

(UN)BELONGINGS: MUSLIM WOMEN IN MULTICULTURAL CANADA

by

MOLLY KRAFT

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Abstract

In this thesis I explore the way Muslim women in Vancouver, B.C. narrate stories of belonging. Addressing the way in which Muslim women have become a popular symbol for the perceived incompatibility of multiculturalism and specific cultural practices, I focus on how this group has been affected—resists and negotiates—the changes to Canadian policy and the social landscape in the last two decades. I examine how these women come to see themselves in relation to the framing of their social, cultural and religious practices as inherently incompatible with aspects of Canadian society. What stories of belonging do they tell? How are these affected, produced, or outside of, state narratives of *being* in Canada? I draw from feminist, anti-racist scholarship calling for more nuanced and critical approaches to concepts of integration, multiculturalism and nationalism. I argue that these women's stories can best be understood through the theoretical lens of (un)belonging; spaces, moments and attachments that develop outside of normative belonging. Finally, I seek to ask whether we can “keep our senses open to emergent and unknown forms of belonging, connectivity” and “intimacy” (Puar 2007, p. xxviii) and what these might inform or enliven in studies of immigration, settlement and multiculturalism in Canada.

Preface

This thesis was conducted under the approval of the University of British Columbia's Behavioural Research Ethics Board certificate H11-01810.

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List of abbreviations

9/11- September 11, 2001

Bill C-36- Anti-Terrorism Act

BREB- Behaviour Research Ethics Board

CAIR-CAN- Council on American Islamic Relations- Canada

CBC- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

CIC- Citizenship and Immigration Canada

CMAs- Census Metropolitan Areas

CRIC- Centre for Research and Information Canada

CSIS- Canadian Security Intelligence Services

ISSofBC- Immigrant Serving Society of British Columbia

IRPA- Immigration and Refugee Protection Act

LGBT- Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender

MSA- Muslim Student Association

NIEAP- Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program

PR- Permanent Resident

RCMP- Royal Canadian Mounted Police

UBC- University of British Columbia

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This thesis is dedicated to all those who struggle for (and against) belonging.

Introduction:

“Maybe you chose the wrong country in the first place...”

In mid December of last year Jason Kenney, the minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), announced that women wearing the niqab or burqa¹ would have to take them off for purposes of becoming Canadian citizens. He explained that this was not simply a ‘practical measure’; it was instead, “a matter of deep principle that goes to the heart of our identity and our values of openness and equality. The oath...is a public declaration that you are joining the Canadian family and it must be taken freely and openly,” further “to segregate one group of Canadians or allow them to hide their faces...their identity...precisely when they are joining our community is contrary to Canada’s proud commitment to openness and social cohesion” (PostMedia News 2011). Kenney would later go on to proclaim “If you don’t like it, if you feel uncomfortable, maybe you chose the wrong country in the first place” (Sun Media 2011). And finally, after receiving some criticism from the left, he explained that he would have thought that they “would be the first to accept this” new rule as they would no doubt understand “that a tribal custom that treats women as property should not be allowed [in Canada]” (Sun Media 2011). Kenney is thus playing into an increasingly prevalent discourse in Canada and much of the Western world; Muslims (seen here as a unified and monolithic group) do not respect gender equality and until they do, they will not be truly integrated, belong, or in this case, become ‘Canadian’ (Boswell 2012; Hassan 2012). Furthermore, his claims reinforce what Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak (1994) considers the

¹ Niqab refers to a veil that covers the face below the eyes and is worn with the hijab. burqa refers to a whole body covering that includes a head covering, full-face covering and body covering (Khan 2006).

problematic and paternalistic notion that it will be white men (and women) in Canada that 'save brown women from brown men' (p. 93).

Set within the context of increasing suspicion and hostility to immigrants generally (Joppke 2004a, Koefoed and Simonsen 2007) and Muslim migrants in particular (Statham 2003; Joppke 2004b; Goodman 2010) this story highlights the way in which the figure of the Muslim woman² has come to occupy an important place in Canadian discourses of citizenship, immigration and notably what it means to belong in this country. While this discourse plays into older and more well established forms of Orientalism (Said 1979), there is something new and troubling about the way that Muslim women are being framed in Canada (Jiwani 2010). As Sirma Bilge (2010) explains the “‘core value clash’, between the West and Islam,” is no longer constructed as just about democracy but instead “gender equality and sexual liberalization” (p. 10). Grounded in an understanding of the Canadian state’s celebration and propagation of multiculturalism (both as policy and ideology) this construct of an inherent ‘value clash’ raises important questions about actualized belonging for Muslim women in Canada. If all cultural difference should ideally be respected and allowed, yet more negative depictions of Muslim women proliferate, how do Muslim women come to feel that they belong? And importantly, what role does multiculturalism play in this process?

² While the niqab/burqa are not the hijab, nor should they stand in as representative of all Muslim women, I use this story as one particularly striking example of the Canadian states discursive production of the figure of the Muslim women. I will however explore other examples of this to complicate any clear definition of the Muslim woman.

In this thesis I draw upon fieldwork in which I interviewed first and second generation Muslim immigrant³ women in Vancouver, Canada. I focus explicitly on these women's sense of belonging and how they negotiate this in relation to the Canadian state. I want to argue that their stories of belonging can be best understood by what Joanna Garvey (2011) has called (un)belonging. That is, "spaces that undo belonging while not leading to the destructive erasure of not-belonging" (p. 758). I explore both the religious and gendered subjectivities that influence these narrations (Chapter 3) as well as the ways in which they come into play with experiences of discrimination and imaginings of the multicultural state (Chapter 4). I locate (un)belonging as one response to what Spivak and Judith Butler (2011) have shown to be the simultaneity of being at once contained by the state and disposed from it (p. 5).

Which 'you'?

But whom is Kenney speaking to when he says *'you* chose the wrong country'? Is it *all* Muslims, or *some* Muslims? And maybe more importantly, does this discourse affect *all* Muslims, or just some? This thesis deals explicitly with Muslim women's narrations of belonging while acknowledging that 'Muslim women' do not represent a coherent or stable 'group.' The question then becomes, in what ways does the aforementioned figure of the Muslim woman have to do with particular Muslim women's embodied experiences? According to Shahnaz Khan (1998), "the multiple determinations and uneven discourses deployed to signify the Muslim Woman do not define reality for actual Muslim women in Canada" (p. 473). This is in large part due to the intense diversity of Muslim women—they are in fact from multiple countries, speak different languages, belong to various religious

³ In the context of Canadian Immigration, first generation refers to people who have immigrated to Canada over the age of 15. Second generation refers to those who have been born in the country to one or both immigrant parents. 1.5 generation refers to those who immigrated under the age of 15.

affiliations, and are first, second and even third generation immigrants. It is also because generally, these discourses are grounded in simplistic and Orientalist visions of the world.

Khan clarifies that

Although discursive determinations of Muslim femaleness do not describe their day-to-day reality, individual Muslim women inevitably confront predetermined codes and signifiers and the contradictions contained within them. These women must face not only ambivalent forms of knowledge about themselves but also their own ambivalent responses to that knowledge (1998, p. 473).

The negotiation of these ambivalences, and what this tells us about multiculturalism's capacity to deal with actual difference and diversity in Canada, is the focus of this thesis.

Furthermore, as Sedef Arat-Koc (2006) clarifies, even if 'Muslim' remains an inaccurate term it has "become 'real' socially and 'politically'" (p. 218) and thus requires thoughtful and critical engagement. What's more, all of the women interviewed for this thesis employ 'Muslim' as part of their own self-identification (in various ways). I thus accept each woman's own definition as they state it, "what counts for me is the self-identification that one is a 'Muslim'" (Bullock 2012, p. 95).

However, and shying away from what Mahmood Mamdani (2004) has called the 'good' Muslim versus 'bad' Muslim dichotomy, I do not seek to uncover a "redeemable element" within Islam or Muslim female subjectivities simply by 'recuperating' the 'good' parts of the religion (Mahmood 2005, p. 5). That is, to show how much *some* Muslims (and Islamic practices) are amenable to Western societies like Canada. Thinking in these terms simply plays into civilizational divides that situate (a particular) Islam against the West, a particular 'good' 'liberated' Muslim woman against the 'bad' 'oppressed' one (Jiwani 2009, p. 79). This construct positions women like Irshad Manji⁴ outside of the 'you' in Jason Kenney's

⁴ Irshad Manji is a writer and journalist in Canada. She is well known for her critiques of Islam as in desperate need of reform. Her books often "advance the idea of a culture clash of epic proportions between the West and Islam" and further reinforce the notion that "to take up a political position that is critical of the current American and Israeli administration...[is] at best being callous towards Muslim women and at worst being

statement; those who appear ‘like us’ become the “doubled counterpart [of the oppressed Muslim woman] reflecting the benefits of the West as they are embodied in liberated representations” (Jiwani 2009, p. 79).

Chapter outlines

Inspired by critical race feminists such as Dana Olwan and Sophia Azeb (2012), I want to ask: what is left “unturned” when we frame the debate in these binaristic terms (Islam *versus* feminism or Islam *versus* the ‘West’)? As Olwan and Azeb explain, confronting simplistic depictions of Islamic identifications means “asking questions that center Muslim women’s lives” in order to “highlight their rich and multifaceted encounters with patriarchal, gendered, colonial, imperialist, and local state oppressions;” questions that must take seriously the answers that are garnered. This type of analysis allows space for the complex “conceptions of self, moral agency, and politics” (Mahmood 2005, p. 5) that Muslim women narrate to be heard, and further requires us to work through (and situate them) within the places and spaces in which they occur.

This thesis follows in four chapters. In Chapter 1 I map the context of Canada in order to situate Muslim women’s experiences of belonging. I explore Canada as a multicultural place, as well as think through the spatial imaginings that have worked to tie Canada (and Canadians) to the events of September 11, 2001 (9/11) and the subsequent ‘War on Terror.’ I trace the history of Orientalist visions of the world (and examine these as manifest through the war) but conclude the chapter by thinking through the way these debates increasingly focus on Islam as incompatible with gender rights and freedoms (Bilge 2010). This focus is visually exemplified in a pictorial interlude between Chapter 1 and 2. In Chapter 2 I position

supportive of profoundly misogynistic political regimes” (Razack 2008, p. 87). This positions her within acceptable realms of difference in the country (as her opinions align with dominant narratives in Canada today) and she is often asked to speak on behalf of ‘Muslims.’

myself, as author of this thesis and as a white Canadian woman attempting to enact (and imagine) a particular kind of solidarity. I focus here on the methodological encounter (Ahmed 2002) and explore the possibilities (and limitations) associated with this kind of research endeavor.

In the second half of this thesis I turn to the stories Muslim women tell about belonging in Canada in order to explore the diversity and complexity of these feelings. In Chapter 3 I argue that hearing these stories of gendered (un)belonging allows space to understand Islamic identifications and female subjectivities in a way that challenges the (common) assumption that Muslim women cannot be *both* Muslim and feminist (or even that it remains difficult to be Muslim and female). Simplistic depictions of agency as only manifest through resistance to the patriarchal tendencies of traditional Islam reinforce a hierarchy of progressive politics (Mahmood 2005, p. 9); one in which the familial and religious relationships in these women's lives are constantly de-valued and undermined. These depictions further conceal the strength, support, and power, Muslim women take from the confluence of Islamic identities and female subjectivities.

In Chapter 4 I move to consider how these stories challenge and 'un-settle' multiculturalism (Chazan *et. al* 2011). I want to argue that they expose the Canadian state and its multicultural policy as promising belonging at the same time as being directly implicated in the impossibility of actually achieving it. This is not least because belonging remains relational (to the last place or time it was felt), as well as because of persisting inequities, discrimination and Islamophobia in the country. Myths of multicultural acceptance become debunked through an acknowledgement of the difficulties associated with normative (or easy) belonging for Muslim women in a post 9/11 Canada. While I do not intend to argue that Muslim

woman *cannot* or *should not* belong in Canada, piecing together their stories allows a more holistic representation of the difficulties associated with this process.

This thesis should not be read as a call to abandon the practical task of living with, and struggling through, difference and diversity. In the conclusion I attempt to wrap up these powerful narrations of (un)belonging by thinking instead about the importance of listening to the emotionally inflected stories Muslim women tell about belonging in order to reflect on the value of Canadian multiculturalism in the face of persisting discrimination and Islamophobia. If a “new multicultural logic is always possible” (Walcott 2011, p. 21) I want to conclude by thinking about what these stories of (un)belonging teach us (as well as require from us) in order to achieve this.

Chapter one: placing Canada, understanding Muslim space(s) in a post-9/11 world

Feelings of belonging are created and negotiated *in* place and *through* space⁵. Insofar as this thesis is concerned with those feelings, we must first come to understand the place(s) and space(s) in which they occur. But where do we begin? That is, which place (or space) and what events do we start with? When attempting to engage with Muslim populations in the wake of 9/11 this is an inevitably political question, imbued and charged with particular meaning.

I therefore begin with Canada; that is, a brief sketch of Canada as a particular place with certain demographic characteristics and ideological imaginings, as well as a place that many Muslims have come to call home. I do this in part to denaturalize the assumption that all Muslim lives *began* (or came to matter) with 9/11 and its socio-political aftermath. This is however not to suggest that Canada *makes* Muslim women's lives, but rather it remains a context of these lives, and thus a good place to begin. Next I move to consider the historical presence and meanings of Orientalism, from the position of the 'West'. I specifically explore the construction and practice of "designating in ones mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space...which is 'theirs'" (Said 1979, p. 54) and uncover the simplistic logic of 'East' versus 'West', Islam versus Christianity, religion versus secularism (to name a few) that underpin this designation. I then situate the events of 9/11 and the subsequent 'war on terror' as a continuation of an Orientalist logic, but develop the argument that this has become greatly—and terrifyingly—amplified in the post-9/11 world. I dwell here on the pervasive nature of Islamophobia and its modern meanings and manifestations. Coming back to

⁵ A note on the terminology proves useful here. If places are "portions of geographical space" (Gregory *et al.* 2011, *Place*) and space is a "social product" (Razack 2002, p. 7), then in order to understand the places we live in a great deal of attention must be focused on the construction and maintenance of particular spaces. Questions of "how spaces come to be...what they produce as well as what produces them..." (Razack 2002, p. 7) are intertwined with peoples everyday experiences of particular places and thus require further thought.

Canada, I then consider how the country has been influenced by the events of 9/11, participated in the ‘war on terror,’ and how ‘our’ space has been re-made as a consequence. Finally, I focus in on constructions of Muslim women within this context and argue that they have become mobilized within on-going Orientalist and Islamophobic notions of an incompatible ‘East’ and ‘West’. This chapter is thus concerned with both situating the place (Canada) in which these women’s lives are lived, as well as the broader spatial context(s) of Orientalism, Islamophobia and the ‘war on terror’; spatial imaginings that inevitably—but variously—impact Muslim lives.

Canada

Multicultural Canada

In Canada both state-sponsored and demographic multiculturalism exist not just as autonomous features in the socio-political landscape; they are actively embraced and cultivated (Hunter 2008). As Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) reminds us: “multiculturalism...is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity. Canadians celebrate the gift of one another’s presence and work hard to respect pluralism and live in harmony” (CIC 2009, p. 68). For many, the policy has become “a social ideal and organizing nationalist vision” since its adoption in 1971 (Wood and Gilbert 2005, p. 68). For others, the country’s earliest foundations, rooted as they were in three founding peoples (English, French and Aboriginal (Dewing 2009, p. 1)), have meant that the policy is actually more part of ‘us’ than we really know, an inherent component of Canada’s traditions of “peace, fairness and good government” from the very beginning (Saul 2008, p. xxi). However, not all view the policy in such a positive light. While the Canadian immigration system has received a range of evaluations, from ‘better than most’ (Ley 2007) to a “world model” (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002, p. 20) multiculturalism as a policy has been widely criticized for its

symbolic nature (Mackey 1999, 70), its token treatment of diversity (Bissoondath 1994), and its failure to address issues of immigrant integration (Li 2003). Still, in the last few decades, a discernable shift to more sensitive policy has been made. The policy has been adapted to place greater emphasis on “values such as freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and the equality of men and women” moving to programming focused on “intercultural and interfaith understanding,” adapting “institutional responsiveness to the needs of a pluralistic society” and even incorporating ways to combat racism (CIC 2011, p. 5). The policy, as David Ley (2007) explains, should not be dismissed as simply a rhetorical tool as it in fact represents “strong claims” to protect diversity and immigrant rights in the country (p. 7).

One of the primary ways in which these claims were initially promulgated was through the entrenchment of the multicultural vision into the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 and the Canadian Multicultural Act in 1988 (Ley 2007, p. 4). The Act importantly inscribed in law the cultivation and preservation of “culture and language” with goals “to reduce discrimination, to enhance cultural awareness and understanding, and to promote culturally sensitive institutional change at the federal level” with an explicit focus on racism and the eradication of discrimination in Canadian society (Dewing 2009, p. 6). While many to this day argue that this legal stability—and sensitivity—does not absolve the policy of its numerous structural problems (Abu-Laban 2002, p. 460) Canadians are legally guaranteed equality in terms of “race, cultural heritage, ethnicity, religion, ancestry and place of origin” (CIC 2008). Officially and legally, no one group has the right to take precedence over any other (Trudeau 1971). Multiculturalism promotes a “two-way process of accommodation between newcomers and Canadians” that rests on the belief that ‘newcomers’ should not have to abandon their cultures to settle in Canada (Dorais 2002, p. 4). Canadian multicultural policy should thus be understood as distinct from discourses of European integration and American

assimilation (Biles and Winnemore 2006; Jedwab 2006; Baubock 2005); this is neither a ‘melting-pot’ rhetoric (Banting *et al.* 2007, p. 155), nor a society that imposes ‘strict rules’ of integration (Body-Gendrot and Martiniello 2000). In Canada, diversity recognition is not seen as incompatible with social cohesion (Banting *et al.* 2007, p. 6).

Furthermore, the institutionalization of multiculturalism should also be understood as positively and productively contributing to the general acceptance of the policy (and its associated ideologies) in Canada. Even if Canadians are not always clear on what exactly is meant by multiculturalism, most remain optimistic about its role within the country. A “survey published by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC) in October 2003 found that 54% of those surveyed said that multiculturalism made them feel very proud to be Canadian. This figure rose to 66% among those between the ages of 18 and 30” (Dewing 2009, p. 12). Additionally, a survey of 1500 people in 2006 reported that “76 percent agreed that multiculturalism aids immigrant integration, 76 percent that it aids equal participation in society, 74 percent that it assists a sense of national belonging, 69 percent that it assists national identity and citizenship, 69 percent that it enhances the identification of shared values, and 64 percent that it aids social cohesion” (Ley 2007, p. 6). The policy is thus not simply a distant governing political structure, but rather, is conceived of as structuring the lived reality of Canadian society as a multi-cultural and accepting place.

Beyond the political or ideological definitions of Canada as multicultural exist broader theoretical constructions of it as a nation firmly located within the ‘West.’ Canada is a “Western liberal democracy” (Walcott 2011, p. 15) that prides itself on the practice of ‘peace, fairness and good governance,’ principles that ostensibly bind Canadians “together by a shared commitment to the rule of law and to the institutions of parliamentary government” (CIC 2009, p. 3). This allows narrations of Canadian history to be situated in a long tradition

of a particularly ‘Western’ notion of ‘freedom.’ The government explains that these values were secured

for Canadians [through] an 800-year old tradition of ordered liberty, which dates back to the signing of [Magna Carta](#) in 1215 in England (also known as the Great Charter of Freedoms), including: Freedom of conscience and religion; Freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of speech and of the press; Freedom of peaceful assembly; and Freedom of association (CIC 2009, p. 8).

The country is thus said to have a lot to celebrate: a long history of multiculturalism (Dewing 2009, p. 1-3; Saul 2008); general acceptance of diversity (Ley 2007); a deep commitment to accommodating this diversity (Kymlicka 2007, p. 39); widespread and free state health care; liberal, tolerant and even benevolent laws (Patel 2012, p. 273) (including same-sex marriage rights); a well functioning ‘liberal’ democratic political system (Walcott 2011, p. 27-8), and a ‘good’ peaceful (and peace-keeping⁶) international image (Valpy 2007).

Most importantly, for the purposes of this thesis, an effective policy of multiculturalism promises some sense of belonging. Canadian multicultural policy is not only structured around promoting economic or political integration but importantly places great emphasis on the social integration of immigrants as well (Kymlicka 2010, p. 7). The policy is thus both a legalistic framework of equality and a deep claim to support emotional and expressive wellbeing through the practice of diversity recognition (Ley 2007). As CIC explains

Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures. The Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding, and discourages ghettoization, hatred, discrimination and violence (Government of Canada 2008)

The vision here is that the policy not only provides the hard tools for successful integration but that it also ideologically structures social relations in a positive way that allows—and provides—belonging. Ideally everyone can, and will, belong.

⁶ While the vision of Canada as ‘peacekeeping’ will be explored (and challenged) further on, for now of importance is that prior to 2001 “...70 per cent of Canadians consider military peacekeeping a defining characteristic of their country...” partly because in 1991, Canada contributed more than 10 per cent of all peacekeeping troops to the UN...” (Valpy 2007).

But what exactly is meant by social integration and how is belonging imagined as a component of this? Most commonly belonging is used as a way to denote citizenship and is seen as the final step in the integration process (CIC 2007, p. 45; Government of Canada 2008).⁷ Typically the assumption here is that once formal citizenship is achieved you ‘belong’ in Canada. As one Conservative Member of Parliament explains, “Canadian citizenship remains the link that holds us all together. It reminds us that we all share a common bond. That common bond of citizenship implies a sense of belonging...” (Government of Canada 2007). Importantly however, the term belonging also appears in a handful of government documents in the context of ‘feeling at home’ or creating a shared community (CIC 2007, CIC 2004; Government of Canada 2009). This is in part because

In 1997, the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism announced a renewed program that focused on three objectives: social justice (building a fair and equitable society); civic participation (ensuring that Canadians of all origins participate in the shaping of our communities and country); and identity (fostering a society that recognizes, respects and reflects a diversity of cultures so that people of all backgrounds feel a sense of belonging to Canada) (Dewing 2007, P. 8)

All three elements of the program (in this vision) include sensitivity to creating a home or community out of the recognition of difference and diversity. Multicultural integration here suggests a thoughtful consideration of the potential to develop a sense of belonging.

Canadian demography

Beyond the prescriptive nature of ideological and political notions of the country there remains the demographic reality that Canada is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. With a population of just over 33 million (Statistics Canada 2011, p. 5) and first-generation immigrants amounting to roughly 20%—and all other immigrants (that is of non British, French or aboriginal ancestry) totaling 50% (Kymlicka 2007, p. 43)—the demography of

⁷ One government publication explains, “As you journey toward Canadian citizenship, we sincerely hope this information helps you to feel at home and to feel that special sense of belonging. We are a nation of newcomers, and we welcome you to our family.”

Canada should be understood as one of the most ethno-culturally diverse in the world (Martin-Matthews *et al.* 2010, p. 81). Furthermore, while the pre-1971 period was distinguished by a racially restrictive policy determining where migrants could be from (Kobayashi 1993), the introduction of the points system⁸—accompanied by large numbers of people arriving through family reunification—has led to a diversification of migrants’ countries of origin (Dewing 2009, p. 2). This was evident in the 2006 census, which recorded the Canadian population as having over 200 ethnic origins (Dewing 2009, p. 2). Additionally, in 2010, of the 276,000 new Permanent Residents (PR)⁹ to Canada, just over 30% were from countries located in Africa and the Middle East, followed by 29% from Europe and The United Kingdom and 28% from Asia and the Pacific (CIC 2010, p. 36) with the top-ten source countries of immigrants “being China, India, the Philippines, Pakistan, the United States, South Korea, Romania, Iran, the United Kingdom, and Colombia” (Reese 2011, p. 302).

Canada’s immigrants are increasingly diverse and as such increasingly ‘visible.’ Based on the Government of Canada’s definition ‘Visible Minority’¹⁰ refers to “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (Statistics Canada, 2007). As the diversity of source countries increases the number of people who identify (or

⁸ The point system can be understood as the policy that granted points based on distinct economic, social and educational criteria allowing immigrants to enter the country. It was a part of the massive expansion of the program, with all people scoring high enough allowed to enter the country (Card and Freeman 1993, p. 7).

⁹ Permanent Resident as defined by CIC: A permanent resident is someone who has acquired permanent resident status by immigrating to Canada, but is not yet a Canadian Citizen (Government of Canada, 2007).

