons who were expected to have a low level of education, as shown in sample characteristics. Certain questions were open-ended for the purpose of activating free associated responses; similarly, closed-ended questions proved useful in obtaining specific information such as demographic characteristics.

The research survey, which was administered in either Arabic or English, was conducted in 100 households in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Ten of these, however, were non-responses due to a change of address, death and other uncontrolled circumstances. These were randomly selected from a total of 200 addresses which were obtained from various sources between May - August 1977.

The following criteria were set for selecting the sample: any household member who was 18 years and over qualified to represent his family. Secondly, the respondents should have immigrated to Australia after World War II. Exceptions were made, however, with regard to four people, two of whom migrated in 1927 and 1936 respectively; the other two cited Australia as the place of birth. In all, the sample consisted of 20 females and 70 males, whose characteristics are outlined below.

All of the interviews were conducted by the same researcher, thus making any possible bias constant. The method of personal interview was adopted because of the compelling advantages it enjoys in data collection over other methods. It permits, for example, a greater flexibility in clarifying questions and answers.

### *Sample Characteristics*

The demographic characteristics in the present survey were such that the largest group of the sample (49%) fell between the ages of 25 to 35 years. Fifty-five percent arrived between 1969 - 1977. As regards the level of education 44% have attended some or all secondary classes; and 9% never attended school. Their religious background however was more evenly distributed - there are 31% Maronites, 23% Greek Orthodox, 14% Catholic, 23% Moslem, 6% Druze and 2% Protestant.

Further, results reveal that the majority of Maronites (67.9%), Orthodox (76%), and Moslems (76.2%) reside in lower status suburbs. These figures can be contrasted to Catholics (38.5%) and Druze (20%) who reside in similar areas. As for the Protestants, they are equally distributed in lower and upper status suburbs.

The educational standards of different sectarian affiliates are marginally at variance. Comparatively, the largest proportion of persons with absolutely no education are Maronites (14.3%) and Moslems (14.3%). The second largest rating - though in comparison relatively small - is that of the Orthodox (4.8%); but no one from the three remaining categories, the Catholics, Druze and Protestants has suffered from a complete lack of education.

Against this background, it is clear that the heterogeneous and pluralistic nature of the Lebanese society has been transplanted in almost all its features to the community of Melbourne and forms in many aspects a miniature Lebanon. Like the original country, the ultimate effects of the presence of a variety of religious sects, social classes and historical backgrounds has brought about a number of 'fragmented' national identities among members of the local community. Furthermore, as the refugees of the 1975-76 civil war form a large proportion among the ethnic community, the exacerbated bitterness of the division in their home country has inevitably shaped in various forms their lifestyle, attitudes and behaviour.

### *THE HYPOTHESIS*

The hypothesis is divided into two complementary parts. The first which relates to the tendency of (Lebanese) migrants with high educational/occupational qualifications to sense more discrimination by members of the host society was reinforced on three out of five measures used. With respect to the second part, three indices fully supported the assumption that though the former group perceived more discrimination, it did exhibit a greater tendency, that other (migrant) groups to assimilate.

*The writer's basic hypothesis concerns the tendency of (Lebanese) migrants with high education/occupational qualifications to sense more discrimination by members of the host society than other migrant groups, without necessarily being less inclined to assimilate.*

The rationale behind this theory assumes that those with higher educational qualifications tend to be more sensitive about prejudice as the result of being treated in the same manner as other less qualified and more under-privileged migrants by the majority of the host society.

This proposition, of course, should not be seen as precluding any possibility of assimilation on the part of the more highly educated Lebanese migrants: rather the researcher is inclined to believe that this group favours integration with Australian society more than with any specific group in the ethnic community.

The hypothesis was tested in relation to 8 indices that measure any significant correlation between levels of discrimination and the respective groups. (Noteworthy levels of association between variables is statistically significant at .05 or less, in the null form).

**LEVEL OF EDUCATION:**

*(1) Its Effects on Perceptions of Australian Life.*

**TABLE I**  
Perceived worst feature(s) of Life in Australia,  
by Level of Education.

What do you think is the single worst thing about living in Australia?

Worst feature of life in Australia	Level of Education		
	None/Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
(a) Sexual Permissiveness	29.4%	18.4%	—
(b) Unfriendliness (including discrimination)	17.6%	34.2%	75%
(c) Lack of spiritual values	33.3%	23.7%	16.7%
(d) Other	17.6%	23.7%	8.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 15.33040$  df = 6 Sig. = .01 n = 90

The results in Table I indicate that a significant association does exist between 'primary', 'secondary' and 'tertiary' groups regarding the main disadvantage that they perceive concerning life in Australia. Of the four responses given, the most relevant to our analysis is related to 'unfriendliness', a category to which other similar responses such as 'avoidance' and 'sense of superiority on the part of Australians' were aggregated.

