

Culture, Identity, and the Economic Socialization of Children

Greetings, Participating Families and Friends!

We hope that our new quarterly newsletter finds all of our contributors in the best of health! We are writing to share with you the progress being made on our project, as well as to inform you of some new directions which we will implement in the weeks ahead.

As you may know, the results of our research will be used to help develop curricula and programs whose subject matter includes economic and financial literacy, youth entrepreneurship, and career planning—material that will be developed especially for the children of immigrants. For this reason, it is very important that our reported findings are culturally accurate, meaningful, and fact-based. We want to assure all of our contributors that we understand the importance of constructing a fair and valid representation of how the Lebanese people live, work, and give meaning to their lives in the Boston metropolitan area.

To this end, we are currently in the process of forming Community Advisory Panels (CAP) for the project. CAP will play a unique role lending advice and reviewing study results with the Research Team, in the process ensuring that the essence of Lebanese culture, religions, families, and social identity is captured in the story we tell; also ensuring that the story we tell fully conveys the importance of the economic values and practices learned by the children—for example, involving spending, saving and investing, work and entrepreneurship, credit and debt, and property ownership; and, finally, ensuring that you all are fully informed about the results of our study.

If you, or anyone you know, would like to know more about CAP participation, please contact Dr. Lawrence Gianinno by telephone at (617) 627-4449 or via e-mail at [lawrence.gianinno@tufts.edu](mailto:lawrence.gianinno@tufts.edu).

As you aware, we rely on our participating families to make referrals of other eligible families for the continued growth and progress of the project. With this in mind, we have also included an updated project description for your review, with the hope that you will forward it to other Lebanese families that might want to share their story with us.

The Lebanese story is an important one to convey, not only to the academic community, but to your neighbors near and far. As social researchers, we firmly believe in the importance of our work, given the promise of its future contributions.



We would like to acknowledge that many of the Lebanese friends we have made over the course of our research have been profoundly impacted by the Hezbollah-Israel conflict which began last summer. To gain an increased understanding of the challenges facing the friends and family of our Lebanese friends still living in the region, our Research Associate, Jeannette, recently attended a lecture on Re-Building Lebanon's Infrastructure, sponsored by the Boston Chapter of the American Lebanese Engineering Society (ALES). To learn more about the initiatives that local engineers from ALES are taking to help re-build Lebanon, visit their website at: <http://www.alesonline.org>. We sincerely hope that all of your friends and Family are safe, and we continue to pray for peace in the region, and in the world.

**Our Team:**

**Lawrence Gianinno, PhD**, leads the project, and continues to look for innovative ways to increase understanding of the ways in which culture influences the development of children and young people and, in particular, how ethnicity, religion, and media affect what they learn about the economic world.

**Kathleen Cobb Leonard, PhD**, a cultural psychologist, is excited about her new role as Post-Doctoral Fellow and project liaison for participating Lebanese Muslim families. Katie can be contacted by email at [kathleen.leonard@tufts.edu](mailto:kathleen.leonard@tufts.edu).

**Jeannette Belcher-Schepis**, a graduate student in the Sociology Department at Boston College, is the project liaison for Lebanese Christian families. Jeannette can be contacted by email at [jeannette.belcher\\_schepis@tufts.edu](mailto:jeannette.belcher_schepis@tufts.edu).

We welcome **Ana Maria Vidal**, our new Undergraduate Assistant. Ana Maria is a Senior at Tufts University, majoring in International Relations and Sociology.

We look forward to getting to know all of our participating families in the months ahead!

We wish everyone a happy, healthy, and prosperous year. **Happy New Year!**





## **An Invitation to Join a Research Study at Tufts University**

### **Greetings!**

We are excited to tell you about a very important research study that is being conducted at Tufts University. As you may know, helping children develop the skills to function effectively in today's global economic world is an increasingly important challenge for parents and teachers. Global competition, ever-changing workplace technologies, and expectations that workers will assume more responsibility for their own financial welfare and future—these are conditions that require that children and young people begin to acquire an understanding of fundamental economic concepts and practices and to become self-reliant, able to make sound decisions in regard to spending, saving, and investing; credit and debt; career planning; entrepreneurial activities; property ownership; and other economic practices. Given the widespread absence of curricula in our schools to help children become economically and financially literate, this challenge may be particularly difficult for immigrant parents to address alone on behalf of their children. But there are some immigrant groups, including the Lebanese, which tend to respond quite effectively to this challenge. How do they do it?

### **Do culture, ethnic traditions, and religion influence the process of acquiring the values and skills that families use to adapt to the U.S. economic world?**

To answer these kinds of questions, social scientists at Tufts University are interviewing members of Lebanese Christian and Muslim communities in Eastern Massachusetts. According to the most recent U.S. Census, the Lebanese are among those immigrant groups that tend to adapt well to economic challenges. Our goal is to learn more about what accounts for their success, and examine the kinds of experience their children have that enable them to develop into healthy, productive, and successful adults.

### **What are the benefits of this research?**

The Tufts Research Team plans to collaborate with school teachers, curriculum specialists, and others, and apply the research findings to aid the development and/or improvement of curriculum materials focused on economic and financial literacy, youth entrepreneurship, and career planning. In the final phase of the project, the Team will seek to inform and influence policy makers and others—to obtain their support for legislation and funding for school and after-school programs fostering the development of a full range of economic skills that children and young people will need to succeed.

### **Participation**

The Research Team is currently interviewing families with at least one Lebanese immigrant parent and an 8-12 year old child. In later phases of the project, other ethnic groups will be included as well. The interviews are a positive experience, provide the children with a unique opportunity to voice their thoughts and opinions, and offer them a gift certificate as a token of appreciation for their families' time commitment.

### **How to Get Involved**

If you or anyone you know is eligible to participate in the study, please contact Dr. Lawrence Gianinno at Tufts University by phone at 617-627-4449 or by email at [Lawrence.Gianinno@Tufts.edu](mailto:Lawrence.Gianinno@Tufts.edu). This is the first step to help improve the economic curriculum for our children. We hope to hear from you soon. Thank you!