¹⁰ Visible Minority is a loaded term and should be approached with great caution. Not only does it suggest that “the majority does not require ethnic identity... ‘white’ is x, it is the basis for comparison” (Michon 2008, p. 1) it also runs the risk of conflating ‘immigrant’ status with ‘visibility’ (if you are ‘visible’ you must be an ‘immigrant’ (Michon 2008)) and permanently inscribes in policy and society at large notions of ‘minority’ status for groups that are coming to represent ‘majorities’ in many communities in Canada (Michon 2008, p. 2). Furthermore the designation of ‘visible minority’ suggests that difference (from the implied norm) makes one visible, as opposed to experiences racism or systemic discrimination.

are identified) as ‘visible minorities’ also goes up; in 2006 this “population accounted for 16.2% of the [total] population, up from 4.7% in 1981” (Dewing 2009, p. 2). What’s more, ‘visible minorities’ are only set to further increase, with Statistics Canada projecting that by 2031 they will account for 1/3 of the total Canadian population (CBC News 2010). Further, while the entire country has experienced change based on immigration patterns, the three major Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs)—Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver—have certainly seen the majority of this change; “Canada’s claim to being a diverse multicultural nation, is defined by its big cities” (Graham and Phillips 2007, p. 155). As Daniel Hiebert (2005) explains of one particular Statistics Canada projection for 2017, visible minority populations will amount to “approximately 3.2 million in Toronto (more than half the metropolitan total), 1.4 million in Vancouver (also more than half), and 750 thousand in Montréal. The scale of immigrant populations in the three cities are quite similar and are projected to be 830 thousand in Montréal, 3.1 million in Toronto, and 1.4 million in Vancouver” (p. 14). If current trends continue, by 2017 the immigrant population will reach 22%, the highest it has been since 1911 (when it reached the same number) (Statistics Canada 2005, p. iii). While the objective fact of diversity in the country should not stand in for claims that Canadians successfully live together in difference, it remains important to any analysis of the migrant experience.

Muslims in Canada

Thinking beyond Canada’s multicultural policy, or its demographic diversity, we come to the specific conditions, or experiences, of the Muslim population¹¹ in Canada. If, as Aitchison *et al.* (2007) have argued, “the places where Muslim identities are negotiated,

¹¹ In attempting to discuss *the* Muslim population in Canada caution must be taken to not overgeneralize. I draw here from Katherine Bullock’s (2012) definition of Muslim as any person who self identifies as Muslim. This is intentionally broad because “too narrow a definition would obscure, rather than reveal, reality” (p. 85).

celebrated or resisted matter to how these identities are experienced,” (p. 2) this is arguably influenced not just by broader Canadian society but also by the presence of an *umma*. In this sub-section I outline the history of Muslim migrant populations in Canada, the current demographics and geographical distribution across the country and end with projections for the future. The purpose of this sub-section is at once to firmly locate Muslim populations within Canadian history, as well as set up the impetus for more critical research on their presence and experiences within the country for the future.

13 Muslims

In the 1871 census, conducted only 4 years after confederation, 13 Muslims were recorded in Canada (EuroIslam 2008, p. 5). Some historians have noted that within this group were James and Agnus Love, parents who gave birth to the first ever Muslim born on Canadian soil—James Love (named after his father) who was born in Ontario in 1854 (Zine 2012a, p. 4). The first mosque, the Al Rashid Mosque, was built in Edmonton in 1938 and has become an important historic symbol for Canada’s Muslim population (Lorenz 1998). While these accounts are seldom referenced in current discussions of Muslim migrant populations in Canada, they remain important to the historical narrative of Muslim settlement in the country.

The first big wave of Muslims to immigrate to Canada came after WWII and as such the total number of Muslims in Canada by 1971 was over 33,000 (Canadian Encyclopedia 2012). This group was mostly made up of skilled labourers from “Lebanon, Syria, Indonesia, Morocco, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq and the Indian-Pakistani-Bangladeshi subcontinent” (Canadian Encyclopedia 2012). Included in this group were also thousands of people of Indo-Pakistani background fleeing various socio-political conflicts in the area (Zine 2012a, p. 4). The subsequent growth of the Muslim population in Canada can be directly tied to changing

immigration policies—as well as the specific political and economic events occurring in many Muslims’ countries of origin (EuroIslam 2008, p. 5). Finally, while the history of Muslims in Canada is long, most have immigrated very recently; “over 60% of Muslims in Canada are foreign-born and have immigrated in the last 20 years” (EuroIslam 2008, p. 2).

Current demographics

Today, Muslims in Canada are estimated to have grown to just over 1 million (Jedwab 2005, p. 1) and thus represent the fastest growing religious group in the country (CIC 2011, p. 10). In Canada, unlike many European countries, the ethnic composition of Muslim migrants is highly diverse, with over 36% identifying as South Asian, 21% Arab, 14% West Asian and 14% as other ethnic groups (EuroIslam 2008, p. 3). Most Muslims (just as most Canadians) live in Ontario, with Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta also having notable populations; 98% of the Muslim population lives in these four provinces (Riley, 2011, p. 1). Within British Columbia, nearly the entire Muslim population is concentrated in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland (Riley 2011, p. 1) and “in Vancouver of the 52,590 Muslims, 20.8% were born in Canada. Of the foreign-born population, 44.6% immigrated before 1991 and the remaining 55.4% arrived after 1991” (EuroIslam 2008, p. 2). For Western Canadian Muslim populations, the top countries of birth are Iran, Canada and Afghanistan (Riley 2011, p. 2)—reflecting both current socio-political events as well as the increasingly large second-generation population.

There is, of course, intense internal diversity within this group, so much so that it remains difficult to even discuss ‘Muslims’ as a coherent or stable category. According to one estimate Muslims in Canada are from over 85 different countries, speak dozens of different languages, and come from a vast array of ethno-cultural backgrounds (Riley 2011, p. 2).

What's more, differing religious affiliations (Sunni, Shi'a, Ismaili (just to name a few)) and divergent conceptions of the importance of religion and spirituality, greatly affect many Muslim's ideas of what being Muslim (in Canada) even means (Zine 2012a, p. 6).

However, a few commonalities, or general trends, are worthy of mention. First, of Muslims in Canada over 85% consider themselves to be part of a 'visible minority' (EuroIslam 2008, p. 3)—this is a vast majority and also suggests a significant difference from the general Canadian population (the 2006 census reporting just over 16% self identified as a 'visible minority' (as percentage of the total population) (Brooks 2008, p. 38)). Furthermore, a recent survey found that “the mean age of Muslims in Canada is 36.8 years (compared to 46.9 years for the general population), and that Canadian Muslims, both male and female, are more likely than the overall population to have completed one or more university degrees” (Riley 2011, p. 3). A recent Environics survey echoed this trend noting, “Muslims in Canada are better educated than the population at large (45 percent hold a university degree as compared with 25 percent of all Canadians); however, with respect to income, Muslims fall behind the national average” (Zine 2012a, p. 8). While none of these figures or trends should stand in for the 'general' experience of the Muslim population, they remain noteworthy. Muslims in Canada are younger, better educated, more likely to have recently immigrated and potentially more associated with a 'visible minority' status, than the overall Canadian population.

Looking ahead

A final point on the Muslim population and its future in Canada is helpful. Of the most recent (and most likely) future population projections by Statistics Canada, the Muslim population is projected to increase by 160% (compared to 35% in the number of Buddhists, 65% in the number of Sikhs and 10% in the number of Jews) (Jedwab 2005, p. 1). Muslims

are not only growing as a population, they are also growing substantially faster than any other major religious group. This is of importance for the analysis that follows for three main reasons. First, set within a context of increasing suspicion and hostility to immigrants generally (Koefoed and Stimonsen 2007) and Muslim migrants in particular (Statham 2003; Joppke 2004b; Goodman 2010), this substantial increase should signal a need to engage, learn about, and work with, Muslim migrant populations in a more sensitive and critical way. Second, Canada maintains a tradition (or imagined tradition) of secularism (Sharify-Funk 2012, p. 150); how will it adapt as a country to fit the growing needs of this religious group? Third, and finally, as a country that prides itself on multiculturalism and the inclusion of all, questions of how Muslim migrant populations come to fit within this imaginary are crucial to the success of the policy and the task of practically ‘living together in difference’ (Yuval-Davis 2006, p. 213 quoting Hall 2004).

Separating space(s): ‘our’ space and ‘theirs’

In September 2011, Stephen Harper explained on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporations (CBC) National News that “Islamicism” or “Islamic Terrorism” presented the most prominent danger to Canadian safety (CBC News 2011). It is, in his opinion, the “top threat” to the nation, though a “diffuse one,” and something that requires on-going attention and security (CBC News 2011).

In a different vein, Foreign Minister John Baird announced in May 2012 that the conservative government plans to re-open offices and funds to focus on the protections of religious freedoms, both at home and abroad. While mentioning the need to protect *all* religious traditions Baird’s speech on the topic “dealt most extensively with the targeting of Jews and Christians” (Clark 2012). He situated this concern within what he called ‘increasing’ pressure and attacks from “ Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran” focused on Jews, warning that this

was too similar to the killing of Jews during the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust to not stand up against it.

What kinds of logics underpin the above assertions (not to mention the policy initiatives that follow along with them)? Or, more specifically, what particular *geographical imagination*¹² is at work in such claims?

As this chapter is concerned with the condition, production, and maintenance of particular spaces, in this section I want to focus explicitly on the construction of ‘our’ space as different from ‘theirs’ and draw specifically from Edward Said’s (1979) *Orientalism* to do this. I find it useful to highlight Harper and Baird’s statements to remind us of the commanding demarcations at play in Canada that “fold distance into difference through a series of spatializations” (Gregory 2004, p. 17) and fabrications of ‘us’ and ‘them.’ It remains important to ask: who is *the* ‘Islamic Terrorist’ and why is discrimination against Jews of *most* concern? While I will return later in this chapter to think about the specific naming of Muslims as *others* within Canada, I want here to historicize this imaginative geography—one that separates out the familiar from the unfamiliar—in order to later question its validity and unsettle its numerous assumptions. In what follows I briefly explore two important moments—or constructs—in this history: first, the ‘West’ versus ‘East’ of the Huntingtonian world and second Said’s *Orientalism* and imaginative geographies of the ‘East’. My goal is to set the stage for the kinds of discourses that follow in the post-9/11 world, but to be clear that these are, importantly, much older logics.

¹² Geographical Imagination: based on Derek Gregory (1995) definition that “these are figurations of place, space and landscape that dramatize distance and difference in such a way that ‘our’ space is divided and demarcated from ‘their’ space” (p. 29).

‘West’ vs. ‘East’

In Samuel Huntington’s polemic, *The Clash of Civilizations* (1992), he argued that the modern world—the post-Cold War world—would be one in which global conflicts would hinge on distinctions and differences between cultures. He named seven great, and influential cultures (or civilizations) and proclaimed that “The most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating these civilizations from one another” (Huntington 1992, p. 25). Writing from the position of the ‘West’ (of the Christian civilization) Huntington “cast Islam in the role of an enemy civilization” or culture (Mamdani 2004, p. 21). While in some senses his arguments drew from a binary present in writings of Machiavelli and Guillaume Postel in the sixteenth century which posited Islam as oppositional to Christianity (Quereshi and Sells 2003, p. 6), he was also greatly influenced by the work of Bernard Lewis, a well-known Orientalist writing out of Princeton in the late 1980s. While Lewis’s work focused primarily on historical rifts between ‘Judeo-Christian’ and ‘Islamic’ worlds, Huntington “broadened Lewis’s thesis to cover the entire world” (Mamdani 2004, p. 20). As Mahmood Mamdani (2004) explains of Huntington’s work “According to him the ‘Velvet Curtain of culture’ would replace the ‘Iron Curtain’, by finding its most dangerous front in the historical, military confrontation between the Christian civilization and the Islamic one” (Mamdani 2004, p. 21).

Both Huntington and Lewis relied on a fabrication of the world in which tenants of freedom, democracy, progress, and secularism were the sole prerogatives of the ‘West’, and impossibilities for the ‘East’. In each case an ‘Islamic’ civilization is solidified by collapsing time (hundreds—even thousands—of years become unitary), historical events and the places in which they occurred. As Derek Gregory (2004) explains

these are at once extraordinary and dangerous claims. They are extraordinary because they erase the ways in which cultures, far from being bounded totalities, interpenetrate and entangle with one another...[and] dangerous because, in proposing that the world is riven into implacable and opposing blocs, in fabricating that 'sham unity,' they participate in a 'world politics' that opens some rhetorical spaces and closes others, which in turn prepares the ground for the construction of an architecture of enmity as material fact (p. 57-8).

The Huntingtonian world (inspired by thinkers such as Lewis) makes *real* and *true* an 'other' that requires not only a *real* and *true* self, but also action to protect that self. This distinction is based primarily on a rift between 'West' and 'East', grounded in an inherent separation between Islam and Christianity (Mamdani 2004), which structures many present day Islamophobic visions of the world (which will be explored in detail further on).

Orientalism

Any discussion of the practice of distinguishing between civilizations—between the 'West' and 'East'—must carefully engage with Said's influential and powerful critique of European colonialism presented in *Orientalism* (1979). When Said describes Orientalism as,

a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into...texts;...an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly discovery...it not only creates but also maintains (p. 12),

he takes up the important connection between representation and reality. That is, the practice by which particular visions *of* the world become translated into policies, infrastructures and practices that *make* the world. An Orientalist or Huntingtonian depiction actually "produces the effects that it names"; they are performative (even if presented as descriptive) (Gregory 2004, p. 18). What's more, the power to name, or as Said calls it the "freedom of intercourse" remains the Westerner's privilege (Said 1979, p. 44).

With this understanding in mind we might then think about the way this logic allows distinctions between 'us' and 'them' to be made; "a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs'" becomes known (Said 1979, p. 54). This is, as Said (1979) explains, a process of assigning meaning to particular places (and spaces) and *can*

be entirely arbitrary (p. 54). He elaborates this idea by detailing the process of associating meaning, or feeling, to a house. He writes “The objective space of a house—its corners, corridors, cellar, rooms—is far less important than what poetically it is endowed with... thus a house may be haunted, or homelike, or prisonlike, or magical” (p. 55). This is of course, of utmost importance in understanding the fear instilled in Canadian society when Harper names “Islamicism” a threat. The objective possibility of Islamic terror in Canada (not to mention the instability of the very concept of ‘Islamic Terror’ (Ahmed 2004, p. 97) ultimately has little bearing on the imaginative quality, or imagined possibility, of it.

Two consequences follow. First, the imaginative conceptions of ‘our’ space and ‘theirs’ become mobilized for political purposes. These are not just houses we speak and dream of; they are states, with governments, militaries and (embodied) populations. This is a warning that Said was extremely careful to make. There was, in his opinion, a “great likelihood...that ideas about the Orient” would “be put to political use” (Said 1979, p. 203). Further, these truths, over time, become normalized and regularized. Ultimately this allows Orientalist visions of the world to become inscribed as “morally neutral and objectively valid” (206). Thinking back to Harper and Baird’s statements, I re-pose my initial question: who is *the* ‘Islamic Terrorist’ and why is discrimination against Jews of *most* concern? These are not morally neutral claims nor are they objectively valid. Instead, they are born out of an Orientalist vision of the world; in both cases ‘we’ are the ones that need protection from ‘them.’ ‘They’ are inherently dangerous and violent, and both ‘us’ and ‘them’ become immutable categories, not to mention internally homogeneous and irreconcilably different.

Finally, it is not just the Orient broadly that has become implicated in these discussions but also Islam more specifically. It is worth noting that Said identified the ‘othering’ of the Islamic religious tradition as part of Orientalist visions of the world. He

explained that this was because in the eyes of the ‘West’, Islam was typically “enshrined in the seventh century...History, politics, and economics do not matter. Islam is Islam, the Orient is the Orient” (Said 1979, p. 107) and no amount of ‘reform’ would ever change this. It is in part this preoccupation with Islam as un-changing that has given rise to the claim that there is “an incommensurability” between Islam and secularism (Mahmood 2009, p. 64), a claim that is not held as stridently toward other religious traditions. The construction of Islam as at the heart of the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ proves important as this discourse travels over time. As will be shown throughout the thesis, this vision of Islam structures many modern depictions of Muslim migrant populations worldwide.

9/11 and the ‘war on terror’

In the days and weeks following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the pentagon the U.S. government and media became increasingly invested in an Orientalist—and subsequently—Islamophobic rhetoric. This logic was based in the discourses outlined in the previous section but came to take on new meanings as the U.S. eventually declared war on Afghanistan (and later Iraq), as well as increases in homeland security as necessary responses to the attacks. As Andrew Shryock (2010) so bluntly put it, the 21st Century is proving to be “an especially bad time for relations between the Muslim world and the West” (p. 1). In this section I explore this ‘bad time’ by first tracing post 9/11 depictions of Islam and Muslims in America. Next I move to consider the definition of Islamophobia and discuss some of the ways in which American Muslims began to experience it in the days, months and years after 9/11. Finally, I turn to an important consequence of this rhetoric: the racialization of Islam. These trends are, each in their own way, products of 9/11 and the ‘war on terror’ and each contribute (albeit differently) to the persistence of Islamophobia both in the U.S. and

elsewhere. I want to make clear in this section that the production or maintenance of the U.S. as a particular space, with particular values, was altered drastically by the events of 9/11.

‘Good’ Muslim, ‘bad’ Muslim

A month after the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, George W. Bush gave an emotional address at a memorial for those who died in the plane crash at the Pentagon. He declared:

The hijackers were instruments of evil who died in vain. Behind them is a cult of evil which seeks to harm the innocent and thrives on human suffering. Theirs is the worst kind of cruelty, the cruelty that is fed, not weakened, by tears. Theirs is the worst kind of violence, pure malice, while daring to claim the authority of God. We cannot fully understand the designs and power of evil. It is enough to know that evil, like goodness, exists. And in the terrorists, evil has found a willing servant (Bush 2009).

This speech (and others) made perfectly clear the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them.’ Bush went on to note that this enemy was one that “rejects every limit of law, morality, and religion...They dwell in dark corners of earth. And there, we will find them” (Bush 2009). Bush’s America was one in which civilizational war had been declared; this was the living out of a (no doubt imagined) Huntingtonian clash of civilizations. The government rhetoric of the war included “launching a crusade; operation infinite justice; fighting the forces of evil and darkness; fighting the barbarians; hunting down the evil-doers; draining the swamps of the Middle East” and a number of other broad civilizational claims (Thobani 2002, p. 293).

The principal ways in which Muslims, Islam or the Middle East were spoken about in the months after the attacks falls in to what Mamdani (2004) has called the ‘good’ Muslim versus ‘bad’ Muslim dichotomy. Bush warned both of the inherent evil of al Qaeda, firmly located within Afghanistan, Islamic faith and often the Middle East in general (Thobani 2002) but simultaneously urged citizens of the U.S. not to retaliate against the ‘good’ and innocent Muslim Americans around them (Ahmad 2004, p. 1323). Some bodies became worthy of our concern and protection, while others, more distant ones, became disposable (Ahmed 2004, p.

75). A consequence that followed was of course the difficult—and deeply racist—act of determining *which* bodies were which; that is, who was the ‘good’ and who was the ‘bad’ Muslim (and if in fact they were even Muslim at all (Ahmed 2004; and Ahmad 2004¹³)). Not only is this essentialist and simplistic (naming Muslim ‘terrorists’ ‘bad’ rather than assessing the historical, political and social events that led to particular behaviours or actions (Jiwani 2012, p. 120-121), not to mention tying their ‘bad-ness’ to their ‘Muslim-ness’ (Mamdani 2004, p. 15-16)) it also worked to solidify certain stereotypes (Ahmed 2004, p. 75). As Sara Ahmed (2004) explains the effect was (and continues to be) a ‘sliding’ meaning, “the work done by metonymy means that it can remake links—it can stick words like ‘terrorist’ and ‘Islam’ together even when arguments are made that seem to unmake those links. Utterances like ‘this is not a war against Islam’ coexist with descriptions such as ‘Islamic Terrorists’, which work to restick the words together” (p. 76). The post 9/11 constructions of America and its *others* repeatedly ‘restuck’ signifiers of violence, barbarism and danger to categories such as Islam, Muslims and the Middle East.

Islamophobia

One major consequence of these rhetorical constructs was the occurrence of widespread Islamophobia—practices of discrimination, prejudice, and violence irrationally directed towards Muslim people (Cadre and Kassamali 2012). While the attacks on America were no doubt incredibly violent, “another form of violence spread across the country: in the days and weeks after September 11, over one thousand bias incidents against Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians were reported” (Ahmad 2004, 1261). The warning from the president was evidently not enough to ‘unstick’ particular meanings; some Americans had made their own

¹³ Ahmed (2004) and Ahmad (2004) both document the increased attacks on ‘Muslim looking’ people including Sikhs, Hindus and even Latinos and African Americans (Ahmad 2004, p. 1278).

conclusions and taken matters into their own hands. The violence that ensued included the murders of at least 19 people, as well as “fire bombings of mosques, temples, gurdwaras; assaults by fist, gun, knife, and Molotov cocktail; acts of vandalism and property destruction against homes and businesses; and innumerable instances of verbal harassment and intimidation” (Ahmad 2004, p. 1266).

Furthermore, while the physical threat of violence loomed large for many Arabs, Muslims and South Asians, changes to the legal landscape of the U.S. presented another, potentially more terrifying, form of Islamophobia. This was because “in the first two years after September 11, the United States [had] developed a corpus of immigration law and law enforcement policy that by design or effect applies almost exclusively to Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians” (Ahmad 2004, p. 1261). These policies included adopting ‘racial profiling’ at airports,¹⁴ arresting, detaining and deporting without due process (Razack 2008, p. 29), and implanting ambiguous frameworks with the law that disproportionately impacted Muslim populations (Ahmad 2004, p. 1278). It has since been argued that Muslims (or Muslim ‘looking’ people) thus live in a contemporary ‘state of exception’.¹⁵ This state of exception, as Sherene Razack (2008) explains, has transformed the Muslim community into one “without the right to have rights,” which is distinctly different from those “who are merely discriminated against” (p. 7).

Racialization of Islam

Beyond the intense violence and the various state policies, there is an important and long lasting impact of the post 9/11 vision of the world; the repetition of the essentialist

¹⁴ Racial profiling, a term that on “September 10 [2001] described the phenomenon of pretextual police stops of African Americans and Latinos, came suddenly to apply to the singling out of Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians as terrorism suspects after September 11” (Ahmad 2004, p. 1267).

¹⁵ Based on Sherene Razack’s (2008) definition of Agamben’s ‘State of Exception’ where “the law has determined that the rule of law does not apply” (p. 6).

discourses mentioned above has worked to further solidify Muslims as a racial category. This is a *racialization* of Islam; Muslims—as a group—are more frequently depicted as a racial, rather than religious, category (Joshi 2006; Isin and Siemiatycki 2002, p. 192). This has the ultimate consequence of naming particular Quranic versus, religious dress such as the hijab, or cultural practices of certain Islamic states, as inherent qualities of Muslim people. Not only does this mean that there is no space for varying religious interpretations, it also works to reinscribe ‘Muslim-ness’ as the most important identification in all Muslim peoples lives. Strangely though, the inverse of this racialization operates simultaneously. Often this has meant that racially motivated statements are deemed ‘not racist’ because they are depicted as targeting the ‘religious’ aspects of this group. Here, the notion that religion is a choice becomes used as justification for racist or Islamophobic statements (Brown 2011, p. 17). However, and in both cases, Islam—and *all* its teachings—becomes writ as either inherent to Muslim people or a ‘bad’ choice in their lives.

Canada’s own war

On September 12, 2001 Canada’s national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, published a 32-page special issue covering a number of topics related to the previous day’s events. The title “A Day of Infamy” loomed large atop the front-page story detailing the minute-by-minute occurrences of the day (*The Globe and Mail*, 2001). While the pages were filled with stories from the U.S., there was also an underlying focus on what these events would mean for Canada. In this section I want to argue that while Canada was not directly targeted or attacked on 9/11, the events of that day greatly changed the imagined geography of the nation. I start by analyzing *The Globe and Mail* special issue. I do this in order to think about the construction of a vulnerable and fearful Canada, united with its American neighbour, against the threat of ‘Islamic Terror.’ I argue that this construct further allowed and justified

the Canadian armed intervention in Afghanistan and the widespread acceptance of an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ rhetoric. I move from the war to examine the increasing securitization and surveillance of Muslim populations in the country. This is to make clear that Canada now participates in its own ‘war on terror’, and while different from the U.S., it employs many of the same tactics. Finally, I consider a few of the ways in which this has negatively impacted Muslim lives in Canada and conclude with thinking about Islamophobia and its Canadian manifestations.

“Canada goes on alert”

On the morning of September 11th, 2001 I sat in my high school library and watched the second plane crash into the second World Trade Center tower. After receiving word of the first, and that America was ‘under attack’, a number of teachers had suspended classes and we had been allowed to watch the day’s events unfold. We huddled around two TVs, perched atop wheelie carts in the library, and discussed what felt like an attack on ‘us.’ We were informed shortly after that the downtown of Toronto would be evacuated, as a safety precaution, and we had been asked to remain in our school for the duration of the day. I was terrified. But, where had this fear come from and what kinds of imagined geographies did my 14-year-old brain subscribe to in order to make it possible? What did I think, or not think, about the connections between Canada and the U.S.? Or maybe more importantly, the connection between the U.S. and those people, from those far away places, that had just attacked them?