With respect to the three different groups, the responses concerning unfriendliness of Australians point in the expected direction. The proportion of responses on this item increases in a positive correlation with higher educational qualifications, and diminishes with lower qualifications.

Of the tertiary educated group a substantial majority (75%) indicated that 'unfriendliness' was the worst feature of life in Australia, with only (34.2%) of 'secondary' and (17.6%) of uneducated indicating the same response.

*(2) Its Effect on the Perception of Official Discrimination.*

**TABLE II**  
Level of Education, by discrimination experienced from  
Immigration and Government Officials.

Have you ever been discriminated against personally by Immigration and Government Officials?

	Level of Education		
	None/Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Yes	2.6%	7.5%	25%
No	97.4%	92.5%	75%

$\chi^2 = 6.36046$  df = 2 sig. = .04 n = 90

Figures illustrated in Table II are as striking in their tendency as those in Table I. The proportion of tertiary educated respondents who indicated that they have been discriminated against by Government Officials (25%) is significantly higher than either secondary (7.5%) or primary/uneducated groups (2.6%). The question of whether the first group are less inhibited in their responses, or actually feel that they have been discriminated against, perhaps needs further investigation. The explanation that the better educated have experienced more discrimination by Immigration and Government Officials might stem from the non-recognition problem - the lesser educated probably haven't had much contact with such officials, is simplistic and somewhat spurious.

(3) *Its Effect on how they feel Australians Perceive them.*

TABLE III

Responses to the statement: "Australians in general look favourably upon Lebanese", by Level of Education (closed ended question).

	Level of Education		
	None/Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
(Agree) — Yes	50%	47.5%	33.3%
Indifferent	13.2%	15%	16.7%
(Disagree) — No	36.8%	37.5%	50%

$$\chi^2 = 1.08842 \quad df = 4 \quad sig. = .89 \quad n = 90 \quad Cramers \ V = .07776$$

At .89 of the test level of significance, the hypothesis was not upheld by the third index. The direction of the results, on the other hand, suggest a 'superior' positive correlation between a high level of education and disagreement with the statement that Australians look favourably on Lebanese. Table III illustrates that 50% of the tertiary — educated groups disagree with the above statement; 16.7% are indifferent and 33.3% agree. By contrast as many as 50% of persons with primary or no education agree with the statements as opposed to 36.8% who disagree.

In view of the above, it is obvious that the results did not demonstrate statistical differences between the responses in the different categories; that is, any observable pattern does not correlate with degrees of education among respondents.

There is no doubt that the question for this indicator could have been more clearly framed; a much more useful set of responses may well have been obtained had the answers been limited to 'agree' and 'disagree'.

In addition to Table III under the heading *Occupation*, the following two indicators were chosen as an additional measure of reliability. That is they were introduced to verify whether or not, in spite of their 'hypersensitivity' to discrimination, persons in the high educational/professional qualifications do exhibit more tendencies to assimilate than other groups.

(4) *Verbal Fluency in English - a Dimension in Acculturation.*

TABLE IV

Level of Education, by Verbal Fluency in English.

Verbal Knowledge	Level of Education		
	None/Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Little English	*68.4%	27.5%	—
'Fair'	23.7%	45%	16.7%
Quite fluent	7.9%	27.5%	83.3%

$$\chi^2 = 36.89937 \quad df = 4 \quad Cramers \ V = .45277 \quad sig. = .01 \quad n = 90$$

The underlying assumption when introducing fluency in spoken English as an indicator, is that language is a major factor in the assimilation process. It is thus, expected that highly educated (Lebanese) migrants would adapt much more easily to the host community however great their sensitivity to slights inflicted on them by members of the host community. Table IV illustrates that the direction of the results favours a high tendency (sig. = .02) towards assimilation with regard to 'professional/tertiary' groups.

(5) *Its Effect on Ethnic Atmosphere at Home.*

TABLE V

Level of Education, by Interviewer's estimate of Lebaneseness of atmosphere at home.

Atmosphere at home	Level of Education		
	None/Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Mostly Lebanese	89.5%	70%	50%
Half and half	2.6%	17.5%	16.7%
Mostly Australian	7.9%	12.5%	33.3%

$$\chi^2 = 10.900058 \quad df = 4 \quad Cramers \ V = .24609 \quad sig. = .02 \quad n = 90$$

Realizing the inadequacies of scientific procedures in the estimation of 'ethnic' atmosphere, the interviewer would merely wish to say that he himself has had broad experience of both cultures, and that his frequent visits to Lebanese households in Melbourne have been of great value in this regard. As indicated in the Table (V), the wealthier, better-educated and more sophisticated Lebanese show a greater tendency to adopt attitudes and mores of the host culture; the others in general prefer and seek to preserve the world they know. At .02 level of significance, there is a statistical difference between the groups under examination.

## OCCUPATION

### (1) Its Effects on Expectations of Discrimination.

Table VI introduces a new index which as anticipated, triggered a statistical differentiation of responses among varying levels of occupations.