Examining the news coverage of September 12th, 2001 suggests that I was not the only one who had made connections between Canada and the U.S. Under the heading “Canada goes on Alert” (*The Globe and Mail* 2001, p. 6) ran a story dedicated to the idea that there was indeed a ‘very real threat’ for Canadians. One article, which focused on responses

from Canadians across the country explained: “Part of the horror was that the attackers were faceless and nameless. People simply didn’t know who was to blame, what they wanted, or what other evil was in store. They said the onslaught drove home for Canadians yet again the realization that their fate was inextricably linked with that of the United States” (*The Globe and Mail* 2001, p. 25). It was our “proximity to the U.S. [that] unnerve[d] Canadians” (p. 6) and our “symbiotic relationship” (p. 26) that had some people explaining “This is like something happening to a member of the family. A lot of us feel great fear for what the aftermath will be” (p. 26). While as a country Canada had not been targeted directly, this was felt to be both possible and in some senses inevitable. The U.S. and Canada’s concerns, and even feelings, became intimately linked; one media report even declaring ‘We are all Americans now’ (Thobani 2007b, p. 218).

A further response was that this presented an opportunity to think about our nation’s vulnerability and safety in a new and dangerous world. Not only was this presented as an argument for changing our own domestic law and policy, but also as a reason to consider our role in the global fight against terror (*The Globe and Mail* 2001, p. 8, p. 26). One B’nai Brith organization was quoted saying that the events of the previous day should constitute a warning to Canada as these acts signaled the “vulnerability of all democratic nations against the ruthless agenda of terrorist organizations” (p. 8). ‘We’ as a nation were grouped into the ‘we’ that was attacked. This was subsequently presented as justification to limit the domestic actions and freedoms of a pro-Palestinian organization that had (previously) planned protests in Ottawa for the weeks following the attacks (p. 8). ‘They’ as Palestinians were grouped into the ‘they’ that was responsible for the previous days events.

These arguments were rooted in an essentialist and decidedly anti-historical account of U.S. imperialism and colonialism (Thobani 2007a, p. 401). To claim that Canada should be

on alert was to align the countries based on a fiction of shared experience and collective innocence. Nothing about the attacks suggested that ‘our fate’ was “inextricably linked” with the U.S. (*The Globe and Mail* 2001, p. 25). This was instead an imagined connection based on a particular reading of America as innocuous. In subscribing to the American mythology that they were ‘innocent’ and the attackers were ‘evil’ (Gregory 2004, p. 21) the Canadian government and public propped up a willfully ignorant conception of the histories of colonialism, imperialism and occupation that motivated the attacks. In this particular reading of the U.S., the attacks came out of *nowhere* and thus could be directed *anywhere*. As was noted above, if American readings of 9/11 constructed ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ as the primary tenants under attack, and Canadians were able to align themselves (and their state) with these basic tenants, the logical conclusion was that Canada was in danger as well (Thobani 2007b, p. 220). Not only did this work to simplify the differences between the two nations, it also worked to further (reify and) distance ‘Western’, democratic, peaceful states from the ‘Eastern,’ theocratic or un-democratic, violent ones (Gregory 2004, p. 21).

Ten years later, Stephen Harper made clear that this danger had not passed, but instead remained of great concern. He explained during a ten-year anniversary speech commemorating the loss of American life, “this day will serve as a constant reminder that we are not immune from terrorism” (The Canadian Press 2011). The ‘we’ in this speech directly referring to Canadians but standing in for all nations aligned with ‘our’ values. He made this clear in stating: “We will steadfastly defend, protect and promote our democratic values and principles, the very foundation of our free and prosperous society” (The Canadian Press 2011). The speech was a further indication of the commitment to fight ‘terrorism’ and support both our troops as well as our intelligence and security officers “who put their lives

on the line everyday in the fight against terrorism” (The Canadian Press 2011). Canada’s interest in fighting the ‘war on terror’ has only increased in the decade since it began.

While 9/11 arguably happened in *a particular place*, its consequences reverberated through spatial imaginings, reworking and reconfiguring much of the Western world. Canada’s own response to the events, while no doubt differing from the U.S., worked to reinforce Western innocence and ubiquitous fear of the threat of ‘Islamic Terror’ (Thobani 2007b). These initial constructions of an innocent Western world laid the groundwork for changing international and domestic policy with varying degrees of negative consequences on Muslim lives both in Canada and abroad.

From Canada to Afghanistan

The war has brought with it substantive changes both at home and abroad. In the weeks following the attacks the Prime Minister at the time, Jean Chrétien, implemented a set of ‘anti-terrorism laws’ (Thobani 2007a, p. 220); including, but not limited to, “strengthening state powers of surveillance and detention; the imposition of greater restrictions on immigration and refugee policies; the increased scrutiny of immigrants and refugees (both at the border and within the country); and a strengthening of the power of deportation (Thobani 2007a, p. 348).

However, domestic policy was not the only thing to experience drastic changes in the post-9/11 world. In December of 2001, Canadian Defense Minister Art Eggleton, made an announcement to the public that Canadian soldiers had been deployed in Afghanistan to support the U.S. led Operation Enduring Freedom (CBC News 2009). It was, for all intents and purposes, depicted as a peacekeeping mission in line with the NATO led International Assistance Force (CBC News 2009). The dominant government position is that this mission has been defined by its commitment to “peacekeeping and humanitarianism, development,

democratization, foreign aid” and assistance to “counter-terrorism” projects (Harvey 2005, p. 283). Further, the most recent Harper government has re-stated its commitment to the region, declaring a steady military presence until at least 2014, making Afghanistan both a long standing military project—worth roughly 11 billion to Canada—and a reality for Canadian foreign policy in the coming years. This on-going presence has arguably had a drastic impact on Canadian public opinion as well. As one commentator noted “Today, if the military asks for something, it gets it, whatever the cost, whatever the quantity,” this is because in “The aftermath of 9/11, particularly the war in Kandahar, has allowed the military to reclaim its place as a respected national institution” (Murray 2011). While this is not to suggest that there has been an un-questioning acceptance of Canada’s presence in the war, it is to point out that both domestic and foreign policy have been drastically altered since the events of 9/11 (Patel 2012, p. 273).

Securitization and discrimination

The most extreme affects of the ‘war on terror’ in Canada are exemplified through securitization measures, directed disproportionately at immigrants and refugees, as well as Muslim and Arab (looking) people (Patel 2012, p. 279). While arguably the arrests of the ‘Toronto 18’¹⁶ contributed to the security focus on Muslims in Canada, this must be placed within the pre-existing, and intense, “draconian domestic-security regime” (Zine 2012b, p. 235) of the Post-9/11 landscape, which named “Islamist Terrorism” as the greatest threat to Canadian safety (Gov. of Canada 2011, p. 4). This regime was premised on “advocating the security of Canada rather than the civil liberties of Canadians” (Patel 2012, p. 279), an imagined construct that plays up the incommensurability of freedom and security (Aitken

¹⁶ ‘Toronto 18’ refers to the 2006 case of 17 minors and one adult arrested on the grounds of an alleged terrorist attack. “...A case so poorly formulated that charges had to be dropped against as many as seven of the accused even before the trial began” (Siddiqui 2009, p. 1)

2008, p. 1), and relies on the notion that targeting Muslims and Arabs is a “natural response” rather than a “racialized reaction” to potential security threats (Patel 2012, p. 272-3).

The primary target of this regime was thus the “Muslim man within the border of the nation” or those attempting to enter it (Patel 2012, p. 273); both concerns that prompted the government to produce significant statutes, bills and acts to protect the nation. In the days, weeks and months following 9/11 the Canadian government, along with many other nations worldwide, passed ‘quick’ legislation to respond to these threats (Patel 2012, p. 272). Arguably the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) (2001) that sanctions the “detaining and deporting of individuals *before* they have committed a crime” (Razack 2008, p. 30) and authorizes “practices in detention, court trials, deportation, and torture that abuse human rights law” (Flatt 2012, p. 246) is of most concern. This act has contributed to immigrants, refugees and citizens of Arab and Muslim descent becoming the chief targets of Canada’s national security agenda (Bahdi 2003; CAIR-CAN 2004). Furthermore, *The Anti-Terrorism Act* (Bill C-36) and the subsequent use of ‘special’ legal proceedings, secret evidence and detention without charge or conviction as well as “visits at work, intrusive and irrelevant questioning, improper identification, informant solicitation and the interrogation of a minor” (CAIR CAN 2004, p. 3) have led many to argue that Muslims have become the ‘enemy within’ (Flatt 2012). The growing use of ‘security certificates,’ which permits the detention and expulsion of non-citizens who are considered to be a threat to national security, as well as the increasingly ‘sovereign’ power granted to the Minister of CIC (who issues these), has led many to note that Muslims in Canada are either living in, or threatened with, the contemporary ‘state of exception,’ in which the laws granted to their fellow citizens do not apply to them (Razack 2008; Patel 2012; Flatt 2012; Thobani 2010).

Aside from the formal policy changes, Muslims in Canada have experienced increasing discrimination and racial profiling since 9/11. While this might be most visible in the case of Muslims facing extra security checks at airports, as Reem Bahdi (2003) explains it also “takes the form of a vast and complex array of laws, regulations, policies, and practices that cut across contexts like criminal law, tax law, laws regulating financial institutions, employment...” (p. 296) and the most invisible of practices Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) focusing its efforts on examining and investigating Muslim communities (p. 299). Furthermore, this extraordinary focus on Canadian Muslims has led to common occurrences of ‘anti-Muslim’ prejudice or discrimination. In a 2002 survey

...an alarming 56 percent of respondents reported experiencing anti-Muslim incidents on at least one occasion in the year following September 11, 2001; 33 percent of those anti-Muslim incidents came in the form of verbal abuse; 33 percent of respondents indicated that their overall personal situation had taken a turn for the worse since September 11, 2001; 56 percent of respondents indicated that they felt media reporting on Islam and Muslims had become increasingly biased (CAIR-CAN 2004, p. 6).

These trends were echoed by a 2003 Canadian Islamic Congress statistic, revealing that there has been a 1,600 percent increase in “hate crimes” against Muslims in Canada (Patel 2012, p. 281). While it has been argued that the general public is not supportive of these trends (Environics 2006, p. 81), and that these might even be isolated incidents, a 2011 poll found that 56% of Canadians believe that there is an irreconcilable conflict between the West and Islam with 40% also agreeing that Muslims should face extra security checks at airports (Boswell 2011). Statistics such as these have lead Bahdi (2003) to posit that in Canada the debate is no longer *whether* racial profiling and discrimination of Muslims is occurring but rather *how* Canada can “morally, legally, or politically condone” it (p. 295).

Complicating Muslim Canadian spaces

To be sure, the condition of being Muslim in Canada is not a simple or straightforward as presented above. Not all Muslims feel targeted or have experienced

surveillance or detainment. This is of course because many Canadians, certain government policy, and specific media depictions have directly sought to challenge issues of discrimination and racial profiling. For example a recent Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) report *Words make Worlds* (2012) explains that “Muslims have observed that terms like ‘Islamic terrorism,’ ‘Islamist terrorism,’ ‘Jihadism’ and ‘Islamofascism’ succeed only in conflating terrorism with mainstream Islam, thereby casting all Muslims as terrorists or potential terrorists” (p. 4) and that this leads only to further conflict between the ‘West’ and ‘Islam.’ This document stands in direct opposition to other government rhetoric on Islam (CBC News 2011; Clark 2012) and represents an attempt at a more sensitive approach to Muslim populations in Canada.

The RCMP report (along with others (RCMP 2009)) fits in with a number of statements, programs and events directed at Muslims in Canada in a more inclusionary, less reactionary tone (Islam Events 2007; Rawal TV 2012). This was most recently echoed by Stephen Harper’s attendance of his first Eid celebration, in which he “recognized the many contributions of Muslims to Canada’s success as a growing and vibrant country and the importance of pluralism and religious freedom to our common values” (Kinsella 2011). Each, in their own way, signals the potential for better relations between the government and Muslim Canadians.

This improved tone is most clearly exemplified in the CBC television series *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. The show debuted in the fall of 2007 to a “viewership of 2 million, the most watched debut of any Canadian television show” (Dakrouy 2012, p. 170) and has received widespread acceptance and praise. The show represents a concerted attempt, by its creator Zarqa Nawaz (as well as the CBC), to give voice to more a normalized, friendly, and funny Muslim Canadian. It has since been argued that *Little Mosque* “serves to mitigate against

some of the criticism of media representation of Islam and Muslims in Canada” (p. 175) and further that this show has begun to counter negative depictions of Muslims by airing “unconventional portrayals” (p. 176) and mocking or debunking present stereotypes.

These developments can be read in a number of ways. They are in some senses ‘breaks’ from a general Islamophobic tone in the Western world. They are also part of an intense focus that often (inadvertently) reproduces some of the very trends they wish to address. Similar to earlier discussions of ‘special rights’ for immigrant groups, the ‘special focus’ on Muslims in Canada might have the effect of “producing more docile, more disciplined, more dependent subjects” of the state (Pratt 2004, p. 105). This is of course because when the state grants special or specific rights “to groups, the effects can be to further naturalize group identity rather than unveil the social relations that constitute it” (Pratt 2004, p. 105). In the case of governmental focus and attention on ‘Muslims’ in Canada, the possibility of reinscribing their otherness—rather than challenging it—is great. Furthermore, in confluence with a general Islamophobic tone in Canada (Zine 2012a, p. 6), this kind of programming does little to address the root causes of systemic oppression (Young 1990, p. 41-2). And similarly, with *Little Mosque*, general acceptance of the caricatures on screen cannot come to stand in for addressing broader trends of racism, discrimination or Islamophobia in the country.

I include these examples to complicate the picture of Canadian society; to bring forward just a few of the ambivalences and nuances present in the Canadian government and Canadian media’s representations of Muslims. These small examples are neither an attempt to dismiss the reality of Islamophobia in Canada, nor are they meant to suggest that ‘focus’ constitutes positive attitudes. Instead they are an acknowledgement of the complex and varied ways in which Muslims are represented within the country. In the months following 9/11 a

Council on American Islamic Relations—Canada (CAIR-CAN) survey of 500 Muslim Canadians stated that “more than 60 percent...report[ed] acts of kindness and support by their fellow citizens in the wake of 9/11. Numerous interfaith dialogues, town-hall meetings, and open houses [were] evidence of the spontaneous outreach extended by fellow Canadians” (Khan 2009, p. 32). There do exist ‘breaks’ from the generally Islamophobic tone.

The Muslim woman

Finally, within the context of heightened attention towards Islam and Muslims in Canada there has become an increasingly large focus on the figure of the Muslim woman. Reading a newspaper today you will inevitably be confronted by this figure, her eyes often piercing, face or head covered, she stares back at you as the symbol for any number of events taking place locally or globally: questions of immigration in Canada, the war in Afghanistan and Taliban rule, the revolutions in the Middle East and Africa, or any number of niqab/burqa/hijab bans in various parts of the Western world (see for example National Post 2011; Artiste 2008; Patel 2011). Her religion, Islam, is writ as inherently patriarchal and violent and therefore her gender is always already inscribed as subordinate and subjugated (Jiwani 2008, p. 65). Merely being Muslim oppresses her and only if (when?) she steps back from Islam will she be granted rights to agency and subject hood (Thobani 2007a, p. 170).

The figure of the Muslim woman has become so pervasive that miriam cooke (2008) has argued for the adoption of the idiom *Muslimwoman*: the two words becoming one to evoke a singular identity. “*Muslimwoman* draws attention to the emergence of a new singular religious and gendered identification that overlays national, ethnic, cultural, historical, and even philosophical diversity” (cooke 2008, p. 91). While I do not wish to collapse the words or identities (Zine 2008), I agree with the trends that cooke is naming. Muslim women, typically ‘ripped out’ of their contexts (Jiwani 2008, p. 65), have become an important symbol for the

‘clash’ between the West and Islam (Bilge 2010). This line of argument frequently follows the notion that “the barbarism of Islam is principally evident in the treatment of women” (Razack 2008, p. 84) and consequently Muslim women are in need of ‘saving’ (Khan 2009, p. 138). Furthermore, while historically this rhetoric was “dominated by colonial cultural producers” (Zine 2008, p. 110) it has more recently been adopted by a “new breed of authorities...in the form of secular politicians” who decide how Muslim women should (or should not) occupy public spaces or social life more generally (Zine 2008, p. 110-11).

The construction of this figure should be understood as deeply rooted in Orientalism as well as Islamophobia (Cadre and Kassamali 2012). While the histories and geographies of both Orientalism and Islamophobia pre-date September 11, 2001 and the subsequent ‘war on terror’ (Khan 1998) there is no doubt that they have become ever more present in Canada since (Aitchison *et al.* 2007, p. 1). Much of the logic outlined in the previous sections of this chapter have influenced the Canadian public so much so that roughly 80% of Canadians support the recent ban on niqabs and burqas (Kingston 2012). This is an alarming number and is directly contradictory to state claims of multicultural acceptance. In this new world, as Sherene Razack (2008) explains, “while Muslim men have been the target of an intense policing, Muslim women have been singled out as needing protection from their violent and hyper-patriarchal men” (p. 4). The logic underpinning both constructs is grounded in the racialization of Islam and Muslims (Joshi 2006, Razack 2002, p. 192). Religious identification, and all its various meanings, becomes read as the primary force in Muslim lives.

Placing ‘the Muslim woman’ in Canada

Understanding how this comes to play out in Canada means thinking through the kinds of stories that are told about Muslim women in the country. These might include the banning of the hijab on soccer fields and certain places of employment—women in apparent need of

saving from the physical threat of being choked by their hijab (Bahkt 2008, p. 106-7); the banning of the niqab/burqa in citizenship ceremonies—women in need of being liberated from a tribal custom that treats them as property (Sun Media 2011); the *sharia* law debates in Ontario and Quebec—Islamic law being disallowed because it might negatively impact women’s lives (Razack 2007); the coverage of ‘honour killings’—young women yearning to be ‘Canadian’ killed by their backwards, barbarous and patriarchal families (Blatchford 2012); and finally the acceptance and celebration of people like Irshad Manji—Muslim women who denounce Islam and are thus welcomed into ‘mainstream’ Canadian society (Ali 2008, p. 101). Alternatively we might also look to how Canadians speak about Muslim women in other countries. This might include the use of women’s desperate existence under the Taliban to justify the Canadian armed occupation of Afghanistan (Jiwani 2008, p. 78); the atrocities faced by women in Saudi Arabia (including the illegality of driving (The Globe and Mail Editorials 2011)) or the persistence of stoning and female genital mutilation in certain parts of Africa and the Middle East (Peritz 2011)—‘their’ backwards practices appalling to ‘our’ gender equal society.

A striking example of this rhetoric, which galvanizes the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ logic, can be found in the new Citizenship Guide, *Discover Canada*, given to all immigrants upon arrival. Readers of the guide are informed that “In Canada, men and women are equal under the law. Canada’s openness and generosity do not extend to barbaric cultural practices that tolerate spousal abuse, ‘honour killings,’ female genital mutilation, forced marriage or other gender-based violence”¹⁷ (CIC 2009, p. 9). This is a pre-emptive strike on all things ‘other’ and it implicitly names Muslim populations both ‘barbaric’ as well as guilty of importing this

¹⁷ This is in no way to suggest that practices of female genital mutilation, femicide or forced marriages are acceptable, but rather to question the logic by which *they* become named as particularly of interest, while other practices of gender based violence remain silenced.

barbarism into the country. This unifying logic works not only to bring all Muslims ‘here’ into one, potentially violent group, but it also ties them inextricably to the ‘others’ over there (Jiwani 2010, p. 65). There are two further consequences of this: first, ‘we’, as multicultural and generous Canadians, should stand in opposition to these practices, both ‘here’ and ‘there’, reinforcing the necessity—and liberatory or benevolent nature—of military invasions in places such as Afghanistan or the banning of the niqab/burqa in citizenship ceremonies. And second, that Muslim women ‘here’ can now be divided further into two groups; those who remain oppressed because they continue to believe in Islam (and or wear hijab, niqab, burqa) or those who become liberated because they accept ‘our Canadian’ practices of gender equality and non-violence (Thobani 2007a, p. 168). This silences the persistence of all other gender-based violence in the country—Canadians don’t commit these crimes, ‘others’ do—and names certain practices as more worthy of legal and political attention and condemnation—‘honour killings’ require our focus but ‘femicide’ in general does not.

A further example came on January 30th 2012 when Crown Attorney, Gerard Laarhuis, spoke to reporters about the importance of the guilty verdict in the Shafia ‘Honour Killing’ trial outside the Frontenac County Courthouse in Kingston. He explained that the “verdict sends a very clear message about our Canadian values and the core principles in a free and democratic society that all Canadians enjoy” (Findlay 2012). The murder of female family members in the name of honour are not in line with ‘our’ values, they are instead “imported” from abroad (The Canadian Press 2012). In Prime Minister Harper’s words these are ‘barbaric’ and ‘heinous’ crimes in need of special attention and funding to eradicate them (The Canadian Press 2012). Finally, as Justice Maranger handed down the verdict he condemned the convicted noting that “the apparent reason behind these cold-blooded, shameful murders was that the four completely innocent victims offended your twisted notion of honour, a notion of

honour that is founded upon the domination and control of women, a sick notion of honour that has absolutely no place in any civilized society.” (CBC News 2012). The focus throughout the trial remained on the inherently patriarchal tendencies of this family—their religion (Islam) and culture (Afghani)—rather than the continuities between this particular case of gender violence and many others occurring in Canada today (Olwan 2011; Cadre 2012). ‘Canadians’ are writ as somehow removed from acts of gender violence, while Muslim migrant populations—specifically women—are imagined as permanently in need of saving from the ‘barbarism’ of their beliefs. Finally, sex, sexuality and ‘liberated’ conceptions of gender become inscribed as out of reach for Muslim women (Olwan 2011).

Gendering ‘us’ versus ‘them’

These exchanges hinge on the construct that Western women (and men), liberated from gender violence and patriarchy, must stand with their Muslim sisters (both ‘here’ and ‘over there’) and work to free them from an inherently patriarchal religious tradition. While there is no doubt that patriarchy and misogyny are operating in many of the aforementioned examples (Jiwani 2008 p. 71), the Canadian coverage and commentary of them is guilty of focusing on this as inherent to the religion or culture rather than as in line with other gender based violence happening more broadly. “The Western context of gender inequality remains concealed” and displaced by the extraordinary focus on the apparent cultural and religious manifestation of it (Jiwani 2008, p. 71). In international cases this obscures the colonial and imperial linkages and responsibilities for collective violence and gender-based violence (for example in Canadian occupation of Afghanistan), such as the well-documented increase in intimate partner violence during state violence, war, or occupation (Clark *et al.* 2010). In local or national contexts this works similarly to distract from the complex relationship between migration, institutionalized racism and the persistence of gender violence (such as the link

between migration and experiences of discrimination in the new society, and intimate partner violence in migrant communities (Riley 2011)). In Canadian media and public policy that focuses on Muslim women, a particular construct of gender becomes both permanently adhered to religion as well as detached from other social, political, historical or geographical markers.

There are a number of consequences to this particular discursive production of the figure of the Muslim woman. First and foremost, only when Muslim women's actions align with liberal feminist conceptions of agency (as equated with resistance to patriarchy) are these women understood as legitimate subjects (Mahmood 2005, p. 7). "When women's actions seem to reinscribe what appear to be 'instruments in their own oppression'" they are deemed unworthy or incapable of subjecthood (p. 8); wearing hijab thus cannot be a free and informed choice but is rather an 'exercise in false consciousness' (Khan 2009, p. 135). In the Canadian case this is most clearly demonstrated in discussions over the allowance of the niqab/burqa (and even the hijab) in which women are presented as permanently oppressed.

Second, and closely tied to the first consequence, is that feminism—including but not limited to issues of gender equality, Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender (LGBT) rights, and social and political freedoms for women—becomes permanently oppositional to a static and unchanging patriarchal Islam (Mahmood 2005, p. 190). This has the effect of silencing complex, varied and radical Islamic feminism(s) (see for example Wadud 1999; Mahmood 2005; Hafez 2011) as well as promoting and legitimizing what Jasbir Puar has called 'homonationalism(s)' (Puar 2007). In the Canadian case this has allowed the government to pit multicultural tolerance and acceptance (of the Islamic 'other') against gender and sexual freedoms (women and LGBT rights). Here decisions to restrict Muslims' religious freedoms have been propagated under the banner of protecting gender and sexual freedoms, as though

the two are mutually exclusive (or inherently incompatible) (The Canadian Press 2012; CIC 2011, p. 38).

Third, religious belief becomes tied to stupidity, ‘blind faith’ or even dishonesty (Scott 2007, p. 125), thereby reinforcing the notion that only the secular subject has legitimate and truthful control over her own life and beliefs. This assumes rationality and honesty of the secular subject and further demarcates between the modern, secular subject and the pre-modern (or anti-modern) religious one (Mamdani 2004, p. 21). As Christie Blatchford wrote in the National Post of the Shafia ‘Honour Killings’ “...it’s a fair generalization that some Afghans have learned to say whatever they think their listener wants to hear...it’s true that there is what’s called ‘permissible lying’ in Islam (it’s called al-Taqiyya, and means the concealing or disguising of one’s beliefs, feelings or opinions to save oneself from injury)...” (Blatchford 2012). Blatchford locates lying within Islam and a tendency for deception within Afghan people as a group. This is grounded in the assumption that the “true, the objective, the real, the rational...emerge only with the shedding of religious authority or ‘prejudice’” (Brown 2009, p. 10). These claims reinforce the notion that the secular subject is outside or somehow removed from these tendencies, whereas the religious or cultural one—in this case the Islamic Afghani—is definitively dishonest (Mahrouse 2010, p. 92).

Fourth, and finally, Muslim men are ultimately conceived of as incapable of love and potentially outside of ‘normal’ human interaction (Steuter and Wills 2009, p. 23). This is in large part due to the persistence of violent depictions of Muslim men. A simple google search on ‘Muslim men in Canada’ returns results for ‘terrorism,’ ‘violence’ and ‘anti-Muslim prejudice’. There is a “consistent disinterest in nonviolent Muslim perspectives” (Steuter and Wills 2009, p. 5), leading to the under representation of Muslim men as important, valuable or even loving parts of their communities and families. This is further compounded by reference

to the oft-cited Quranic verses that ‘allow’ men to take more than one wife (Alvi *et al.* 2003, p. 139) as well as the controversial (and variously interpreted (Khan 2009, p. 151)) verse that suggests a man shall ‘hit’ his wife if she disobeys him (Wadud 1999, p. 76). These Quranic prescriptions, however, remain hotly debated and contested. They are located within a particular reading of Islamic belief and cannot be understood as scripting the actions and behaviours of *all* Muslim men. It is important to mention here that both Judaism and Christianity have similar prescriptions within their religious text, yet men of these faiths are not proscribed with the same anti-woman characteristics. This is an intense ‘double standard’ (Khan 2009, p. 37) in which Islam and Muslims are conceived of as irredeemably ‘other’.

A qualification about the source, and condition, of this logic must be made. The present depictions of Muslim women are in large part dominated by (a particular kind of) Western feminism or through the mobilization of (certain) feminist concerns. This is a decided shift from a right-wing conservative distaste for Islamic religious dress and practice, to a much more liberal feminist ‘concern’ for the emancipation of the Muslim woman (Bilge 2010, p. 15). With the beginning of the ‘war on terror’, “almost overnight, feminism acquired a new lease on life, as enthusiastic women—and men—clamoured to discuss the abject status of the oppressed Muslim woman...a particular kind of feminism became exercised with this burning desire” (Thobani 2010, p. 128). This is worrisome as often these interventions are motivated by fairly simplistic constructs of the ‘West’ and its Islamic ‘Other.’ Further, an unquestioning acceptance of this particular kind of feminism works to obscure the often anti-woman, imperial or colonial policies that come along with it; “governance feminism” becoming widely practiced at the same time as pushing “anti-immigration and monoculturalist agendas” (Bilge 2010, p. 11). To be sure, this imagines a world in which liberal democracies are the only places where human-freedom exists, a reading which “conceals the brutal forces of unfreedom that

made freedom an ideal” and neglects to address the “other ideas of freedom” that still remain (Walcott 2011, p. 17). Finally, this presents a complex challenge to anti-racist feminists as it has typically meant that speaking out against government interventions, wars, or occupations is deemed ‘against gender equality’ and even restrictive of migrant integration (Bilge 2010, p. 11). There remains a critical need to interrogate what kinds of feminism(s) are being celebrated and which kinds remain silenced (Olwan and Azeb 2012).

Conclusions

In this chapter I have mapped the Canadian landscape as one of multiculturalism, immigration and inclusion as well as Islamophobia, discrimination and gendered racism. I began with a look at Canada as a place that many Muslims call home, and as a place that many more will continue to live, and thrive in. I then looked to the historical presence of Orientalism and ‘West’ versus ‘East’ logics to better contextualize the presence of Islamophobia today. In my subsequent examination of 9/11 and the ‘war on terror’ I argued that the U.S. and Canada were dramatically re-made that day. I examined the affects of this through both the formal policy changes in each country, as well as the increasing presence of Islamophobia, discrimination and racial profiling. Finally, I explored the construction and maintenance of this rhetoric through the figure of the Muslim woman. This chapter presents the ‘context’ for many of the interviews, stories and discussions I had with the women I worked with. In many ways, the complexities and contradictions of this context help situate the uneven and intricate stories of Muslim women’s experiences that I turn to in later chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 2: methodological encounters, ethics and solidarity

Solidarity as method

It is vital that leftists, when feeling flames of righteous rage on behalf of Muslim women (or other marginalized groups), do their research. For one thing, it is not enough to have allies, if our allies have proven themselves racist and sexist. For another, we need to acknowledge that the Muslim women most affected by the issue of the month were dealing with it long before the media ever picked it up, and that they will have already developed a diversity of perspectives and strategies. Above all, if 'solidarity' is to mean anything, we must remember to take leadership from marginalized voices, not space: feminism's role is to facilitate, not liberate (Cadre and Kassamali 2012).

As Cadre and Kassamali so clearly outline, solidarity is much more than the practice of 'liberating' those who face oppression. In fact, it is the opposite. Understanding resistance is, in Lila Abu-Lughod's words, about "not just arguing for the dignity or heroism of the resisters but by letting their practices teach us about complex interworkings of...structures of power" (quoted in Mahmood 2011, p. 9). A practiced, embodied solidarity is thus premised on taking seriously the experiences of oppression faced by Muslim women, as well as allowing these to inform our analyses of structures and systems of power in Canada. My 'method' is built from within this understanding.

As a white woman engaged in a project with Muslim women, solidarity was both a goal and a serious necessity; if my attempts to enact this were to mean anything, my methods, ethics and research practice had to be the starting point. I want to argue that my solidarity was in fact built through the methodological practices I chose, and furthermore this method was born out of taking seriously Sara Ahmed's (2002) notion of the encounter.¹⁸ I am not a Muslim woman, but this cannot and should not be a reason to abandon the possibility of working together, this would "involve a withdrawal from responsibility for others and for one's own implication in relationships of power" (Ahmed 2002, p. 568), something I simply have no interest in doing.

¹⁸ Here I am specifically referring to her contention that 'face-to-face' encounters can become the basis for collective politics, even when little 'common ground' is shared (Ahmed 2002, p. 568).

In what follows I think through my own situated knowledge and particular positionings that give meaning to the research I have done and the methods I have chosen; I do this because these are in fact not divisible. Next I move to consider some of the issues embedded in doing qualitative research and the work I have drawn from to address these issues. I work from a feminist geographical perspective and thus have an “intrinsic...self-consciousness about research methods” (McDowell 1993, p. 400) built into my understanding of their value. I explore method as not just the “investigative technique employed” (Winchester and Rofo 2010, p. 4-5) but also, and more importantly, a practice of ‘drawing out connections’ between what we know, how we know it, and the power embedded in such knowledge (Harker 2009, p. 18). I move then to examine my chosen methods as well give an overview of what was said, or some ways of thinking about the overall ‘results.’ Finally, I conclude with thinking through the potential limitations and pitfalls of this type of project, before ending with the possibilities that remain.

The “I” in all of this

So, who am I and what does this have to do with the thesis that follows? Why and how did I become interested in stories of belonging in Muslim immigrant women in Canada? As Leslie Sanders (2001) posits “people usually choose fields that provide them with a way of articulating their most basic questions about life” (p. 168). My questions have a lot to do with who I am. To start, I am a woman. A white woman. A white, Jewish, queer, Canadian woman. These are not solid identifications or categories but each in their own way shape my perspectives, desires and politics. Further, some (if not all) of these identifications allow me to benefit from dominant systems of power and thus require pause and reflection.

As a woman with feminist politics I seek to challenge and confront patriarchy, misogyny and the on-going gendering of knowledge in my personal life as well as my activism

and research. I agree with Yasmeen Abu-Laban (2008) in her contention that “a comprehensive approach to the theoretical and empirical study of political life in the twenty-first century demands that explicit attention be given to gender” and further, the question of “how gender matters for understanding relations of power” remains key to understanding the nation-state (p. 2). Grounded in post-structural and anti-essentialist visions of the world, however, I want to think of universalist claims for solidarity and equality among women as “a political process of generating intersubjective agreement rather than applications of pre-given rules or identities” (Pratt 2004, p. 134). My claim to woman-hood (or any of the other identities explored below) is thus not an essentialist statement to *one* type of awareness or experience (Dyck 1997, p. 183), but a complex acknowledgement of both the performative nature of that identity¹⁹ as well as the ways in which it practically affects my politics.

As a Jew I am further interested in discussions of ‘othering’, discrimination and trauma. From this position I feel tied to this project on two fronts. First, as Gassan Hage wrote of Sherene Razack’s influential book *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics*,

Hannah Arendt argued that Holocaust history shows that Jews were perceived and treated by German society as marginal and expendable long before their extermination was acted out. *Casting Out* shows the complex ways in which Muslims in the West are slowly being driven to become today’s exterminables...It is however worth remembering that the Holocaust was not a historical inevitability. Those struggling against the dark forces of extermination can succeed. (Hage on Razack 2008, back cover)

I am thus invested in a solidarity based on the acknowledgement that Hage makes; Muslims are the ‘new’ Jews.²⁰ The removal of political and social rights from many Muslim populations worldwide should be an indication of a troubling current condition; one that Hage reminds us

¹⁹ I want to think of this through Butler’s (1993) explanation that “to claim that discourse is formative is not to claim that it originates, causes, or exhaustively composes that which it concedes; rather, it is to claim that there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body” (p. xix).

²⁰ This statement is not to suggest that there can be ‘equivalent’ forms of suffering and thus solidarity based on that; conflating one group’s suffering for the other is not a useful task. Instead, this is to argue for an ethic of responsibility that emanates from the acknowledgement that Hage makes, that Muslims have become today’s exterminables.

is not inevitable. As a Jew, with a familial history firmly located in the Holocaust, I am not interested in accepting this current condition and instead choose to work towards ‘struggling against’ it (Razack 2008, back cover). Second, and based on this commonality I am invested in the acknowledgement that systemic “oppression is the primary traumatizing condition” (Burstow 2003, p. 1308) and it ultimately has transgenerational and long-lasting impacts (p. 1309). Working to counter this means engaging in an awareness of “the centrality of oppression in the traumatizing of human beings” and the importance of “the traumatized gaining or re-gaining the power to name, protect ones-self, and counter alienation” (p. 1310) through “telling one’s story; naming one’s own experiences; debunking myths about one’s community” (p. 1313) and exploring the role of the state, its institutions, and wider society in the production of this trauma (p. 1314). My identity as a Jew motivates my political interest in solidarity with Muslims but also my methodological focus on emotional and expressive wellbeing in oppressed populations.

A further element of my identity that greatly shapes the research I do and my political concerns is my queer-ness. I draw here on Jasbir Puar’s (2007) instrumental book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Puar argues that the increasingly prevalent display of support and acceptance for certain queer or gay bodies in the United States is accompanied by a simultaneous construction of Orientalized terrorist bodies as permanently outside and threatening to this. She explains that this logic can be understood as “the rise of homonormative Islamophobia in the global North, whereby homonormative and queer gay men can enact forms of national, racial, or other belongings by contributing to a collective vilification of Muslims” (p. 20-1). This construct is based on an “Islam versus Homosexuality” paradigm and it works to reinforce colonial wars, imperial occupations, and oppressive or racist depictions of Muslim populations globally (p. 17). The idea that my rights

to sexuality are at odds with Muslim religious (or cultural) practice is blatantly racist, unnecessarily homogenizing and deeply problematic. I seek to trouble this construction: first by reclaiming my queer body as not in opposition to Islam, and second, by investigating—and challenging—the logic that underpins these claims and rhetoric.

Finally, as a Canadian citizen I must constantly question the ways in which my passport and citizenship rights are used to enact violence upon particular ‘others’, both locally and globally. My citizenship and assumed ‘Canadian-ness’ comes with certain freedoms and privileges and paired with my white-ness provides many comforts. I move freely between states, I access my rights easily and I do not face extreme levels of state scrutiny (even when engaging in criticism of state practices). Further, my Canadian identity remains mobilized as in need of protection, both from the ‘others’ over there as well as the immigrant ‘others’ over here (Jiwani 2006; Thobani 2007a), and thus remains something to be critical of. Acknowledging this, as well as critiquing the differential ways in which Canadian citizenship operates, allows me to contribute (if minimally) to questioning the legitimacy of certain state claims.

Qualitative research: ethics, power and position

Geography has, in various ways, always had a close relationship with qualitative research methods. Broadly speaking, qualitative research is concerned with “elucidating human environments and human experiences” (Winchester and Rofo 2010, p. 4-5). There is a focus on engaging with social structures (how they operate and what this tells us) or individual experiences (what is felt or seen and what can be learned from this) (Winchester and Rofo 2010, p. 5). Within this thesis I am explicitly interested in individual experience(s), but believe that a focus on them can in fact enliven understandings of social structures. That is, a focus on particular Muslim women’s negotiations of belonging allows us to better

understand the Canadian state and projects of multiculturalism. It does not however, tell us conclusively *who* the Muslim woman is, or *what* the Canadian state is capable of. Adopting the language of Gail Davies and Claire Dwyer (2007), this project rejects notions of ‘singularity’, ‘clarity’ or ‘precision’ of results; there are no un-ambiguous conclusions. Instead it is grounded in the belief that

In place of the pursuit of certainty in generating representations of the world, there is recognition that the world is so textured as to exceed our capacity to understand it, and thus to accede that social science methodologies and forms of knowing will be characterized as much by openness, reflexivity and recursivity as by categorization, conclusion and closure. (p. 258)

My research methods are subsequently located within a tradition of *why* and *how* questions that seek to “understand meanings within broader social processes and structures” (England 2006, p. 292) and further explore the relations of power that contribute to these structures (McDowell 1992, p. 400).

From ethical review to re-imagining ethics

There are a number of ethical concerns that arise when conducting qualitative research. Ethics are broadly understood as the practice of conducting research in a way that is accountable, sensitive and responsible to those peoples or communities involved in the research (Dowling 2010, p. 28). At the University of British Columbia (UBC) all research involving human subjects must be reviewed and approved by the UBC Behaviour Research Ethics Board (BREB).²¹ On their website they state that “The underlying value of research ethics review is respect for human dignity. The review process ensures that research involving humans is sensitive to the inherent worth of all human beings and the respect and consideration they are due” (UBC 2012). The concerns raised (and ideally addressed) by ethics boards focus on privacy, consent, harm and risk (Dowling 2010, p.28-30) with specific

²¹ The UBC BREB is governed by the Tri-Council and its policies. The Tri-Council consists of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

emphasis placed on the researcher's role and responsibility to their research subjects (UBC 2012).

But how can an institutionalized notion of ethics engage with actually evolving, and variously interpreted, ethical and moral considerations? And, do my personal ethics correspond with institutional definitions fashioned by UBC? While some have argued that ethical review boards offer a “good starting point” (Howitt and Stevens 2010, p. 51) for pursuing ethical research, others have noted that the rigidity of these guidelines make them unsuited for engaging with the particularities of qualitative techniques (Dowling 2010, p. 30). Not only do ethics boards simply proscribe a governing ideal that might have little to do with how research is ultimately conducted, they also remain far removed from the changes that occur on the ground. I find Paul Routledge's (in Lynn 2003) notion of ‘relational ethics’ valuable in addressing this dilemma as he argues for an adaptable, changing, and contingent ethics, based on a collaborative and embodied encounter with ‘lived practice’ (p. 70).

However, each and every ‘lived practice’ remains different. Ethical and moral considerations are entirely subjective and often deeply personally and politically motivated. As Laura Pulido (in Lynn 2003) argues this means researchers inevitably “make ethical judgments, and sometimes choose to act upon those that they consider to be ‘unethical,’” (p. 48) further highlighting the difficult (and potentially impossible) nature of claiming hard and fast rules to distinguish between ethical and unethical behaviour. There is no straightforward way to know “the difference between justice and injustice,” this is instead a process of “navigating the pathways connecting thought to emotion, and politics to affect” (Wright 2010, p. 819). Thus, my personal ethics are derived both from an acknowledgement and participation in a formal ethical review process as well as a deep skepticism of its (stand-alone) value.

Building my own conception of ethical research has meant engaging in a range of scholarship on solidarity, ally-ship and activism (Wright 2010; Bishop 2002; Mikdashi 2012; Cadre and Kassamali 2012; Olwan and Azeb 2012). This was inspired in large part by anti-racist theorizations of solidarity such as those articulated in *States of Race: Critical Race Feminism for the 21st Century* (2010). The editors, Sherene Razack, Malinda Smith and Sunera Thobani, make a call for “collective activism, embodied encounters, and a willingness to engage in the hard work of dialogue and solidarity that includes a politics of engagement and speaking *to* and not simply speaking *about* non-white women and indigenous women” (emphasis in original, p.12). My desire to see this feminist politics of alterity enacted has also pushed me to consider my ethics through relationships of friendship and empathy (Routledge in Lynn, p. 70) as well as the more traditional relationships of researcher and researched. I draw from the belief in a “situated ethics” in which the researcher is committed to “paying explicit attention to the particular situation and to the consequences for the relations of those involved” and further maintains “an absence of interest in making universal claims” all the while “still appealing to abstract principles of justice and care” (Vivat 2002, p. 240).

Research relationships: power differentials and positions

One of the primary ways in which questions of ethics become visible is through a consideration of the power differential between the researcher and researched. Acknowledging the differing social positions of both parties’ means thinking about the kinds of relationships we create when conducting qualitative research, and the consequences of these. Robyn Dowling (2010) explains that social researchers typically engage in three research relationships: reciprocal relationships, in which both parties are in similar social positionings; studying up, in which the researched is in a position of power relative to the researcher; and potentially exploitative relationships in which the researcher is in a position of more power

than the researched (p. 32). In many ways my white, Canadian-born, educated, middle-class status placed me in a 'potentially exploitative relationship' with some of the women I interviewed. Many spoke English as a second language, were new to Canada, and had far lower levels of formal education than I did. If Muslim women constituted the common positionality in my research, I was certainly an 'Outsider'²². I was keenly aware of my potential power over the women I worked with and attempted to trouble this in a number of ways.

However, a note on the 'insider'/'outsider' dynamic is necessary. Taking an anti-essentialist approach to my research further required me to think about the ways in which these identity demarcations were not solid and as researchers we are never simply "either and outsider or an insider" (Dowling 2010, p. 36). To assume that the women I worked with were always already less powerful than I, was simply misguided and had the potentially negative impact of reinforcing a particular state of powerlessness. As Dowling (2010) reminds us "We have overlapping racial, socio-economic, gender, ethnic and other characteristics. If we have multiple social qualities and roles, [so] do our informants, then there are many points of similarity and dissimilarity between ourselves and research participants" (p. 36). Within my project, often women's educational backgrounds or class positioning's meant I was in fact 'studying up'. Or, sometimes our collective notion of womanhood positioned us in a much more 'reciprocal relationship'; our shared understanding of certain gendered experiences bringing us together. Additionally, my sexuality, while not explicitly stated in most interviews, proved to be a powerful moment of solidarity for the queer women I spoke with, creating a common understanding to bond over, and drastically changing the power dynamic between us. As Ahmed (2002) clarifies "rather than thinking of gender and race as something that this other has (which would thematize this other as always gendered and racialized in a certain

²² "An insider is someone who is similar to their informants in many respects, while an outsider differs substantially" (Dowling 2010, p. 36)

way), we can consider how such differences are determined at the level of the encounter. That is, the immediacy of the face to face is affected by broader social processes...” (Ahmed 2002, p. 562). Stating this is not to alleviate the potentially exploitative nature of my research, but rather to claim interest (and faith) in the ‘encounter’ and thus dedication to the ‘face to face’ quality of each relationship I built; each different enough to complicate envisioning one ‘power relationship’ between researcher and researched.

Critical reflexivity

While developing my project I worked to challenge this ‘potentially exploitative relationship’ by engaging women who were interested in the design of the research. I started by having conversations with two Muslim women: one an immigrant from Fiji, aged 65, who had been in Canada for 30 plus years and responded to my email invite for research participants (see Appendix A); the other, a second-generation woman, 24 years of age, who I had known for a few years through a scholarship program we had both participated in. These were not formal interviews but rather conversations meant to engage my research group in a process of dialogue. In each meeting I outlined my interests, my motivations and my basic research question. In each meeting they pushed me to consider various aspects of the project that I had neglected to think through. The older woman, Runa²³, urged me to interview second-generation women and include their perspectives (“well like my daughter, and my daughter in law, they have gone through the whole Canadian schooling, they are like *Canadian*. They must have had lots of difficulties”²⁴). The younger, Hafsa, warned me to suspend my secular-feminist visions of the world and just try to listen to what was important for these

²³ All names used are pseudonyms. They have been chosen by respondents if they were interested in doing this and chosen by me otherwise.

²⁴ I conducted all interviews quoted in this thesis between October 2011 and June of 2012.

women's sense of belonging. I took seriously these interventions and adapted my project to include second-generation women and began challenging myself (and my research) to consider the importance of Islam in some of these women's lives.

Further I adapted my research questions *with* my participants, changing each interview slightly to fit their needs and interests. This was an arduous process that required me to actually listen to what each person felt was meaningful, often getting far 'off track' and away from topics I wanted to discuss. In many ways this was a process of constantly reconsidering what was meaningful or apparently valuable to my research, instead reevaluating my own assumptions based on what I was actually hearing (Dowling 2010, p. 37). The primary example of this being my initial belief that if immigration policy and rhetoric in Canada was shifting to be more apprehensive or hostile to Muslim women, it would be immigrant women that would have the most to say about this. As I began my research I was urged by numerous women to discuss these topics with their 'daughters.'²⁵ While both groups had much to contribute to this conversation, it was in fact true that women born in Canada were more concerned with these changes.

Finally being critically reflexive does not remove the possibility that my research will have negative consequences or reinforce some (if not many) of the injustices I seek to address (Mahrouse 2010, p. 183). This is in large part because the simple act of "bringing marginalized groups into visibility is insufficient to change hegemonic relations" (Pratt 2004, p. 173). Making space for Muslim women to tell stories of belonging does little to actually change Canadian state and media rhetoric. It also potentially works to reinforce the idea that 'they' need to be given space, while I need to be doing the giving (Dyck 1997, p. 197). As Leslie

²⁵ When women referred to their 'daughters' they often meant the younger generation, those born in Canada or growing up in Canada. Only on two occasions did women request that I spoke directly with their (actual) daughters.

Brown and Karen Potts (2005) ask: “How is it that ‘our very efforts to liberate (through our research) perpetuate the relations of dominance?’” (p. 256). They go on to remind researchers that “good intentions are never enough to produce anti-oppressive processes or outcomes” (p. 260) arguably because qualitative research projects are often “laden with positivist assumptions about epistemology” (p. 256). Methods, and critical reflexivity about them, are thus not outside of the power dynamics we wish to challenge.

Research design and techniques

When I began my research project I was set on using qualitative methods because of the particular political concerns I had and my specific interest in recording detailed stories of emotional attachment and belonging. I decided to use one-on-one interviews, focus groups (or group interviews) as well as participant observation, interspersed with content analysis of Canadian media and government discourses (Hay 2010; Winchester and Rofo 2010; Mansvelt and Berg 2010; Dowling 2010).

Recruitment

Recruitment for this project was done through two immigrant settlement organizations serving Vancouver and the Lower Mainland: the Immigrant Serving Society of British Columbia (ISSofBC)²⁶ and MOSAIC.²⁷ In the case of ISSofBC I had previously conducted research there, and had developed a good working relationship with settlement counselors at one of their locations. I felt comfortable asking counselors to recruit at the same time as being sure that no services would be denied if clients chose not to participate in my study. In the case of MOSAIC I was made aware of their support group for Afghani and

²⁶ ISSofBC was incorporated in 1972 as the first immigrant-serving agency in the province. Since that time, ISSofBC has grown to be the largest, multicultural, immigrant-serving agency in western Canada (ISSofBC 2010)

²⁷ MOSAIC is a multilingual non-profit organization dedicated to addressing issues that affect immigrants and refugees in the course of their settlement and integration into Canadian society (MOSAIC 2010)

Iranian women by a settlement counselor at ISSofBC and was told to speak with the program director. At both organizations posters were put up (see Appendix B) and flyers (as well as consent forms (see Appendix D)) were distributed to women interested (see Appendix C). The recruitment at ISSofBC led exclusively to contacts not using their services, that is, women who were friends of settlement counselors or worked at other organizations serving Muslim women.²⁸ The recruitment at MOSAIC was much more successful as the group was very interested in working with me and had a translator on site, which helped with language barriers. After a few sessions with the MOSAIC group they agreed to let me join their weekly meetings for an indefinite period of time.