The three categories of responses are identified in terms of whether the respondents found the level of discrimination in Australia (a) better than they had expected before migration, (b) much the same, (c) worse than they had expected.

It should be noted that most of the 'professional' group had obtained their qualifications in Australia and only a minority found it impossible to have their overseas qualifications recognized in Australia, and their responses should be considered in this light.

The relationship between the two variables (.05) is verified in the null form.

TABLE VI  
Expectation of Discrimination, by Occupation  
(closed ended question).

Discrimination perceived in relation to expectations before migration.

	Occupation				
	Professional	Skilled/ Clerical	Commercial	Unskilled	Others
Better than expected	25%	25%	13.8%	28%	33.3%
Much the same	—	33.3%	13.8%	—	5.6%
Worse than expected	75%	41.7%	74.4%	72%	61.1%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

$$X^2 = 14.01428 \quad df = 8 \quad sig. = .05 \quad n = 90 \quad Cramers V = .27903$$

While the majority of the various occupational groups indicated that discrimination in Australia was 'worse than they expected' the 'professional' group (75%) suffered the greatest disappointment. The absence of responses in 'much the same' category among the professional group indicates considerable polarization as far as this issue is concerned.

### (2) Its Relevance to a Sense of Belonging in Australia.

TABLE VII  
Sense of Belonging to Australia, by Occupation  
(closed ended question).

	Occupation				
	Professional	Skilled/ Clerical	Commercial	Unskilled	Others
very good/ good	50%	33.3%	44.4%	16%	33.3%
fair	37.5%	33.3%	29.6%	56%	27.8%
very bad/ bad	12.5%	33.3%	25.9%	28%	39.9%

$$X^2 = 8.68910 \quad df = 8 \quad sig. = .37 \quad n = 90 \quad Cramers V = .21946$$

Illustrated in Table VII are figures that ran contrary to the expectations of the researcher. Differences obtained at a .37 level do not warrant theoretical attempts to interpret the results in a way that is congruent with the hypothesis. To this effect, the proportion of 'professionals' indicating a 'very good' sense of belonging is substantially higher (50%) than persons indicating a 'fair' (37.5%) and 'very bad' (12.5%) responses. These results are rejected because they are inconsistent with the assumption that 'professionals' perceive they are more rejected by the host society than other groups.

Accordingly any observed pattern, relationship or association between the different categories must be treated here (i.e. Table VII) as spurious; that is the relationship is purely accidental, at .37 level of significance.

It is feasible to conjecture that in spite of their hypersensitivity to discrimination, professionals manifest profound feelings of loyalty to the host country. It could be that 'professionals' have already opted to identify with the Australian sets of values rather than with those of the ethnic community.

Such explanations should not be any obstacle in attempting to refine our measuring device, since the quality of sense of belonging requires a sophisticated test of its reliability.

(3) *Its Effect on Ease of Making Friends with Australians.*

TABLE VIII

Ease of making friends with Australians (90 cases); by Occupation (closed ended question).

Ease of making friends with Australians	Occupation				
	Professional	Skilled/ Clerical	Commercial	Unskilled	Others
very good	62.5%	8.3%	40.7%	8%	50%
fair	25%	50%	33.3%	48%	22.2%
very bad	12.5%	41.7%	25.9%	44%	27.8%

$$\chi^2 = 17.37311 \quad df = 8 \quad \text{Cramers V} = .31067 \quad \text{sig.} = .02$$

The pattern of responses across the occupational ladder in Table VIII is most supportive of the hypothesis. The correlation with Australians is, at .02 level, statistically significant. Here the majority of professionals (62.5%) as opposed to 8.3% clerical, 40.7% commercial and only 8% unskilled have very favourable attitudes towards members of the host society.

The above indicator undoubtedly serves as a reliable measure that there exists a difference in interactionist tendencies with Australians between Lebanese in high professions and those who are not.

### CONCLUSION

The majority of measures selected have established the validity of the hypothesis — highly educated/professional Lebanese are more 'hyper-sensitive' — that is, they perceive more discrimination than other Lebanese.

The likelihood that the above group displays fewer tendencies to integrate with Australians was also explored and subsequently disproved (Tables IV, V and VIII). Whilst it is feasible to argue that because of continual contact with Australians, highly educated Lebanese migrants do in fact experience more discrimination than other groups, the examination of this issue was not the intention of this paper. Neither was it the intention to examine the reasons for the respondents' perceptions of discrimination.

It is contended, however, that pride of struggling towards upward socio-economic and educational mobility, though accelerating the acculturative process, can assert itself in a dislike. Highly educated Lebanese may feel, for a variety of reasons, that they do not receive a special treatment

from certain sections of the host society who generally stereotype them as just 'another Lebanese' as though their achievements have failed to draw a deserved respect.

Subsequent to a complete analysis of the eight indices which we introduced as reliable measures, it may be concluded that with the exception of two, the remaining results make the hypothesis acceptable.

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