Once the project was opened up to include 1.5 and second generation women I began contacting Muslim Student Associations (MSA) at two local universities in Vancouver. I also reached out (via email (see Appendix A)) to youth groups, support groups and various organizations serving the Muslim community in Vancouver to solicit participation in the study. This was an incredibly difficult process and many people responded with disinterest in participating, as they felt ‘over-researched’ and weary of their words being ‘used against them.’ While in some cases individual conversations over the course of a few months led to the development of trust and eventually a research relationship, in others it did not. Ultimately the most successful method of recruitment became ‘snow-balling’²⁹ as I typically developed positive one-on-one relationships and subsequently encouraged women to invite friends or family to participate. After a few months I began receiving emails, calls or texts from women

²⁸ This was primarily because of language barriers in their clientele. Settlement counselors often put me in touch with women they knew in the community or through their mosques who were more fluent in English and thus more able to complete a one-on-one interview.

²⁹ Snow balling involves asking people who have already participated in the project to recommend others who might be interested (Hay 2010, p. 388)

who I had not contacted directly but who had heard about my project from friends, family or organizations.

Interviews

When designing my interview guides I relied heavily on feminist research methodologies. I began with Leslie Brown and Susan Strega's (2005) *Research as Resistance: critical, indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches* and took to heart many of their suggestions: I met with women multiple times (not interviewing until they were comfortable to do so); I began with an overview of my work, the research and the interview questions (making sure that if concerns were raised we could re-structure the interview); I often distributed the interview script ahead of time; and I made transcripts available for editing afterwards. The interviews were designed to be 90 minutes long but ended up running anywhere from 60-120 minutes. While I had a detailed script available on hand (see Appendix E) I often abandoned these in favour of a more fluid conversation style. My questions remained pre-meditated in the sense that they were taken from the scripts, but I moved freely between topics. I conducted 25 formal interviews in this style.

Focus groups and group interviews³⁰

Initially I hoped to invite women who I had interviewed to participate in focus groups at a later date. This proved to be far too challenging to coordinate and I quickly abandoned this plan. I switched instead to inviting pre-existing groups (support groups, MSA's, or community groups) to discuss some of the research topics in either a focus group or group interview setting. My interest in doing this was drawn from the belief that group interviews

³⁰ I include both terms in order to get at the difference between a more in-depth Focus Group (in which the emphasis is on the interaction between participants) versus the Group Interview (in which the same questions are asked to individuals in a group setting) (Cameron 2010, p. 153)

and focus groups are “important for the elucidation of intersubjectivities” (Sirin and Fine 2008, p. 199) and might provide information not otherwise accessible. I ultimately conducted two group interviews with different women at the MOSAIC group and one focus group with the Nurturing Islam Support Group. In both cases, much less was learned about each individual person, but invaluable insight was gained from the way women spoke to one another.

Participant observation

The last component of my research was an extended ‘participant observation’ at the support group through MOSAIC. This relationship was not planned but emerged through my own desire to develop an ethical and responsible relationship with the women I worked with; it felt important for me to practice my interest and intent by returning each week. As well, for many women, there was a desire to have a more sustained, long-term, ‘conversation’ about topics of belonging, multiculturalism and immigration. Finally, the overwhelming desire to be ‘interviewed’ simply necessitated that I return each week to interview more people.

What was said

In the notes I took immediately after attending my first meeting with the MOSAIC Women’s group I wrote of the immense differentiation in the stories I heard. Some women spoke exclusively of their families—belonging very much tied to their capacity to make a home and life—others focused on their citizenship rights and their feeling of outsider-ness because of their extended PR status. Others still insisted that belonging was something they would never have in Canada. I was (naively) surprised by this variation (both between the stories and within them). In many ways I think I was looking for a coherent answer to my questions. How do Muslim women feel/create/have belonging in the face of apprehensive or

negative depictions of their capacity to belong? Thinking back on it, I had assumed that each answer, while person specific, would be focused: 'I feel belonging when' or 'I question my belonging when.' This was of course not the case and in my very first formal interview I had to re-think my own basic assumptions when confronted with this blunt (but extremely apt) question: "Do you mean belonging to Canada or belonging to yourself?" What did I mean? I quickly replied (without much thought) "Belonging to yourself?" (Adding the question mark to denote my very serious self-doubt). Didn't I mean both? And didn't I want to get at the relationship between the two? Over the next 8 months I got better at explaining what I meant, but the women's answers continued to be complex, profound, varied, and often contradictory. In this section I outline a summary of the conversations I had, this is to both situate the conversations that follow in the next chapters, as well as to make space for the 'face-to-face' encounters (Ahmed 2002, p. 568) that constituted my methods.

In many conversations there was an immediate desire to communicate a bigger story, or a message, to the larger Canadian public. While I was explicit about the purposes of the research project (and the limited readership of an M.A. thesis) the interest to 'speak to an audience,' or to make known certain things about Islam, or Muslim women, came up time and again. For many this desire came out of the belief that if the general public simply knew more about Muslims, Islam and the people who practice it, they might not be so 'afraid' of it. All women felt misunderstood or misrepresented (to varying degrees) because of their gender or their religion. Here the focus was primarily on two distinct kinds of misrepresentation; some women were more concerned with representations of Islamic extremism and terrorism while others focused on depictions of Islam as patriarchal and their gender rights as in questions because of this.

A number of women's interviews circled around the issue of debunking myths about their perceived oppression or liberation (I am not oppressed because I wear hijab or I am not un-Islamic because I don't wear it). An oft-repeated comment was that those criticizing Islam for being overly patriarchal should think more carefully about the West, or Judeo-Christian societies', own issues with, or tendencies towards, patriarchy and misogyny. As one woman stated, "I mean I would *really* like the West to look at their women, yeah, *their* women" and another, "I mean there is no internal critique of [equality for] Canadian women, so I find [the focus on Muslim women] really frustrating actually..." The feeling of being under a 'spot light' was shared by many and some women felt that they had to 'speak up' on behalf of all Muslim women; to explain, present or perform good, 'liberated', or 'balanced' Muslim women.

For some of the older women gender (mis)representations took a backseat to representations of Islam and immigrants more broadly. Many women were self-conscious (and frustrated) about being perceived as 'different' simply based on their headscarves, skin colour, or language abilities. Stories of basic and often banal racism were told as daily occurrences for many (12), with most women not identifying them as racism at all. Asking for clarification on one particular incident with a bus driver Mina explained to me, "you probably don't understand how we feel because you were born here", noting later that it was a constant struggle to feel truly accepted in Canada (by 'Canadians'). Echoing this frustration another woman argued that if Canadians were all immigrants (except for the indigenous population) then we should *ideally* be able to get along. The topic of acceptance in mainstream 'Canadian' society came up a lot and produced varying degrees of pain, sadness and bewilderment for certain women.

Because of the relative confusion about what was meant by 'belonging' I typically asked the women I interviewed to both define the term and imagine their perfect state of it. This led to conversations that highlighted the feeling as processual, as changing over time, as defined in relation to the state, family, ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, country, city, neighbourhood, and a number of other factors. One woman explained that her ideal belonging was "to be a part of a community, to be accepted for who you are regardless of your values, beliefs, race, and what you wear or do not wear" highlighting her own struggles with feeling belonged at the same time as wearing hijab in Canada. For another it was rooted in a "feeling of acceptance and having close relationships and stuff like that" something she was not sure she would ever truly have in this country. Another explained that belonging could be equated to "knowing each other just as a *person*. To not look at the name, or the title, that's the ideal." Definitions of belonging both aligned with common understandings of the term (see Chapter 3) but went much beyond them as well.

An additional trend that emerged was the capacity for each woman to express both deeply held feelings of belonging at the same time as questioning these, feeling (un)belonged or feeling outside of 'normal' belonging. Again, my initially simplistic understanding of emotional wellbeing meant that I found this surprising. Was it possible to feel both at once? Not only was it possible, it was most commonly the case. Often women would begin by unequivocally stating "I don't belong here" or "I don't have belonging, I haven't since..." followed by stories of deep emotional comfort, acceptance and peace in certain aspects of their lives. It became clear that belonging (and (un)belonging) were not one or the other type feelings. In some cases belonging was felt to be unattainable because of language, wearing hijab, skin colour, or religion, at the same time as it was developed (or worked towards) in school, work, family community groups or support groups. Feelings of belonging related to

varying aspects of each woman's lived experience and the places in which these occurred; furthermore all these were most certainly feelings that had changed over time. Most interviews oscillated between narrating feelings of belonging and (un)belonging; contributing to the overall complexity of identifying how and when each happened.

One commonality in this regard was that belonging was often defined in direct relation to feelings of belonging that had occurred before, either in a different time or a different place. For women born in Canada this was primarily narrated as a pre-9/11 feeling that had been lost or through a story of relocation from one city to another. For the 1st generation immigrant women, belonging was defined in relation to their places of birth, countries they had lived in before, or places where family members remained. For one woman who had left Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, belonging had become that much easier in Canada because she had the space to practice her religion as she chose: "my heart is Muslim now." However for another, a woman who had lived over half her life in her native Fiji, it felt impossible to obtain belonging as she simply could never feel as tied to Canada as she could to Fiji.

Since my research project specifically sought to engage with women the notion of *being a woman* came up a lot, taking on drastically different meanings for each person. Of the 1st and 2nd generation women, all spoke extensively about their own gender identity and its relationship to Islam. There was an interest here in directly challenging stereotypes by presenting their own vision of being a Muslim woman. For the converts, discussing gender was bound up in challenging their families' perceptions of Islam; they felt misunderstood and type-casted as 'giving in' to a patriarchal religion. All converts spoke openly of the power and freedom they felt they had obtained in finding religiosity, but felt as though they were constantly perceived as under the influence of the Muslim men in their lives (this was often

regardless of the fact that they had converted prior to meeting their husbands). Of the 1st generation women just over half engaged in discussions about being a woman and narrated stories of their gendered experiences. This was often much more focused on being a strong mother, an equal and respected wife, a good grandmother and a role model for other younger Muslim women.

A number of women (5) expressed concern over living in (or being perceived as living in) 'two-worlds': the 'Western' world and the 'Islamic' one. For some this was narrated as 'balancing' two sides of their personalities, the 'liberated' feminist on the one hand, and the pious and often devout Muslim on the other. For others this was seen as an imposed narrative, a dualism that did not relate to their actual lived experiences of hybridity. Instead these women felt that the 'two-worlds' narrative reflected misconceptions about gender and Islam rather than any truthful separation in their lives.

The majority of the women I interviewed felt that the current Canadian government was of some level of concern for them (20). For many this was because they felt that Stephen Harper knew 'nothing' about Islam, while for others this was focused more on the general anti-immigrant tone of the current conservative government. The level of concern varied greatly amongst women but of interest is that only 2 out of 25 women stated that the government was a positive thing for Muslims in Canada. A handful of women (5) directly mentioned Jason Kenney's policies as being anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant and of serious concern, while 4 felt that his decision to ban the niqab and burqa (although somewhat unfair) was probably better in the long run. A total of 10 people felt that even if they personally didn't like the burqa or niqab, the government had overstepped its role in making this decision. Stephen Harper's name came up in over half of the interviews with many (6) criticizing his claim that Islamism was a threat in Canada, noting that this comment came out of nowhere and was

inappropriate coming from the Prime Minister. Finally, 6 women were directly engaged in anti-Harper, anti-colonial, anti-racist, or migrant justice groups working against what they saw as an increasingly Islamophobic tone in Canada.

Finally, discussions about Canada, beyond the current government, were focused on perceptions of multiculturalism, integration and general acceptance or tolerance. Many thought that multiculturalism (in broad terms) had something to do with the general tone of acceptance in Canada. Most interviewees felt that Canada was doing ‘something right’ in relation to immigrants and often referenced Quebec or European countries as having worse conditions for immigrants. Often interviews began with a story of comfort or safety because of this official acceptance but then quickly moved to question this, or tell stories that directly contradicted it. For some this was not intentional; pride in Canada espoused easily as stories of intense racism and Islamophobia quickly followed. For others these feelings caused deep confusion and often sadness, the official line simply not matching up with lived experiences. And finally, still others saw these contradictions as part and parcel of the *true* Canada. References were made to ‘fake’ acceptance or ‘false’ multiculturalism, some even claiming that they wished Canadians would just come right out and say that they were uncomfortable with immigrants instead of always hiding behind (the acceptance of) the policy.

Making connections, analyzing ‘data’

Methodological considerations do not stop once the research process is over. If anything, understanding what I heard (what I saw, what I felt) became more complex the more I thought about it. A number of important questions arise when trying to make connections, or analyze the ‘data’ collected.

Who spoke?

Questions of *whom* I spoke with, and how representative this group is (see Table 1), remain paramount. A few points of consideration are important.

First, all interviews were done in English (because of my language (in)abilities)) or in Farsi/Dhari, and simultaneously or subsequently translated. This means that not only is my sample predominately made up of these two language groups (and thus excludes many others) it also arguably impacts the concerns and interests of my sample. That is, most of my interviewees were from Iran, Canada and Afghanistan (in that order), and thus might share similar life histories or experiences, and even views on the world. The primary example of this became manifest in conversations about Canada's military presence in Afghanistan, in which all women from Afghanistan expressed opposition to the Canadian government and military role in the country (their connection to Afghanistan no doubt influencing their views). This is in no way to suggest that the sample is thus *invalid* but rather that it should be understood as greatly shaped by those who participated, their life histories and their complex social and political identifications. Interestingly enough this same group (those born in Afghanistan) all had completely divergent feelings about the Canadian government. Identities, and identifications, are complex configurations that do not necessarily have straightforward or linear logics (Dowling 2010, p. 36).

Second, the desire to speak, to have one's voice heard, or to participate in a social science research project, can be understood as a uniting characteristic for all of the women I interviewed. This is inevitably (although obviously) limiting in that only women who *wanted* to speak about these issues engaged in the project; there is something 'political' about this act (Bullock 2012, p. 107). However, I caution against any reading of this desire as representative

Generation	Place of birth ³¹	Age	Migration date	Citizenship status
1	Canada (Iran)	26	1992	Citizen
2	Afghanistan	33	N/A	Citizen
1.5	Iran	24	2000	PR
1	U.S.	18	2009	Citizen
2	Iran	38	N/A	Citizen
1.5	Iran	33	1998	Citizen
1	Saudi Arabia	27	2005	Citizen
1	Canada (Pakistan)	31	2006	Citizen
1	Iran	31	N/A	Citizen
1	Afghanistan	28	1998	PR
1	Iran	28	1996	Citizen
1.5	Albania	26	1983	PR
1	Canada	61	2007	Citizen
1	Iran	63	2000	Citizen
1	Iran	70	2005	PR
2	Hungary	65	N/A	Citizen
2	Canada (India)	66	2006	Citizen
1	Fiji	45	2003	PR
1	U.S.	65	1972	Citizen
1	Jordan/Palestine	61	2007	Citizen
1	Afghanistan	62	1981	Citizen
2	Canada	31	N/A	PR
1	Iran	58	2000	Citizen
1	Afghanistan	55	1992	Citizen
1	Sri Lanka	32	2006	Citizen

Table 1: Summary of participants³²

of the same kind of ‘politics’ for each person. No two motivations were exactly alike. Some women were formally engaged in politics and activism and thus saw the interview as a continuation of their public persona. For others, who were much less ‘publicly’ active, the anonymity of the project afforded them a space to be political in a particular way. The diversity of motivations, and thus of political perspectives, was not unified.

³¹ For place of birth I add in parenthesis the place of parents birth for second-generation women. I also intentionally included Jordan/Palestine for a young woman who was born in Jordan but considers herself to be Palestinian by birth (her family was originally displaced in 1948).

³² This summary cannot be read horizontally. For privacy purposes I have randomized the identifications. The table can thus only be used to give a break down of each identity category, not to gain a holistic picture of each interviewee.

How to listen, or what to listen for

Writing in, or ‘writing up’ the results of a research project is not simply a matter of ‘telling;’ it is a process that is ultimately influenced by my own perspectives and opinions (Mansvelt and Berg 2010, p. 343). I seek to counter this through a deep commitment to conveying the feelings and emotions expressed throughout my research. I am inspired by Audre Lorde’s claim (quoted in Wright 2010, p. 819) that “Our feelings are our most genuine paths to knowledge” and thus present productive and powerful access points for understanding the affects of racism, discrimination, ethnocentrism, and other such injustices (Wright 2010, p. 825).

In this way I attempted to listen to (and for) feelings, to make space for the typically “buried, the absent, the fleeting...” emotions (Sirin and Fine 2008, p. 200). Drawing on Kevin Dunn’s reflection of learning from his work with Minelle Mahtani, I sought time to hear the ‘sounds of silence’ that are typically missed by rushing through interviews (Dunn 2010, p. 127). Further, and thinking about Pratt’s (2010) consideration of the possibilities associated with ‘listening for ordinariness,’ I spent much time thinking about how to listen for *more* (or *less*) and what insight could be gained from this. This led me to conclude that belonging often cannot be easily spoken about. It is a process narrated as much through silence (deep sighs, long pauses, quiet faces) (Ho 2006, p. 797), as it is one known (or knowable) through words (explored further in Chapter 3).

What’s more, part of listening to these stories has also meant conceiving of them as whole, complex, and contradictory. As Daniel Hiebert (2000) carefully showed in his examination of cosmopolitan identities in Vancouver, B.C. too great a focus on one component of a person’s life, one element of the story, can obscure the complex realities of that story (p. 18-19). Listening all the way through the sound clip, reading all the way through

the transcript, invites a more nuanced (but far more complicated) way to hear what is being said. Many women's identifications and opinions have changed over time; to be sensitive to this I attempt to present the ways in which they shift—back and forth—(Hiebert 2000, p. 20) and between belonging and (un)belonging.

Finally, there remains a political imperative to listen to what was said, mostly because these were not just 'stories'. As one guide for enacting solidarity explains "Don't tell me my struggle/fight/cause is 'like really interesting.' I don't give a shit that it's interesting. It's killing me" (Williams and Lygate 2010, p. 159). What I heard were people's life experiences, their pain, their histories and their everydays; respecting this means approaching them as such, feeling responsible more than sorry for the injustices I was hearing (Williams and Lygate 2010, p. 159). In an attempt to take this seriously, I thus accept these stories as truths (not immutable universal ones, but rather personal truths that have great meaning for the women I spoke with).³³

Dangers and limits

It remains important to note that no amount of critical reflexivity rids me of the possibility of failure in various realms. Sometimes, as researchers and as people, we simply just get it wrong. In one particular instance, my belief in the need to 'wrap up' interviews (Dunn 2012, p. 118), to sensitively and kindly conclude, slipped my mind. The interview had been hard, certain times emotional and deeply sad at points. I was not prepared and had not practiced how to close with this in mind. Walking away from Nimali I sensed the discomfort I

³³ I say this in order to address the ways in which personal narrative is approached in this thesis. I do not attempt to determine whether or not these stories are 'factually' correct (assuming that such a thing exists) but instead seek to engage with each story as truth for those who told it. This is important because it allows me to take seriously feelings about belonging in Canada instead of focusing on the official tales of what this means.

had left her with. I later emailed and apologized for not being more on top of this. She wrote back

hey molly,
no worries! it was definitely a serious conversation, and i was taken aback too by how weighty it felt at the end. but i appreciated the opportunity to think through and talk about some of those issues.
-n.³⁴

We went on to have many more conversations and time to heal from this, to chat about (and practice) our particular solidarity and friendship. However, I am sure, I left others sad and ‘weighty,’ something that constitutes a real danger of this kind of project. It remains to be seen whether talking about the ‘weighty’ issues is enough to make them feel less so.

Furthermore, while acknowledging my positionality allows me to critically engage with the ways in which my subjecthood is bound up in questions of who belongs and who does not in Canada, it does not remove the potential for unequal power relations or asymmetrical research relationships (England 2006). Often times the act of critical reflexivity in a researcher has the affect of placing the researcher at the center of the conversation (again) (Bardnt 2010, p. 177). As Sarita Srivastava (2005) has warned, in ‘confessing’ one’s position we must be careful not to get stuck in the individualized ‘moral and emotional’ responses to the injustices we are implicated in (p. 29). While the following chapters are an attempt to ‘re-center’ the women I worked with, to privilege their perspectives over mine, this remains an on-going challenge and a very real limit to this kind of research.

Conclusions and possibilities

In this chapter I explored how I am implicated in this research project in order to bring forward some of the basic ways in which I imagine solidarity, at the same time as presenting the possibility that my identity will always already be implicated in the injustices of

³⁴ Included (slightly edited) with permission from Nimali

oppression faced by (particular) Muslim women. Instead of seeing my identifications as incommensurable with Muslim women I examined the ways they might constitute a basis for collective politics (Ahmed 2002). I moved then to consider the qualitative methods used in this project and my particular approaches to them. I summarized some of the basic ‘results’ of the project in order to situate the conversations that follow in the next chapter, as well as to make space for the actual ‘face-to-face’ encounters that constituted my methods. I examined a few of the dangers of this kind of project, not to dismiss them but instead to make them visible.

My method is inspired by the claim of solidarity presented at the beginning of this chapter and as such I attempt to take seriously Cadre and Kassamali’s (2012) assertion that feminism’s role is to ‘facilitate’ not ‘liberate.’ The premise of this project (both in methodological and theoretical ways) is to facilitate a space (albeit a small one) for Muslim women to speak about belonging in Canada. I move to this task in the next two chapters. Finally, and circling back to my original declaration of being invested in a feminist politics, my ethics and research methods are embedded in a deep commitment to Sara Ahmed’s (2004) notion, and definition, of hope. She writes:

One does not hope alone, but for others, whose pain one does not feel, but whose pain becomes a thread in the weave of the present...through the work of listening to others, of hearing the force of their pain and the energy of their anger, of learning to be surprised by all that one feels oneself to be against; through all of this a ‘we’ is formed, and an attachment is made. This is a feminist attachment and an attachment to feminism and it is moving (p. 188).

My methods are informed by this hope and my research continues to move forward with this ‘attachment to feminism’ in mind.

Chapter 3: Islamic (un)belongings and female subjectivities

“No one belongs here more than you”³⁵

Well let's be clear, our government has had a breach from the past, where we had this kind of cultural relativism. I think implicitly the liberal attitude about multiculturalism was that 'all cultures are equal, we can't denounce any particular culturally based practice because to do so is arrogant and imperialistic' we said, no no that's rubbish, there are certain practices that we bluntly call barbaric in our citizenship guide and which will carry the full sanction of the law. That's new language, that we have put in our citizenship guide...now in terms of selection...we obviously don't want to be inviting into Canada people who do not intend to integrate, who do not intend on respecting our laws, who don't intend for example, on respecting the equality of men and women, so the question then is, how do you prevent such people from coming in? And there really is no easy answer (SunMedia 2012)

Days after the Shafia murder trial ended Kenney explained the newly invigorated, and maybe even re-imagined, multicultural policy in Canada. He focused on how to protect 'Canadians' from immigrants who do not *wish* to integrate, who do not want to leave behind “ancient hatreds” and cultures that “treat women as property” (SunMedia 2012). Playing up the conservative governments interest in securitizing the process of immigration, he claimed that this might help further protect the country from the ‘bad apples’ that didn't really want to adopt ‘our’ values. This conversation should be situated within months of focus on ‘Muslim’ religious and cultural practices and a media storm of attention towards them (The Canadian Press 2012; The National Post 2011; CBC News 2011). In this case the focus was also specifically on Afghani cultural practices and Islamic religious ones (Blatchford 2012; Findlay 2012). This conversation should also be understood as employing “colonial ideologies of racial and cultural difference to distinguish between desirable and undesirable citizens” (Zine 2012a, p. 18). These are imagined as inherent differences that further work to harden the borders and behaviours of the nation; nationalizing those on the inside that *want* to be like ‘us’ and denationalizing those (both locally and globally) who do not (Syed, 2012 p. 65).

³⁵ This is the title of a Miranda July (2007) compilation of short stories and I use it to speak to the promise of belonging in Canada. The stories are filled with the everyday, seemingly insignificant encounters that work to ‘reconfigure the world’ and make up our identifications.

In this construct (as was explored in detail in Chapter 1), gender violence is located from within religious and cultural difference, with the only possible rehabilitation from this obtained through integration into Canadian society. This not only calls into question *who* can rightly belong (and what this belonging will be premised on), it also calls to the fore the actual process of belonging for all those who feel implicated in this conversation. While Kenney is most certainly not speaking about *all* Muslims, the question of whether his words *affect all Muslims* is more complex. This is because as Derek Gregory (2004) reminds us, “representations are not mere mirrors of the world. They enter directly into its fabrication” (p. 121). The stories that are told *about* Canada (who belongs, who doesn’t) matter for the embodied practices of belonging *in* Canada.

In this chapter I explore the complex and often contradictory ways that notions of belonging, Islam and gender come together. I do this first by outlining some of the basic ways belonging and (un)belonging can be understood. I then turn to two ways the women I spoke with narrated these stories. First, and concentrating on Islam and religion, I argue that many women find their deepest sense of belonging and comfort in their faith, religious community and spirituality. However, in the context of increasing suspicion of Muslim populations, as well as the pervasive nature of Islamophobia in Canada, I dwell here on the complications associated with this relationship. Many women simultaneously expressed great comfort in their religious affiliation at the same time as recounting the difficulties associated with being Muslim in a post 9/11 world. Further, and to complicate the picture even more, I present the ‘dissenting’ voices, women whose relationship to Islam is troubled, questioning or more ambivalent. I move then to consider the ways in which simplistic depictions of Islam have come to affect Muslim women’s gendered identities and notions of agency, subject hood and freedom. Here I dwell on how ‘gendered Islamophobia’ (Zine 2006a) has come to impact

feelings of belonging for Muslim women in Canada. This chapter explores the contradictory ways in which women take strength from their religious and gendered identifications as well as the ways they must constantly and critically negotiate these relationships.

Belonging

In order to understand the impacts of this rhetoric on Muslim women in Canada I find it useful to think through the concept of belonging. The term ‘belonging’ refers to the feelings, opinions and attitudes that individuals or groups hold towards their geographical place, community, home, family, network(s), nations, or cultural/religious groups. More specifically, it denotes feelings of acceptance, membership, close relationship (often resembling familial attachment) or comfort to or within these categories. In Nira Yuval-Davis’s (2006) work on the concept she clarifies between three common usages of the term; social location (race, class, gender—‘you belong to it’), ethical and political values (‘it/they belong(s) to me’) and emotional attachment (‘I feel...’). In citizenship studies and geography while much attention has been paid to the first two dimensions of belonging there has been a noticeable lack of interest in the third. In studies that do engage with the concept, there remain deeply problematic assumptions about how this particular dimension of belonging can be measured, discussed or reported on.

In the most expansive attempt at clarifying belonging for migrant populations in Canada to date, Reitz and Banerjee (2007) seem to understate the complexity of what immigrant integration strategies with an eye for belonging might look like. They rely heavily on statistical constructs (that is, belonging on a scale of 1 to 10) as well as the idea that belonging can be equated with ‘being a part’ of a particular community or group (Banting *et al.* 2007, p. 1, 647, 680) or feeling ‘in or out of place’ (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007 p. 547). This is used to create a comprehensive picture of how identity categories—ethnicity, age, and

migration cohort—may or may not lead to feelings of belonging (p. 493-4). They employ the statistical information provided from Ethnic Diversity Survey, taken from the 2001 census as a sampling frame. The question reads, “How strong is your sense of belonging to Canada?” (Reitz and Banerjee, 2007, p. 539). The information collected here should ideally allow us to paint a picture of immigrant versus non-immigrant conceptions of belonging and thus provide insight into the potential barriers to the feeling. Furthermore, the inclusion of this question should suggest an effort on the part of the Canadian government to investigate emotional and expressive wellbeing for migrant populations in the country.

However, according to Yuval-Davis (2006), belonging operates as a ‘wanting’, a ‘yearning’ and an actualized feeling (p. 202); scales of 1 to 10 miss the differentiation between these categories (not to mention, change over time and the subjective nature of the definition). It is also important to note that there is no necessary connection between one’s ‘social location’ and particular emotional sense of belonging (Yuval-Davis p. 200). Further, studies that have explicitly sought to interrogate belonging have often neglected to define the term (Bakht 2008; Aitchison et al. 2007). This has typically meant adopting normative assumptions about the inevitability of ‘belonging’, such as the belief that belonging *will* happen for everyone consistently, and that belonging formally to the nation state is equivalent to having an emotional attachment to it. However, these are not givens and require much further thought and attention. While quantitative measures remain one way of measuring these types of feelings, I want to work beyond these by imagining the variation(s) and contradiction(s) present within narrations of belonging.

The politics of belonging

My focus is thus primarily on ‘emotional attachment’ (accompanied by the assumption that this comes in multiple forms), with an intention to interrogate the way other identity

categories, as well as structural realities, inform these attachments. These structures can be better understood by returning to a distinction that Yuval-Davis (2006) makes between the belonging that we feel and the “politics of belonging,” that is, the politics of delineating between “us” and “them” (p. 204). Arguably the ‘politics of belonging’ has a significant influence on the emotional experience of belonging. As Spivak and Butler (2011) explain:

If the state is what ‘binds,’ it is also clearly what can and does unbind...If it does the latter, it is not always through emancipatory means, i.e through ‘letting go’ or ‘setting free’; it expels precisely through an exercise of power that depends on barriers and prisons, and, so, in the mode of a certain containment. We are not outside of politics when we are disposed in such ways...This is not bare life, but a particular formation of power and coercion that is designed to produce and maintain the condition, the state, or the disposed. What does it mean to be at once contained and dispossessed by the state? (p. 3-4)

This question should be understood as structuring many of the responses that follow. In Chapter 1 the state (in its Canadian form) was shown to be both that which ‘binds’ (through inclusionary ideologies and practices of multiculturalism) and ‘unbinds’ (through racist and Islamophobic discourses). As Yvonne Riaño and Doris Wastl-Walters (2006) explain “State discourses are the official means of representation and play an important role in fostering collective unity and in maintaining the idea of the nation-state. State discourses shape and sustain national identities through narratives of the ‘self’ and ‘other’” (p. 1694) and contribute to portraying an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 2006) as distinct from ‘other’ nations or states (Riaño and Wastl-Walters 2006, p. 1707). This particular view allows us to implicate the Canadian state and media in the productive, and potentially violent, effects of Islamophobia on the lived experiences, or emotional belongings, of particular Muslim women.

(Un)belonging

If Spivak and Butler (2011) provide us with the necessary terminology to understand the potentially troubling relationship with the formal state, I turn to Joanna Garvey (2011) for clarification on how this state interacts or affects emotional attachment and belonging. In

analyzing figures of the queer diaspora in Dionne Brand's³⁶ work, Joanna Garvey calls attention to the "violent categorizations" and structural inequalities that configure many migrants' lives (p. 759). She argues for the application of the analytical concept of (un)belonging; spaces, moments and people "that undo belonging, while not leading to the destructive erasure of not belonging" (p. 758). This is precisely the distinction that Spivak and Butler (2011) make between 'bare life' (not belonging) and being simultaneously 'contained and dispossessed' by the state ((un)belonging).

Here the pains of relocation, the complex interplay between home and identity, as well as the "racialized laws" (p. 769) that configure the Canadian landscape are described as permanently barring many migrants from normative belonging. Bound up in the term is both the pain and hurt of being 'pushed out' of belonging as well as the productive and positive potential of reasserting spaces of (un)belonging for oneself: "(un)belonging may offer the most auspicious and constructive alternative to forced assimilation and policing of identities" (p. 762). Quoting Brand's narrative description of a Verlia, a young Caribbean woman attempting to find home in Toronto, Garvey explains that certain reclamations of space might

undo [normative] belonging and shape a different relation to time and place. "There are two worlds here in this city [. . .]. One so opaque that she ignores it as much as she can – this one is white and runs things [. . .]. The other world growing steadily at its borders is the one she knows and lives in' (p. 180). Verlia learns to negotiate the borders and begins to claim space and with it, presence (p. 758).

Garvey works through Brand's narrative reconstruction of migrant lives in Toronto, and in doing so enlivens notions of belonging through the concept of (un)belonging. She writes that these narratives shape "a new kind of belonging, one that does not demand conformity to prescribed identities and dreams of an elsewhere to replace the pain of here and now" (p. 760).

³⁶ "An immigrant from Trinidad to Canada, Dionne Brand has explored gender, sexuality, and migration from myriad perspectives, in film, essays, poetry, and fiction" (Garvey 2011, p. 757)

I turn to Farah, a young woman originally from Iran, who explains the process of claiming ‘presence’ in multicultural and diverse city spaces, to enliven Garvey’s analysis. For her, the racialized laws (and discrimination) she faces in places of white-homogeneity presents a world she feels no sense of comfort in. When she imagines belonging she explains

I think the easiest places to feel like I belong, or that I fit in, are really diverse places, where I am not the only one who looks different, or is assumed to have a certain identity or religion. It definitely feels safest when *no body* looks the same in the room and we assume that everyone comes from a different set of values and politics and that’s what is the safest to me and where I feel like I most belong.

Describing where this is, Farah admits that it is shifting; belonging is most certainly not stable and at times feels like it moves out from under her. However she is able to identify that in general the diversity of downtown Vancouver gives her a much deeper sense of belonging than that of rural Nova Scotia (where her partner’s family is from and she often visits). The world in which she belongs, that she takes most comfort in, is the lived multicultural (the practiced *utopia* (Sandercock 2003, p. 2)), her experiences of diversity washing away the ‘racialized laws’ that structure more homogenously white spaces.

But Farah, as well as many other women I spoke with, narrate much more than one sense of belonging or (un)belonging. I want to argue that the term should thus be read in three (interrelated) but distinct ways: first, the bracketed (un) so quiet that is imperceptible to some—racism or Islamophobia having little impact on some women’s ability to belong. Second, (un)belonging as one word—the rhetoric of who belongs and who does not having profound and painful affects on some women’s abilities to feel truly accepted or belonged. Third, and most in line with Garvey, the term suggests a space of resisting normative belonging—(un)belonging actually becomes a powerful assertion of non-normative possibilities and spaces beyond pre-conceived or pre-determined belonging. Importantly these meanings should be read as constantly in negotiation with one another, each moving to subsume the other, over and over again.

Circling back to Farah, she describes moments of belonging as slipping away (the feeling gets lost) but she explains that this typically leads her to “overcompensate by being really competent” to prove that she is “really *needed*” and thus able to belong. In high school this meant letting her classmates borrow her algebra notes, now in her PhD program this means being the best at what she does. Her story can thus be read as three separate narrations of (un)belonging: one, in which she subsumes herself in diverse places (meaning one), two in which she feels pushed out simply by being a ‘visible minority’ (meaning two) and three in which she claims space by being a needed, albeit different and racialized, addition to her surroundings, a powerful reassertion of her protested (un)belonging (meaning three). Farah’s narrations, taken with Garvey’s insights, are incredibly powerful, as they do not suggest a uniform or unitary process of belonging. The ‘politics of belonging’ produce, and even necessitate, various and ever changing feelings of belonging and (un)belonging.

Further expanding on Garvey’s analysis I find an additional consideration of (un)belonging to be useful; stories of belonging are often unspeakable. That is, certain narrations of emotional attachment cannot be put into words; or at least not words that we readily understand and take meaning from. I borrow this from Geraldine Pratt’s (2010) assertion that we must think more seriously about ‘spaces of ordinariness’, which are “at some distance from conscious, intent-filled, eventful narrations of life” (p. 344). This is because “Much of life is lived in modes of incoherence, distractedness, and habit, and a scholarly focus only on intentionality and deliberative activity is incomplete at best, politically and morally punishing at worst” (p. 344). An intention to think through the ordinariness of (un)belonging provides an impetus to move beyond conversations explicitly focused on the topic (that is “I feel like I belong...”) and into the more ordinary, banal and unconscious ways

(un)belonging becomes manifest (such as the associated perceptions of safety, closeness and comfort or alternatively fear, detachment and discomfort (explored in detail in Chapter 4)).

This was made most evident in the difficulty some women had speaking about belonging. Many women were stuck. Often a long silence, followed by a deep sigh, a head tilt and an inquisitive look, more silence, maybe even a minute of silence, and then “I think... I think...the word belonging...(pause) you know (long pause) I am trying to think. What does belonging mean? (Deep breath) I guess belonging means, being at peace somewhere (pause, deep breath). Do you know what I mean? Being accepted, as you are, um, but it’s a tough question (long pause).” This pattern came up in almost every interview, as noted in Chapter 2 I would simply wait, hoping that patient listening would allow women to arrive at their own definition(s) (Dunn 2010). Sometimes this worked. Dema gets to her own definition explaining “(Long pause) so I guess...hmm...so I guess here (long pause)...I don’t think we...I don’t think I belong here. I don’t feel that sense of...(pause). Belonging to me means like...I don’t know what my exact definition would be but as soon as I say it I get this warmth and this feeling of acceptance and having close relationships and stuff like that. I don’t feel that here, I think there is always a boundary (pause)...” For others, no amount of waiting would produce a coherent answer. The ‘ums’ ‘ahs’ and silences should instead be read in conjunction with the rest of their narratives. Listening only for intentional statements would miss the discomfort that this question produced for many women. A confused look. A painful sigh. A long pause. These are important qualifications because, as Elaine Ho (2009) explains, there remains a tendency to study “emotions that are visibly expressive or easy to recognize” (p. 792). As I move through each story I try to highlight the ‘ums’ and ‘ahs,’ as well as the emotions expressed as the words were spoken, in hopes of bringing forward some

of the more ‘ordinary’ and ‘unspoken’ sentiments present in conversations about belonging (p. 792).

Islam and religion

“I believe in one god, I believe in Allah, but I...my friends laugh at this, but I say I am the biggest religious whore, because I am in bed with a different god every night! Because I read every religious book, because it’s like, my own confusion about what my religion means.”

Who has the right to say who is Muslim or not (Smith 2010, p. 29)? How do variously interpreted notions of Islam and being Muslim intersect with feelings of belonging for the women I spoke with? What if Hasti’s definition (quoted above) doesn’t align with dominant notions of being Muslim? This section explores the role of Islam, of identifying as Muslim, in conceptions of belonging. I want to argue that many of the women I spoke with find their deepest sense of belonging, and comfort, in their faith, religious community and notions of spirituality. However, two qualifications to this must be made. First, there are wildly divergent understandings of Islam and religion present in these stories, making any broad claim to the importance of religion in these women’s lives simplistic and overly broad. To address this I explore the different ways Islam is conceived of, and the complex array of identifications that fall under the designation ‘Muslim.’ Second, in the context of increasing suspicion of Muslim populations, as well as the pervasive nature of Islamophobia in Canada, many women simultaneously expressed great comfort in their religious affiliation at the same time as recounting the difficulties associated with being Muslim in a post 9/11 world. This section is an exploration in the back and forth of belonging and (un)belonging of religious identifications for Muslim women.

Muslim first and foremost

For many women Islam, and identifying as Muslim, was one of the most important factors in their lives. While this identification was based loosely on the five pillars of Islam³⁷ some women also expressed their commitment to Islamic reasoning, or *Ijtihad* (literally meaning intellectual effort or struggle (Massoumi 2010, p. 65)) as the primary way to live a devoted life. Other women expressed their Islamic identity by narrating a deep commitment to daily prayer, involvement in the mosque, participation in holidays and events, as well as teaching family, friends and acquaintances about Islam. In attempting to understand the important role Islamic identification plays in these women's lives I want to take at face value individual narrations of personal commitments; that is, I accept each woman's own level of religiosity, as they state it. As Bullock (2012) writes, "what counts for me is the self-identification that one is a 'Muslim'" (p. 95). Or, as Talal Asad (2009) explains "the Muslim position" argues that "the mind becomes the site of true religious belonging" (p. 45). In this way I focus not on 'officially sacred' stories or moments, but rather the self-designation of belonging to (and of) Islam (Kong 2001, p. 228).

For Sanam, a woman in her mid 60s from Iran, conceiving of her self as a good and kind person was located from within her identity as Muslim. This was not, in her opinion, oppositional to any of her other social, political or even educational identifications. Rather this commitment to Islam inspired many other actions in her life; it was at the core of her being. She explained, "I want people to know that I am Muslim; if I have good behaviour it is because of my strong beliefs in Islam, and commitment to Allah." Sanam's "religious

³⁷ The Pillars of Islam are the five basic acts, which are considered obligatory for believers. In the Quran they appear as a framework for worship and faith. They are: one the testimony of one god, Allah; two, daily prayers; three, almsgiving and charity; four, fasting during Ramadan; and five, the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime. The Shia and Sunni sects both agree on these as essential details for a Muslim life (Sirin and Fine 2008, p. 33)

subjectivity” (Hafez 2011, p. 49) was one in which choices were not ‘pre-determined’ by an all-knowing god (Bullock 2012, p. 154), but instead one that gave her the strength to make the ‘right’ decisions for herself. This was most manifest when I asked her if she ever considered wearing hijab, she quickly responded “Heart is important to me, so I don’t cover. It does not fit with what I want. But I am very happy being Muslim and I want to be seen as Muslim.” This desire to be seen as Muslim, to be identified as belonging to Islam, was so strong that Sanam felt the need to tell people she met about her religious affiliation. She did not, however, feel the need or desire to wear hijab. For Sanam belonging was obtained not only through her religious commitments (to pray, to attend mosque, to give back to the community) but also through others acknowledgement of her identity as Muslim.

For some, the commitment to Islam and being Muslim was located firmly within a familial history. As Runa explains matter of factly “I am Muslim, I was born Muslim, my parents were Muslim...I went to Muslim school.” Taken on its own this might suggest a fairly forced, even un-wanted relationship to Islam, the Muslim self simply coming into existence through “association with kin” (Anwar 2010, p. 27). Runa simply *is* Muslim my virtue of her past; she honours her family and culture’s history by identifying as such (Bullock 114). However, Runa goes on to explain that even if her religiosity began this way, it certainly has not ceased to evolve. Instead she narrated a commitment to self-transformation, to “learning about Islam,” and to teaching others about it as a key component in her life. This is the process of critically ‘struggling’ with Islamic principle, practice and faith (Massoumi 2010, p. 65). After explaining this dedication she says, “If this is good (places one hand on her heart and one on her head) then this will go out to that (points to our surroundings). If your home is good, then people from your home will be good to go out [into the world]. If your home is no good then where will they go? They will go to the society and make a mess.” For Runa

constantly working to investigate the meaning of Islam as well as to teach and discuss Quran at home with her children were ways of developing a strong relationship to Allah and Islam. This practice not only provided her immense strength in the face of difficult circumstances it also allowed her to make claims to a strong sense of Islamic self.

While many women echoed this level of commitment to Islam, some simultaneously narrated an interest in portraying 'Islam as good' as one way of doing justice to its core principles. For Yalda, a woman in her mid 60s originally from Afghanistan, her time in Canada has been structured by a deep commitment to 'Muslim activism.'³⁸ This has taken the form of starting up the first mosque in Nanaimo, B.C., working in her children's schools to teach about Islam, volunteering with other faith groups in numerous communities and now providing religious support through a women's group in Vancouver. Yalda's life has been based on religious practice, volunteering, and giving back to the community. Yalda narrates this commitment and says

Islam is good, it's a wonderful religion. It's very important to me. Islam, Christianity, Judaism they are the religions that came and followed each other. It's the same religion in the beginning, first Judaism and then Christianity and then it was completed with Islam. People should think differently. Some people for different purposes use Islam badly, not only Islam, Judaism and Christianity. Our job is to know the reality, and we should know the religion according to the reality not according to the people who [practice it badly] and are against the society.

As Yalda explains her own commitment and love for Islam she simultaneously attempts to locate it within a (legitimate) history of religious practice by tying it to Christianity and Judaism. Further, she envisions her capacity to be a good Muslim as bound up in presenting Islam in a true and honest way. If she is Muslim first and foremost, this identity comes with a commitment to not only live by the 'reality' (of the Quran's teaching) but also to communicate this to others (to help them 'think differently'). This is an interesting way of narrating the self and suggests that discursive productions of Islamic religiosity cannot be

³⁸ Defined as the mobilization and support of Muslim causes in the public sphere (Bullock 2012; 98).

separated from subsequent imaginings of religious subjectivity (Hafez 2010, p. 50). Belonging comfortably and confidently to Islam entails working towards teaching a more honest engagement with it at the broader societal level.

Strains on Islamic identities

This kind of dedication to Islam was evident in many women's stories but was often paired with, or inseparable from, feelings of discomfort, pain and sadness surrounding a 'lack of space' for religiosity or general misconceptions about Islam.

While Canada is a religiously accommodating country (legally all religious difference is to be tolerated (CIC 2008)) there remain some limits to this accommodation. Isin and Siemiatycki (2002) have explored conflicts over the built environment and the challenges associated with "making space for mosques" in Toronto, arguing that these kinds of conflicts challenge normative understandings of citizenship, as religious groups demand new (and sometimes difficult) accommodations. However, and inspired by Alison Mountz (2004), if we "shift the scale of analysis...to the finer scale of the body...processes, relationships, and experiences otherwise obscured" (p. 325) because visible. Talking about bodily accommodations thus enlightens 'strains' on Islamic identities. This was most evident in one seemingly funny moment as Naderah relays a story to me about a friend.

N: Her number one concern is you know Muslim women wash themselves after they go to bathroom. And there is no facility to do this here in Canada. And this is a big concern for her here in Canada.

MK: multiculturalism doesn't go far enough? How does she deal with this?

N: come back home, go back out, takes wet ones with her and then go back out again. Sometimes we think it is a good idea to carry a small bottle with you around

While it might be difficult to imagine policy changes that would venture into bathrooms, this conversation highlights the limits to certain kinds of religious accommodation; this is an

experience of (un)belonging produced through ‘cultural imperialism.’³⁹ Many women at the MOSAIC support group echoed this concern and claimed a certain level of comfort in attending mosques, or community groups, that were aware of this need and thus accommodating. Muslim ‘spaces’ providing one possible site of belonging (Aitchison *et al.* 2007, p. 3). While these conversations produced jokes and laughter some days, paired with other stressful events, or experiences of discrimination, this lack of accommodation became a frustrating manifestation of (un)belonging. Commitment to Islamic principles of hygiene (belonging to the religion) produced a feeling of outsider-ness to ‘normal’ Canadian society ((un)belonging to Canada).

An insight on the issue of accommodation, or broadly acceptance, was evident through a disagreement between two women during one of the group interviews at MOSAIC. Discussing the ‘hardships’ of Muslim and female identities Boosah and Souri, both from Iran originally, explain to me (and each other) their feelings about being Muslim in Canada.

B: it’s very hard to be Muslim but it’s very easy to be a woman (in Canada)

S: No, it’s easy to be Muslim.

B: If you want to practice and be Muslim its very hard. If you want to be Muslim it’s easy, but it has to be behind closed doors

S: For me it’s easy to be Muslim because I am at home supported. I live in my own place I have my own facilities, I go to mosque and its my own mosque and its easy. It is easy this way, but if you want to do everything out, it will be hard.

The women’s divergent understandings of being Muslim in Canada gives voice to a complex component of belonging for many; it’s one thing to be Muslim (by name, in one’s heart, etc.) but entirely another to be supported publicly in this. For Boosah, her belonging to Islam, her being Muslim, is discussed as only ‘easy’ when it happens out of sight. It becomes ‘very hard’ once she tries to take this out into the world. For Souri, while she begins by saying ‘it’s easy,’

³⁹ Cultural Imperialism as defined by Iris Marion Young (1990) in which the dominant meanings of society render the ‘others’ needs invisible (p. 58-9)

she qualifies this by explaining that she has support, she has a Muslim community. If she didn't it would 'be hard.'

Public accommodation of religion was felt to be one of the biggest strains on religious identities for the women I spoke with. If Canadian society was perceived as being 'tolerant' of religious difference, it was simultaneously felt to be constituted by a particular kind of secularism that elided any *deep* religious accommodation. Arguably, in Canada as in much of the western world, religion has been privatized (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002, p. 106) in order to "render it an individual rather than common matter" (Brown 2008, p. 31). This has the ultimate affect of delegitimizing faith for many: "that which is most vital to individuals—personal belief or conscience—is not only that which is divorced from public life, but that which is divorced from the standing of shared Truth" (Brown 2008, p. 32). However, the inverse (of 'privatizing' religion) has occurred at the same time; more interest and focus has been placed on the management of certain religions, or religious practice, in the Canadian public sphere (Syed 2012). This was most clearly manifest in the Sharia law⁴⁰ debate through which the government of Ontario decided to delve into the 'private' matter of religious arbitration in order to disallow certain practices of 'religious law.' The focus in these debates was most heated when it came to Muslim Sharia law and its assumed incompatibility with Canadian law. Many women perceived this as extremely contradictory as they felt that they were being asked to both keep their religions to themselves, but that increasingly they had to justify their religious practice to the general Canadian public. However, Ahmad (2004)

⁴⁰ The Sharia Law debate is a complex one that cannot be fully summed up here. However, for purposes of this thesis it remains important to note that religious arbitration had been going on in Ontario for over a decade with no issues associated with the practice, primarily because normal Canadian law still applies. However, when a Toronto based organization, the Islamic Institute for Civil Justice applied for standing under the act, a debate ensued about the potential 'abuses' that Muslim groups might commit through the application of this law. This was primarily focused on women, and the rhetoric fell in line with 'saving Muslim women' from their communities. What is important about this debate is that it not only ignored the actual tenants of Sharia Law on the application; it re-imagined faith and religion as of great concern to public matters in Canada. (For a good discussion of the logics that underpinned this see Syed 2012)

clarifies this apparent contradiction explaining that “spheres of privacy are frequently the products of state action (or inaction) and...the state is itself selectively constitutive of private concerns” (p. 1265).

Often conversations about feeling under-accommodated religiously slipped into discussions about experiences of Islamophobia or discrimination. For Carly, a convert originally from the U.S., her faith had provided her a comfort she had never known before. She was passionately invested in leading a life dedicated to Islam but felt permanently bared from normative belonging in Canada because of this. She explained rather directly “Belonging would be...if I was getting religious support” and later asked rhetorically “Do I want to be the weirdo on the block?” For her, Canada would never be a somewhere she could belong if it continued to be a place where religious support was lacking and the dominant “quasi-official state religion” of Christianity persisted (Biles and Ibrahim 2009, p. 167). However, she went on to explain that the lack of accommodation went further and was in her opinion more of a general tone of “negativity [about Islam]” in post 9/11 Canada and the U.S. She explained, “Nobody wants to open a dialogue with a Muslim person” because of a commonly accepted fear of the religion. For Carly, leaving Canada to go somewhere more religiously accommodating felt like her only real option. While she was cautious not to claim that Muslim majority countries were by any means perfect, she felt that certain countries might provide a better basis to belong religiously.

Carly went on to narrate a feeling of isolation from mainstream Canadian society as well as a general disinterest in being a part of a (discriminated against) minority. That is, she didn’t want to be a part of what she saw as either the dominant-white-Christian world nor did she want to become further isolated in the minority-racialized-Muslim one. Another convert, Katrina, tried to comfort her by saying “[Islamophobia] just is, that’s the way people are

going, that's the way society is going...so if you want to be a part of it stay in Canada and if you don't, you go to the Muslim world." It should be noted that both converts were white, their conversion and decision to wear the hijab racializing them in a way previously not experienced. As Katherine Bullock (2007) narrates of her own conversion process "I was not treated as I had been as a white, middle-class woman. It was my first personal experience of discrimination and racism, and made me see my previous privileged position in a way that I had never before properly understood" (p. xxiv). Belonging, as 'white women,' was no longer an option for either Carly or Katrina. They were relatively new targets of Islamophobia and they both found the experience of negotiating a religion in a secular society to be challenging. However, both women had found strength in their faith and commitment to Islam, their (un)belonging premised on finding religious accommodation and support.

While Katrina and Carly had somewhat resolved to leave Canada if things 'got too bad,' clearly articulating a desire to belong to Islam *over* Canada (if necessary), other women attempted to make space for the dual identification of Muslim-Canadian. This was not an easy claim to make and Runa's comments illustrate the difficult reality of actually occupying a dual identity. She says

...You know at mosque we always say we are Muslim but we are Canadian. But if we do something bad we are doing it as a 'Muslim bad'. You know? But if we doing something good we are Canadian because we are doing it good. Because, look if we do bad, they will say we are Muslims, we are doing it bad. Right? But if we are doing it good, 'take that Muslim part away'.

Runa was quoted earlier discussing the important role Islam plays in her life. She is committed to the religion as well her particular religious community. She is also proud and happy to be Canadian. She recounts numerous positive stories about working with other 'Canadians' and learning from the diversity present in her neighbourhood as well as office and places of community service. However, as soon as the claim to this dual identity leaves her mouth ('we always say we are Muslim but we are Canadian') she qualifies it with the reality of

these identifications. For Runa, good actions seem to be placed primarily under the banner of Canadian, while bad ones relegate her (and other Muslims) to the marker of Muslim. This was echoed by other women and aligns with what many felt was an imposed construct in which “religious, cultural, or ethnic differences” were perceived as “sites of natural or native hostility” (Brown 2008, p. 151); bad actions, even violent ones, always already being portrayed as emanating from Islam, and good ones reserved for ‘Canadians.’ Wendy Brown (2008) speaks to the absurdity of the logic behind this and asks, “What makes groups cohere in the first place, that is, what binds them within and makes them hostile without; and what makes group identity based on culture, religion, or ethnicity, as opposed to other kinds of difference, an inherent site of intolerance?” And more provocatively “Given a liberal account of beings as relatively atomized, competitive, acquisitive, and insecure, what makes common beliefs or practices a site for overcoming this prickliness?” (p. 151). For Runa, her attempt to claim a group identity (to Canada, as a Muslim) remains difficult, or strained. Even if she desires this, she perceives a fairly serious misconception about her religious practice in Canada, which bars her from belonging.

Islamic identification; being perceived as Muslim

But not all Islamic identity is conceived of in the same terms. There remains a critical need to investigate stories of ‘belonging’ to Islam that do not align with faith or religiosity in the strict sense. For many women, identification as Muslim or even claiming an Islamic identity was a process of negotiating familial traditions, countries of birth, and even ‘racialized’ (self) representations. This is because, as Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000) so clearly articulate, there is a basic (albeit important) interplay between self-identification and identification or categorization imposed on oneself by others (p. 15). For many women Muslim identity (or the process of self-identification) was complicated and

thoroughly troubled by the external imposition of that identity; the “formalized, codified, objectified systems of categorization” (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, p. 15) that structured their everyday lives presenting real challenges to understanding their identity in simple terms. Were they Muslim or not? Did they *feel* Muslim or were they told by others that they were?

In a conversation that began focused on religiosity Naderah, a woman in her 40s originally from Iran, identifies herself as Muslim (‘I am Muslim...’) but explains that she was not raised particularly religious. She tells me

...when I turned 18 I said now I can do whatever I want, I want to practice Islam. But when I was 18 the revolution (in Iran) happened, I saw so many bad things they were doing against their own people. Iranian government against Iranian people it didn’t matter if they were Muslim, not Muslim, any other religion. So, that’s why you know, after the revolution I was not so crazy about doing anything religious. I learned you know, how to be honest, to not lie, to do things that are helpful for people. These things give me good feelings and they are learned from my mom and dad and a little bit from my faith and Islam.

Naderah’s religious identity is shaky at best. Being 18 during the revolution in Iran forever impacted her perception of Islamic political movements and she remains skeptical about overly zealous dedication to any religion because of it. Yet, she reflects on learning what she needed from her family as well as her faith and Islam. In this way her self-identification of ‘being Muslim’ while certainly not religious, is present within her conception of identity. However, in conversation about the positive associations she takes from this, her feelings of belonging, Naderah begins to open up about the impossibility of this. She explains

N: (takes a deep breath) yeah you know, but still with these things...9/11 and Harper, I am not as comfortable as I was before to say I am Muslim. I like to say, I want to, but I am not sure if I should. I think it’s going to ruin the relationship before they know me.

MK: really?

N: As [Parand] said, when people don’t know anything about each other they just listen to the words they hear from others. So they think ‘Oh you are Muslim’, and Harper said that, and Bush said that, so you are bad...they just judge by the name.

MK: And do you think it has changed (since 9/11)?

N: Um yeah, yeah, yeah. I had an interview you know, the interview was in Quebec. They said, you are- it was two days before 9/11- and they said ‘you are going to start (working) next Monday’ and then 9/11 happened and they called and said ‘no’

Naderah is Muslim primarily by name and by cultural or familial attachment. She is not by any means dedicated to religious practice but would like people to know she is Muslim none-the-

less. This is an identification that is given little space in Canada today. She is not only assumed to be Muslim (first and foremost (Mikdashi 2012)) the meaning of this is also read on her in a particular way. The difficult thing about this story is that it reminds us not only of the real lived experiences of Islamophobia but also that “Identification can be carried more or less anonymously by discourses or public narratives...their force may depend not on any particular instantiation but on their anonymous, unnoticed permeation of our ways of thinking and talking and making sense of the social world” (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, p. 17). This works in two ways. First, the employer that called Naderah begins to ‘identify’ Muslims in a racialized and racist manner, hopefully not intentionally, but no doubt essentially. And second, Naderah takes on new meanings of her own self-identification, “self-understandings may be overridden by overwhelmingly coercive external categorizations” (p. 19). She now questions telling people that she is Muslim for fear that it will ‘ruin the relationship.’

Many other women narrated a similar trend of negotiating their own identity with external acts of identification. Islam was not necessarily that important to certain self-conceptions, but it came to matter in new ways because of how some women were perceived. The external identification of Muslim often triggered a self-identification of being Muslim, in a way that was not always expected or desired. In one particularly complex conversation, Farah explained that she is so distant from her own Muslim identity that she often feels as though Islamophobic news or government rhetoric is ‘talking about somebody else;’ that is, she does not feel personally impacted by the naming of Muslims as other. This constituted a powerful assertion of belonging but was quickly followed by a story that directly undermined this. Farah went on to narrate an instance of over hearing her mother-in-law (and some of her friends) saying inflammatory and Islamophobic things, as she sat breast-feeding (apparently

out of earshot) in the other room. The distance typically inhabited from her self-identification as Muslim shrunk. She was Muslim in this moment and “it was so hurtful, so so hurtful.” This was repeated by Hasti who claimed a detachment from Muslim communities and a far more stable sense of belonging in mainstream ‘Canadian’ society, at the same time as noting the immense pain she feels when her mother (who wears hijab) is stared at as they walk down the street. When narrating these stories of discrimination she spoke specifically as a Muslim woman. While Muslim self-identifications are much too complex to claim that they come into being through just these moments, they remain tied to the circulation of particular, and often racist, discourses of what it means to be Muslim.

There is a certain violence associated with this that remains necessary to highlight. It is not enough to say that this complicates the self-identifications of Muslim women in Canada. Returning to Ahmed (2004), and her explanation of reading ‘fear’ on a bear by a child, we must “note also that the ‘reading’ then identifies the bear as the cause of the feeling. The child becomes fearful and the bear becomes fearsome: the attribution of feeling to object (I feel afraid because you are fearsome) is an effect of the encounter, which moves the subject away from the object” (p. 8). The external identification of Muslim (in all three stories producing some level of fear or concern) actually contributes to the resignification of Muslim’s as ‘fearsome;’ the identity becomes perceived as ‘causing’ the feeling, rather than Islamophobic attitudes. However, I draw hope from Butler (1993) here in her claim that the act of naming can actually bring into further question that which we seek to name. She explains, “as a consequence the name mobilizes an identity, at the same time that it confirms its fundamental alterability” of that identity (p. 157). Arguably, in being identified as a Muslim (by others) the alterability, or the instability, of that identification becomes apparent.

Islamic identity and internal reflection

Coming to a place of comfort, to a place of strength in identifying as Muslim (or belonging to Islam) was often a process of intense internal reflection. Many women located this in the condition of living in the West in a post 9/11 world, the “suspicion and doubt” (Massoumi 2010, p. 64) cast on Muslim identity often triggering a process of self-exploration and even politicization of Islamic ideals. As Massoumi (2010) explains the negotiation of Islamic belief in Western society’s is triggering a “relativization of Islam, which becomes inherently political through the act of questioning its own parameters” (p. 65). She claims that this is most evident through the self-exploratory and often politicized process of Ijtihad in Muslim individuals, as well as through the now common practice of reaching out to non-Muslims to develop common ground.

In a discussion focused on personal relationships to Islam, Dema, a woman in her late 20s from Jordan/Palestine, begins to open up about feeling like she is in a particularly difficult point in her life. She was at a stage in her life in which she wanted to reconcile many of her conflicting feelings about religion, but felt that she was given little (or no) space to do so. She says

D: But I think for me the biggest problem with the hijab is not the hijab itself because it doesn’t bother me that much, but I don’t like the expectation around it, that I feel like I have to be perfect. I feel like I have to be perfect all the time. And I hate that.

MK: if you wear hijab you feel like you have to be perfect? In all peoples eyes or in other Muslim’s eyes?

D: even in all peoples because... in other Muslims eyes too... but its also in other peoples eyes because I feel like I am representing Islam. Right? So I feel like if I do something, people are like ‘oh this is what a Muslim does’ or something. And I feel like that’s a lot of pressure on me.

MK: and you don’t what that?

D: and I don’t want that. So I go through these phases where I am like I shouldn’t, maybe I should take it off or something, but then its like I know that I believe in it. I don’t like the pressure you know? So I feel like I am under a lot of pressure.

For Dema, immense strength was obtained through her relationship to Islam and identity as Muslim. However she was “not at that point” of feeling like she could be the “perfect Muslim;” she identified high levels of religious commitment and certain interpretations of

practice as just too much for her own personal belief. She gave examples of questioning the value of abstaining from alcohol, as well as challenging normative perceptions of gendered religious practice. However, the disconnect between this process and her assumed level of religiosity was extremely difficult for her. She felt “under a lot of pressure” to perform a perfect Muslim identity (to both the Muslim community as well as the non-Muslim mainstream). In many ways she locates this in the wearing of hijab, a particular signifier of an assumed devoutness or religiosity (Bullock 2007, p. 87). However, she found strength in constantly and critically investigating what Islam meant to her and making space for her own definition. She goes on, “I keep telling myself, I don’t have to be perfect, this is societies expectation, this is not god’s expectation, and this is not Islam. Because Islam tells you it’s a path and you can make mistakes and everybody makes mistakes and you don’t have to be perfect and everything.” Dema makes space for (un)belonging by entering into a process of self-exploration and re-affirming her individual commitment to Islam.

Similarly Nimali narrates an interest in defining her own religiosity through reflection on what the identification of Muslim actually means. For her, while self-perceptions of Muslim identity have changed, they have remained extremely important to her. She explains

... I think what’s changed [about my religiosity] is a nuancing, and a commitment to a much more radical politics than I would have had initially. Whereas when I wore hijab, I was, there was a sense in my head of being a model minority, and my parents were very like “you can do all these things, you can be a hijabi, you can go to school, you can get an awesome job and also be a voice for the community and give back, and you can do all those things.” And for me, some of those things became less important. So wearing hijab became less important, it just didn’t mean as much any more. And giving back to the community has meant different things over time. Whereas previously my parents were still like finish your degree and do all that stuff and don’t get into trouble and don’t be too politically vocal etc. And for me, it’s like well, my community, if that means Muslims in Canada, then being vocal is one part of...is how I get by. And so, that political engagement for me, remains the most consistent way that I remain Muslim. And I continue to have a lot of respect for the more spiritual stuff, that can be divorced from that stuff, but its not necessarily something that holds as much valence for me as it used to.

For Nimali her religious self-identification had become located firmly within the politicization of Muslim identities. Finding strength in identifying as Muslim was much less to do with the

religious or spiritual connections (although they were still present) and had become far more about ‘political engagement.’

Both Dema and Nimali are interested in a self-reflection that challenges many commonly held beliefs about religion and religious subjectivities. Islam is important to both of them (in very different ways) and they are engaged in a critical self-reflection about its meaning. These stories are important as they help blur the boundaries between “conceptual binaries of secular/religion, reason/faith, rational/irrational, and modern/traditional” by troubling the divide of an “emotional religious subject and a scientific secular subject” (Hafez 2011, p. 49). Their reflections suggest numerous non-normative religious identifications; it is possible to move between thought and emotion, reason and feeling, ‘religious’ prescription and ‘secular’ desire. Listening to these negotiations not only enlivens the complex modalities of agency present within religious subjectivities (Mahmood 2005, p. 153) it also makes space for the importance of (a variously interpreted) Islam in these women’s lives.

Islam and religious communities

One of the primary ways that women narrated moments or spaces of belonging in the face of some of the challenges noted above was through their religious communities, or communities loosely based on connections to Muslim identities. This took different forms, but remained a site of strength for almost all of the women I spoke with. As Hafsa so eloquently puts it, through faith based communities at her university

those parts of yourself that you have been required to leave outside the classroom have a space. Like when I said I couldn’t talk to my [high school guidance] councilor about Islamophobia, I couldn’t talk about sexual harassment, I could only talk about the things that they thought I was experiencing, so when I was at [University] I met these other girls who were going through similar things and I was like ok, we can talk about this now. I don’t have to put that part of me aside when I’m with you guys. And I can also have the sense that ok, this is actually happening to a lot of different people, so kind of understanding my own experience through that as well.

Elaborating on the importance of finding a comfortable Muslim space, Hafsa says

...at the MSA [in University] I found that, I finally found that sense of balance. We would go to the gym and workout together, we would see each other after class, we would have coffee, but when it's prayer time we would also go pray. And it wasn't like I had to make an excuse to be like 'oh I have to go to the bathroom for 20 mins' but its like we do these things and its kind of part of our daily routine...I guess having these older girls to look up to I gained more confidence in myself and also learned how to say you know 'I need to pray now' or 'its not that I am vegetarian I actually eat Halal,' right. So, to be like I *can* talk about that.

For Hafsa, the relief of making space for her Muslim identity is a productive and even healing space of (un)belonging. While she acknowledges the difficulty of finding this in many mainstream 'Canadian' spaces, she finds it in the MSA at her University.

While not all women needed (or desired) explicitly 'religious' places or spaces to feel belonged, there was a sense that meeting to discuss, or to organize around, Muslim identities, assisted in feelings of comfort and safety. For the converts and reverts this sense of belonging was fostered by discussing issues pertinent to them; distancing from family (or being fully disowned), new experiences of racism and Islamophobia, and daily commitment to Islam. For others, who felt less religiously inclined, this was much more about navigating others perceptions of their own religious identity, often finding strength through meeting with others who had similar experiences. As one woman explains about the pain of everyday Islamophobia, "yeah meeting with the women's group helps, there are other women who feel the same way...When you have connection and you have communication, its getting better." And another tells me, "I need other women who feel the same way."

Conversations about Islam often slipped back and forth between other issues: gender, multiculturalism, the state, and experiences of Islamophobia (to name just a few). Regardless of the direction these conversations took, most women I spoke with "consistently located their strength and resistance within a framework of faith" (Zine 2006a, p. 250). Islam provided a site of both positive belonging and more complex (un)belonging. For many Islam had taken on new meanings in a post-9/11 world. This was both because of being externally identified as Muslim as well as the increasing desire to re-imagine, or critically engage with,

what this meant. Divergent understandings of faith, religion and spirituality were present within these stories. However, a commonality of negotiating Islamic identification brings them together. In this next section I turn to consider a few of the ways these diverse religious subjectivities bump up against (multiple) gendered identifications.

Women, gender and Islam

“and Muslim women...and Muslim women...and Muslim women. Don’t we have anything better to talk about?”

Runa is fed up with talking about Muslim women. She is referring, as many women did, to what felt like an intense and never ending media and government focus on their gendered and religious identities. There are a number of issues embedded within this conversation. First, and located within a long tradition of (perceived) secularism in Western countries, there has been a tendency to view female religious commitment as one form subjugation under patriarchy (Bilge 2010). As Bilge (2010) explains most early feminist readings of religion “denounced [it] as an intrinsically androcentric and oppressive institution” (p. 11). Second, “the vexing relationship between feminism and religion is perhaps most manifest in discussions of Islam” (Mahmood 2005, p. 1). In contemporary debates about women’s rights within religious groups, Islam is of *most* concern.

But, why Islam? What, *specifically* is this concern directed at? While early Orientalist readings of religion and culture in the Middle East were shown in Chapter 1 to be at the heart of this conversation, in recent years interest in gender equality within Muslim majority countries, and Muslim minority communities worldwide, has become greatly amplified (Jiwani 2010, p. 59). Arguably this is motivated by the belief that Islamic social, political and religious movements exist in opposition to ‘liberal values’ (democracy, ‘women’s freedom’ and individual rights) (Mahmood 2005, p. 1; Asad 2009, p. 24). To be sure, the ‘war on terror’ and

9/11 strengthened this interest and presented new ways to justify colonial and imperial interventions in the Middle East, often under the guise of ‘saving women’ (Massoumi 2010, p. 68). This line of argument frequently follows the notion that “the barbarism of Islam is principally evident in the treatment of women” (Razack 2008, p. 84). This is an Islamophobic construct and is located in a privileging of Western systems of belief (Asad 2010).

Related to the (often racist) depictions of gender inequities within Islam are of course the actual practices and experiences of inequality for Muslim women. There is no doubt that religions, including Islam, “have accorded women a subordinate status” (Mahmood 2005, p. 5) in the past, and in many contemporary moments. What’s more, socio-political movements such as the Taliban are undoubtedly patriarchal (Jiwani 2010, p. 71). Additionally, “Violence against women is a reality in the Muslim community” (Zine 2012a, p. 20). There are experiences of gender inequality everywhere we look. Making space to talk about this without unnecessarily reifying stereotypical depictions of Muslim communities requires sensitivity to individual lived experiences, and a deep commitment to challenge normative constructs of ‘West’ vs. ‘East’, Islam vs. Christianity, and secularism vs. religion (for a good example see Riley 2011). It also demands an analysis that does not seek to name these inequities as *inherent* parts of Islam, being Muslim, or the cultures and countries in which many Muslims live.

With this in mind I want to focus on the way women narrated their own gendered identities in relation to the aforementioned issues and ‘concerns.’⁴¹ I want to argue that for most women, their gender (and its connection to Islam) presented a very serious challenge for normative—or easy—belonging in Canada. While gender injustices within the Muslim community no doubt affected women’s narratives, there was an overwhelming focus on

⁴¹ I bring both the neoconservative ‘concern’ of saving Muslim women, as well as the reality of gender inequality into view not to suggest that they can or should be understood in the same terms, but rather to argue that both contribute to Muslim women’s gendered subjectivities.

debunking myths about being a Muslim woman. Not only were ideas about gender thoroughly wrapped up with religious, spiritual and political identities (to name just a few) they were in constant negotiation with dominant assumptions about what this should look like. Moreover, the pain and sadness associated with being denied a particular kind of belonging was made apparent in these discussions. For many of the respondents, belonging to Canada as a (Muslim) woman was a fraught experience. They felt as though the general public believed that their religious and cultural identifications subsumed their capacity for (free) gendered or sexual identities. Referencing many of the ‘figures’ that I highlighted in Chapter 1, the women I spoke with actively articulated their own gender in opposition to, or outside of, these assumptions. Furthermore, while much emphasis was placed on the current conservative government’s role in these kinds of discourses, many younger women also named ‘feminists’ (or a particular kind of ‘governance feminism’ (Bilge 2010, p. 11)) as having a role to play in the construction of their gender and sexual identities.

Finally, while gendered identities were often troubled by externalized representations of them, they remained one of the most productive sites at which to assert (un)belonging. Claiming a female identity, often in confluence with Islamic faith and Muslim-ness, was a powerful way to make space for belonging. I want to shy away from reading this as a ‘feminist’ response to Islamophobia and patriarchy, and instead open space for each woman’s story to be defined by the terms that she saw fit. It is thus useful to think of the following section as structured by four different but interrelated claims that speak directly to these gender representations: First, I am not oppressed because I wear hijab or because I am Muslim; Second, I am not un-Islamic (or not Muslim) because I don’t ‘fit’ with dominant narratives of what a Muslim woman looks like; Third, I need to make space to be both critical of violence within my own community and recognize the ways in which that violence is used

against me; and fourth, my strength as a woman is located from within a particular reading of Islam. I close with some additional, and contradictory, thoughts on Muslim women's identifications.

Always already oppressed

While discussing the new Citizenship Guide, new citizenship test and the decision to ban the niqab/burqa in Canada, Hafsa explained to me how she sees her gender in relation to the states depiction of it. Hafsa was born in Canada to a Canadian mother and Pakistani father; she wears hijab and works hard to engage with issues of sexism and racism in all aspects of her life. She feels a deep discomfort about Jason Kenney's decision-making and policy changes and likens his work to Nicholas Sarkozy's recent actions in France. For her, claims to protect 'Canadian' values—implicitly or explicitly Islamophobic—come at the cost of her ability to feel safe or belonged. Speaking directly to the first claim, Hafsa narrates a particularly troubling moment in high school:

I remember I was in grade 9 after the coalition forces had taken Kabul, I am in the hallway at my locker and this substitute teacher turns to me and touches my shoulder and she says:
'you are free!'
and I was like 'what?!'
and she's like 'you are free now, we took Kabul, you are free!'
and I was like 'huh?! I was free before!' (laughs) like what are you talking about?
But basically what she was saying was like you don't have to wear that anymore because now we have liberated you over there, right? So it's like there is this constant connection, I have nothing to do with Afghanistan but she is connecting it. She has picked up my body and placed me in that space. And the other part of that is that when I walk around and I am wearing hijab in public space, I am either that oppressed Muslim woman who—now you are in Canada—you are not oppressed so you should take it off, or um, you know...if you are not that oppressed Muslim woman over there, or not the newly arrived [immigrant] than you are the rejecter of liberal values, the threat to the nation...because we liberated you, but if you [still] maintain your barbaric cultural practices, well now *you* are the problem, now *you* are the homegrown terrorist, now *you* are the threat to Canadian safety.

Hafsa's teacher assumes a connection between Hafsa and a place she has never been (she is Pakistani, not Afghani and has never been to Afghanistan) thoroughly troubling and undermining her feeling of belonging to the only home she has ever known—Canada. Her hijab places her firmly outside of normative gendered belonging. She went on to discuss the

pain of having to think through taking off her hijab to avoid similar situations. The underlying message she has received her whole life has been that if she wears hijab she is not fully Canadian. This has come through in general conversations with people who stop her on the street, as well as moments of targeted discrimination and active harassment. She feels that her hijab is perceived as a threat to the nation in that it simultaneously ties her to ‘terrorism’ and signifies her on-going oppression—an affront to feminist ideals, and by proxy, Canadian values. However, Hafsa finds spaces where this is not the case (her university’s MSA, her mosque and certain community service circles) and makes room for her particular gendered (un)belonging. She is not oppressed simply by virtue of her hijab, rather, her choice to wear the hijab, even when faced with the possibility of discrimination, reflects one site at which she constantly negotiates her (un)belonging.

A qualification should be made about how difficult this process has been for Hafsa. While she spoke from a particularly stable place in her life, clear on her desire to wear hijab and be a practicing Muslim, she recounts numerous stories about the process of growing up in Canadian schools, applying for jobs and navigating public spaces, as moments in which her religious identity was equated with a particular gendered oppression that she finds extremely hurtful (“it gets at you...”). Explaining the opposition to hijab, niqab or any other type of religious dress she tells me, “so it’s a particular politicization of a Muslim woman’s body and this idea that you know, you can’t block the gaze, the male gaze has to see your whole face and your hair and whatever and if you are rejecting that, it’s actually part of Canadian identity, and if you are rejecting that, then you shouldn’t be here because you aren’t actually Canadian.” Hafsa’s words speak to two important insights: first, the value of the appropriate performance of the female body and gender identity in a masculinist world (“the male gaze has to see your whole face”) and the reality that this cannot be stopped (“you can’t block the gaze”). And

second, that a break from this not only contests male desire(s) it also thoroughly troubles the national imaginary ('you aren't actually Canadian') by stepping outside of acceptable gendered performances.

For other women, Islam and a commitment to things like wearing hijab, gave them the strength to face the gendered oppressions of their everyday. Described in relation to navigating patriarchy (in every country in which she had lived), Dema narrated the freedom she felt once she made the decision to wear hijab. It was for her a way to escape that 'male gaze' that Hafsa made reference to.

yeah because that [the liberated woman] is also part of my mentality. So like I am very big on feminism. And there is always, that's the struggle in my head sometimes, that was actually part of the reason that I decided to wear hijab because I grew up, I had weight issues most of my life, and so when I was reading about the hijab, I was like 'oh the whole point is that people see you for your mind' and that point really resonated with me. I don't want to be one of those girls that, I am sick of trying to get to this perfect place, or this perfect body, this perfect image, I don't want to do that anymore. Which is really nice that I don't have that pressure anymore. And there is something...like...when I started wearing it I noticed "do I do my hair for me? Or for other people?" and that was like very liberating for me. Because like I really take care of my hair and the way it looks it's not like, it's always very nice...And you notice that you do things for other people, and that is a form of oppression to me. Because you are doing it to show people that you are beautiful, and that's what you don't want. You know?

Dema's feminist ideal is one in which she has the strength to do things for herself, 'not for other people;' to live outside of the pressures associated with being a woman in a masculinist world. This directly challenges the mainstream construction of the hijab as a barrier to ease of movement for Muslim woman and instead reinforces its potential to "facilitate Muslim women's movement outside of the home," women are "free to go out and make a contribution to society, based on one's abilities, not on one's looks" (Bullock 2007, p. 61).

There remains little space for the self-identification narrated by Dema to be respected or 'tolerated' in Canada. A recent study in Toronto examined the extraordinary discrimination faced by Muslim women wearing hijab noting that twenty-nine of the thirty-two women attempting to find employment (in the study) said that their employers made at least a reference to their hijabs, with twenty-one being asked directly if they could remove it and

eleven being told that would have to remove their head scarves if they wanted to work (Zine 2012b, p. 211). While no explicit law exists in Canada that declares head coverings ‘bad’ or outside of acceptable difference, societal norms of female dress, what Jasmin Zine has described as the manifestation of ‘sartorial nationalism’ (Zine 2012a, p. 9), work to reinforce *hijabi*⁴² women’s otherness. This is what Iris Marion Young (1990) has called ‘cultural imperialism,’ when the “dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one’s own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one’s group and mark it out as the Other” (p. 58-9). In my research this was a major topic of conversation. All women who wore hijab (or had worn hijab in the past) expressed feelings of permanent ‘outsider’ status, or cultural invisibility, because of misconceptions surrounding their choice to wear it, at the same time as hyper-visibility (through acts of discrimination, questioning and attention) and other-ness. Along with this was the assumed construction of the hijab as the symbol of the gender inequity in Islam, which many felt marked them as always already oppressed. This is an (un)belonging motivated by representational politics with serious material consequences (Zine 2012b, p. 211).

If Dema’s ideal was located in her simultaneous donning of hijab and continuing to work against gender injustice, it remained difficult for her to find the space for this identification. She was always perceived as having two identities ‘in conflict,’ her gendered and religious identities were impossibly contradictory in many people’s eyes. Even worse, she was often given the patronizing and paternalistic treatment of someone living with a ‘false consciousness,’ her ‘perception’ of a free gender identity simply a fabrication of her mind (Bullock 2007, p. 50). Explaining the reactions of some of her friends when she began wearing hijab for the second time, Dema says

⁴² *hijabi* refers to a woman who wears hijab

D:...a lot of people around me keep telling me to take it off, because like, so I have this really good friend and she is like 'it does not fit your personality, you are too...' and I'm like 'what does that mean, does not fit your personality?!' you know what I mean? She's like 'you are too liberated!' I am like 'but I can still be [me]' but she is not Muslim also so I think she can be, she has other things-

MK: do you think part of your reason for wanting it, is also because you want to show that you can be you? And wear hijab?

D: Yeah, yeah, and sometimes I feel like, I feel like, um I am going to show people that I am a good representation, I am not closed minded I am liberated, I can do anything I want to with the hijab.

There is a desperate need to debunk myths of oppression for Dema. She is invested in a self-identification of being Muslim that is both committed to feminist ideals as well as communicating this position to others. However, “women’s active support for socioreligious movements that sustain principles of female subordination pose a dilemma for feminist analysis” (Mahmood 2005, p. 5); these actions do not align with normative constructions of ‘agency’ as manifest only through resistance to subordination. However, and drawing from critical Muslim feminists such as Saba Mahmood (2005) and Serene Hafez (2011), there is a need to accept that differing (religious) conceptions of agency—ones that negotiate principles of freedom and unfreedom (and the spaces in between)—exist. Discussing Mahmood, Hafez (2011) explains “agency is predicated on submission to religious practice that, when repeatedly performed, discipline [women’s] bodies and allow for a situational and historically specific agency” (p. 10).

The ‘liberated’ Muslim woman

While there is an extensive body of work focused on women who wear hijab and its symbolic, political or religious meaning(s) in Canada (Bullock 2007; Bilge 2010; Zine 2006a), less interest has been paid to Muslim women who do not wear hijab or fall outside of traditional religious communities. The notion that faith could be anything less than all consuming, “the most important factor” (Mikdash 2012) in Muslim women’s lives, is typically left out of political discourse and media commentary on the subject. As a result, what is lost in this discussion is an engagement with the number of ways that Muslim women identify

religiously and spiritually and how this comes to bear on their gendered and sexed identities. As Sherine Hafez (2011) argues there is a desperate need to “challenge binary representations of subjectivities engaged in religious practice as opposed to those who appear to engage with secular endeavors” (p. 27). There is, she posits, a more seamless fluidity (p. 29) to the ways in which religious and secular identities are managed and maneuvered.

Farah, speaks to this (the second) claim. She explains that she is always made out to be ‘different’, the exception to the rule, because she is seen as ‘liberated’.

F: I feel like with Muslim women there is an exoticism actually, that makes it, its kinda sad, but I think it helps [those who benefit] belong a little bit. There is something that people find not interesting but, I find...often my experience has been, especially with white men...like a surprise and relief ‘oh this is not what we expected’ and ‘how cool is that?’

M: what do you think is surprising about you?

F: well I think if you watch media and whatever you have certain assumptions about Muslim women that aren’t actually true, so when you get to meet one and get to know one its like ‘oh well you are not like that, that’s kind of cool’ I feel like I benefit from that...maybe that’s because now I’m thinking about it in a sexual way (laughs) but I think an assumption often from [white] men is that Muslim women are sexually reserved and its like ‘wow, how amazing, and how unusual’ [if they aren’t]. Which its not, its not at all, and its not unusual, it just stands out because of the expectations.

Farah reflects on her choices both in relationships as well as in her career and politics. She self-consciously admits that she ‘fits in’ better as a ‘Canadian’ because she dated all through her 20s, does not wear hijab, has a child with, but is not married too, a white Canadian man and works in progressive activist circles in Vancouver. However, she is insistent on reminding me that there is little truth in constructing her as somehow ‘liberated’ or unique because of these things. She is not particularly religious but has emotional interest in thinking about herself as Muslim.

Farah identifies as a feminist and throughout the interview she repeatedly reinforced her desire to be critical of issues of patriarchy within Islam (both in Canada and Iran) but maintains that this criticism, much like her choices mentioned above, does not make her ‘not Muslim.’ Farah is not particularly religious but it remains important for her to make space for her cultural, even familial, sense of self—which is tied to Islam in many ways—while

simultaneously questioning certain aspects of the religion; these are not contradictory processes. Farah is interested in a time when this might be perceived as just one of many ways of being Muslim, rather than signifying the dividing line between ‘good’ (moderate) and ‘bad’ (extremist) Muslims (Mamdani 2004). For Farah belonging is not easy but for very different reasons than Hafsa or Dema. Farah is more easily read as ‘belonging’ to Canada—in that she appears to have abandoned her relationship to Islam. This makes her somewhat uncomfortable (she doesn’t necessarily want this kind of belonging) because she feels that it reinforces racist and Islamophobic attitudes, separating out the ‘liberated’ Muslim women from the ‘oppressed’; the ones who get to belong and the ones who don’t (Jiwani 2008, p. 73). Because of this, she wonders at the end of the interview if she should try publicly identifying as Muslim more often as a ‘strategic’ move to give voice to the multiplicity that is Muslim female identity (Riley 2011, p. 2). Her (un)belonging is made through not accepting belonging in a “fixed manner, according to a specific set of racialized laws” (Garvey 2011, p. 769) and instead asserting her own, more complex, vision of these.

Thinking through the relationship between Islam and oppression, Majida explains her perception of a generalized (and widespread) oppression of *all* women, something that she feels needs to be talked about more in Canada. Her own religious identification is ‘laxed’ and she sees a much greater need to re-imagine Muslim communities beyond the stereotypes she is confronted with everyday. She says

I think, I mean. Muslim women are oppressed the way that all women are oppressed that’s basically my take on that. I don’t think we are any *more* oppressed, or any *less* oppressed. Although some women do feel more liberated because of their religion, they actually do feel like their religion liberates them and they feel empowered. And how they express that, I mean everyone is different—some women feel empowered to cover more, because they feel that they don’t need to share their private body with the world. And that’s empowering for them, so I am totally for that, if that’s how you want to express your empowerment, right?

Majida goes on to explain how hurtful it is to always be confronted with the iconic figure of the ‘oppressed Muslim woman,’ saying

M:...yeah I do take issue with that characterization of women.

MK: and how do you manage that?

M: it's tough, its *really* tough, and it's a daily onslaught, I mean everyday in the paper I find a story where it completely depicts Muslim women as being oppressed. Its always presented out of context, in terms of how other women are coping in the rest of Canadian society, and how they are committing suicide, and have addiction issues, and are having to live in poverty, right?

Belonging to Canada, as a Muslim woman, might include a more comprehensive and holistic approach to issues of gender injustice in the country. Majida defines her own gendered oppression as part of broader systems of patriarchy that are indeed worthy of focus and attention. However, Majida claims this position not from an unquestioning acceptance of Islam and its practices, she remains deeply critical of various forms of patriarchy within the Muslim community. Explaining her own religiosity she notes "I am usually more, my spiritual practice is more private, at home, even in the mosque I don't find the space that spiritual, from my own feminist perspective it's not always that enlightening for me. But you know, there is always room for change." While she might not find exactly what she needs at the mosque (potentially because it remains too male dominated), she is able to find a 'private' space of spiritual religiosity. This does not take the form of denouncing the religion as 'inherently' patriarchal (see for example Manji 2004), but instead is a process of recognizing *all* women's oppression and working towards challenging it, in every form that it takes. From this perspective the 'liberated' Muslim woman is a fallacy, not because of Islam, but because of widespread and ongoing gendered oppression experienced by all women.

Powerful dual identities

There remains a need to move beyond these often dualistic representations of Muslim women (oppressed or liberated) in order to better understand the connected and interdependent nature of identity categories and the ways these are managed and experienced. This is what Riley (drawing upon Razack 2005) calls an interlocking analysis. It remains key to acknowledging the way that "oppression or violence based on race, gender, religion, and other

factors work alongside and *through* each other, rather than simply happening to exist simultaneously” (Riley 2011, p. 5 emphasis mine). That is, the identity categories of Muslim and woman operate through one another and in different ways depending on how (and by whom) they are taken up. The state’s mobilization of the figure of the oppressed Muslim woman can (and does) impact the oppression that woman faces; not just by the state but also by reinscribing certain oppressive patterns in her daily life. As Hafsa explained to me, after women experienced harassment on the street for wearing hijab, the men in her community felt obliged to walk them to and from nearby bus stops. The Islamophobic nature of the everyday (reinforced by the Canadian state, society and media) thus works inadvertently to further patriarchy and paternalism on a small scale. There remains a critical need to think about how these kinds of violence are connected.

Speaking to this, the third claim, Nimali imagines a new kind of space in which complex and difficult conversations about gender violence, Islam, and the state come together. In reference to Muslim women who work on these issues she says:

Those women give me a lot of strength and support because they are not only speaking out against the ways Muslim women are used as tools by the state, but also the ways in which women are subject to violence generally. So that means we can work against violence within our own communities but also done to our communities and that’s really important. I don’t want to fall prey to the notion that we can’t, its important to me to be able to do both. To speak about violence by Muslim men against Muslim women and to be able to speak about how that violence is then used often by [the state] to alienate Muslim women from their communities that includes the Muslim men that they love- their families or whatever.

Nimali does not want to be the ‘oppressed Muslim’ woman that the state mobilizes in discourses of ‘Honour Killings’ and the like, but she also refuses to become an apologist for gendered based violence in her community; she does not want ‘belong’ in either of the ways the state wants her to. She will not shun her community and claim ‘liberation’ or be the ‘oppressed’ woman controlled by her religion. She makes space for her gendered

(un)belonging by working to name both types of violence as in need of attention, and as intimately intertwined.

Female identity through (re-reading) Islam

For a few women, gender identity was most certainly *not* of political, historical or social interest (in the terms that it was for others). It was instead the very banal and everyday reality of their existence. Often drawing upon their important roles within family, within community and as mothers to guide their children, these women felt no necessary conflict between their gender identity and religious commitments. For these women, *Allah* had made two different (but equal) genders; this was a simple fact of life. They were women through Islam and Muslim through their female identities. What's more these were neither contradictory identities, nor were they of particular interest.

However, for others, this compatibility between identifications had come through a particular engagement with Islam. While there remain masculinist readings of the Quran and many mosques in which men dominate religious practice (Hafez 2011, p. 11), there is an increasing tendency in scholarship and activism the world over to explore the role of 'feminist' or woman-centered re-readings of Islam (Massoumi 2010). In her influential book *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (2006) Amina Wadud offers a critical re-reading of the Quran from a woman (feminist) perspective. This remains an incredibly powerful and political act of making space for women within Islam by re-asserting that the Quran is not (and potentially never has been) 'anti-woman' (Khan 2009, p. 145).⁴³ While historical (and traditional) conceptions of religious practice may not have afforded women much space to

⁴³ A good example of how this is done is through the re-interpretation of key verses within the Quran. The verse 4:34 is often interpreted as suggesting that if a woman disobeys her husband she should be 'hit.' In Wadud's (2006) translation she traces the history of the verb (to hit) and finds a number of alternate (and very plausible) translations. In one example 'to hit' has thus been re-read as 'to leave.'

negotiate these kinds of interventions, this type of work provides room to explore the role of women in Islamic history, mosque leadership and activist or political movements today (see for example Mahmood 2005).

Explaining her own MSA's interest in this, Hafsa elaborates on the importance of re-examining Islamic history with an eye for female participation. Not only does this help to enliven a female-centered perspective in the religious communities and mosques she is a part of, it also works to challenge the perception that Islam is, and always has been, socially conservative and oppressive to women (Mahmood 2005, p. 5). Hafsa explains that working against this means

...hearing a different version of what it means to be a Muslim woman. So looking at Muslim women in Islamic history, or in history in general, and looking at what roles they played in early Muslim communities and seeing like what is it...because we get fed that narrative too right. Like being a good Muslim women is to be at home having kids, you know whatever, kind of the traditional way, but when you go into Islamic history it's not like that. So when we had sisters' events we would try and focus on role models who were participating in the everyday life of the community, were taking leadership positions, were involved in everything that the community did and were really important in everything...and you know many of those women weren't married and didn't have kids or you know- it wasn't like this is how to be the ideal woman it was like oh there are these different talents that you have and those things can benefit community and you as well.

Hafsa finds a stable place of belonging by asserting her connection to the Muslim women of (Islamic) history. This was repeated numerous times by women who had begun reading about, researching, and discussing female role models within the Quran in order to claim a strong religious identification at the same time as asserting a solid gender identity. This speaks to the dual, but also mutually constitutive, aspects of religion and gender; Islam here is re-imagined as not only a religion that can *accommodate* women, but also one that facilitates and encourages female identifications.

Not my Islam

Finally, it remains important to note that not all women saw themselves within these terms. I spoke with a mother and daughter, Hasti and Fruzan, who felt that certain Islamic

states, and certain cultural practices, were inherently incompatible with Western states and ‘liberated’ conceptions of gender. They were thus extremely supportive of the government’s ban on the niqab and burqa and engaged in a politics that aligned with a desire to ‘save’ women from oppressive forces in their lives. Both women had been born in Afghanistan and placed immense importance on the negative role of the Taliban and the desperate need to liberate Afghanistan from it. Hasti felt ‘different’ from other Muslim women in this way and positioned herself as decidedly more ‘liberated’ than others who subscribed too closely to certain cultural or religious practice. I include this precisely *because* it contradicts nearly all of the other positions (and arguments) presented in this thesis. There are no doubt numerous other Muslim Canadian women who feel similar to Hasti and Fruzan (see for example the Muslim Canadian Congress (Bell 2012)). However, a point of interest here is that both women returned to Islam, and the basic tenants of the religion, to argue their positions. They felt that anti-woman attitudes were not part of ‘their’ Islamic practice but rather “others” mobilization of the negative parts of it. Faith and religion remained important to them, at the same time as they argued for government intervention to stop certain kinds of (other) cultural and religious practice.

Conclusions

I close with the confusing, and contradictory position above as I am committed to presenting the varying ways in which Muslim female identities are conceived of (even when they challenge my own politics). Hasti and Fruzan maintain a position that draws upon civilizational tropes that I do not wish to engage. I want to turn to Itrath Syed (2012) who notes that when tropes (such as the above) are “invoked by those who position themselves within the Muslim community [it] does not lessen the problematics.” This is because “those Muslims who willingly engage in this discourse are undeniably themselves subject to the same

racialized gaze within which they anchor their arguments” (p. 67). That is, they are often re-positioned to be outside of acceptable difference, just as they have done with others. This nonetheless remains one way of conceiving of Muslim female subjectivity, something that requires much further attention than just this conclusion can afford. However, moving forward I want to argue that “greater gender justice does not come through promoting racist and Islamophobic sentiments and the false civilizational divides that the narrow and reductive neoconservative position produces; what is required is a broader analysis of the interlocking social factors” (Zine 2012a, p. 20) that contribute to Muslim female identities, identifications, and the violence that is often directly associated with this process.

In this chapter I have explored just a few of these factors in order to present Muslim women’s individual imaginings of their religious and gendered identities. These women must contend with the challenge of “dual oppressions, confronting racism and Islamophobia in society at large” and “contending with patriarchal forms of religious oppression in their communities” (Zine 2006a, p. 239). I have argued that religious and gendered identifications are not only incredibly important to feelings of belonging in Canada, they are increasingly difficult positions to navigate because of a lack of (serious) engagement with religious difference and persisting Islamophobic representations of Muslim women. I have also shown that in any case both religion and gender provide positive sites to assert spaces of (un)belonging, through re-defining the parameters of traditional conceptions of Islam and female identity. Building off of Richa Nagar (quoting Abu-Lughod), and thinking about the myriad ways these women resist the ‘dual oppressions they face,’ we might conceive of these narrations not just as ways to see freedom, but rather as processes that provide great insight

into the operations of power (Nagar 2000, p. 572).⁴⁴ In the next chapter I work through some additional ways these words help us conceive of this power in the Canadian (multicultural) context.

⁴⁴ While arguably this type of analysis could be directed towards understanding the operations of power *within* the Muslim community, I have instead focused more on the ways in which these stories help us understand operations of power in Canadian society in general. I have done this for two reasons; first, it is the intention of this thesis to think about the Canadian state and its relation to these women, which requires a focus on generalized systems of power. Second (and more importantly) as a white woman engaged with the Muslim community, I want to work against the problematic assumption that all relations of power that need challenging (for Muslim women) are relations of patriarchy (within the Muslim community).

Chapter 4: multicultural (un)belongings, Islamophobia and the Canadian state

Belonging in, and to, (this) place

There is a human need or desire to feel rooted in place—to develop a sense of attachment—in order to understand one's own existence and work towards the establishment of strong identifications (Ley and Samuels 1978, p. 34). Geographer Yi Fu Tuan (1977) developed the argument that experience in place contributed greatly to personal relationships and cultural values (p. 34). He saw affection and historical or familial connection to a place as contributing to the development of an individual identity. But how does this feeling relate to the myriad ways that places, or people, are depicted? More specifically, if Muslim women are often represented as outside of acceptable difference in Canadian media and government discourses, how do they come to feel belonging?

In citizenship studies within geography there has been an intense focus on the development of formalized citizenship as a practice of delineating who belongs and who does not (Walby and Hier 2005; Siemiatycki and Isin 1997). Citizenship, it has been argued, signifies not only a set of distinct rights and responsibilities but also the cultivation of a sense of belonging to the nation (Desforges 2004).⁴⁵ However, as things 'speed up and spread out' places may remain sources of belonging but they take on relational, contingent, and complex meanings (Massey 1994, p. 169). As Stephen Castles and Alasdair Davidson (2000) explain, the concept of a single national citizenship has been eroded in the face of much more complex, varied and global ones (p. 156). For them, this destabilizes the notion of belonging to one state and calls into question the multi-layered process of belonging both locally and globally (Waters 2003, Schueth and O'Loughlin 2008); ideas of transnationalism and post-nationalism have furthered claims of belonging to a variety of scales and new categories

⁴⁵As was shown in Chapter 1, this is the primary way belonging is imagined in Canadian government discourses.

(Roudometof, 2005; Deforges 2004). So the question becomes: do immigrants belong to their new society, their old, or both? Do they belong to their nation, their ethnic group or both (Reitz and Banjeree 2007, Bauböck 2006)?

These questions become much more complex for Muslim migrant populations in a post 9/11 world. While a recent survey of 500 Muslim Canadian's reported that "94 percent said they were proud to be Canadian" (a figure matching the national average) and that "freedom, democracy, and multiculturalism were the sources of their pride..." there remain concerns over religious accommodation and discrimination in the country, of this group "66 percent...were concerned about discrimination and 30 percent were 'very concerned'" (Zine 2012a, p. 7). Furthermore, in a 2006 Environics focus on "Muslims and Multiculturalism in Canada" it was reported that 65% of the general Canadian population agrees that "There are too many immigrants who are coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values" (Environics 2006, p. 71), the pollster further noting that this was an increased number due in large part to a "debate in Western countries...about the integration of newcomer populations—particularly Muslims" (p. 72). These are complex and contradictory findings: pride and concern, multiculturalism and discrimination, existing simultaneously.

In this chapter I want to explore a few of the ways these issues come together. My analysis is three fold: first, I show how many women narrate belonging to Canada and relate this to stories told of previous places lived. Here the notion that belonging is *relational* is employed to suggest that often belonging is imagined in direct relation to the last place, space or time it was felt. Second, I move to consider the experiences of racism, discrimination and Islamophobia that influence the aforementioned feelings and dislodge, or make difficult, simple narrations of belonging. Third, I examine how these stories are made more complex by the fact that some are told in confluence and support of the formal Canadian state while

others are told in direct opposition to it. Throughout I attempt to map the way in which belonging and (un)belonging are in fact processual, rather than stable or secure. Finally, and in line with Haideh Moghissi, Saeed Rahnema and Mark Goodman's (2009) finding's, I want to suggest that while belonging is felt to exist in Canada (even in support of the state and multiculturalism) there is a simultaneous "commonality in the sense of being deported to the culture of not belonging" (Moghissi *et al.* 2009, p. 13) for many of the women interviewed.

Relational belonging(s)

Elaborating on the notion of individual continuity (and discontinuity) with our past selves, Doreen Massey (2007) wonder's if we might think of space as 'relational.' She imagines that "just as 'our past continues in our present' so also is the spatially distant implicated in our 'here'" (p. 178) and as such, "identities are, constitutively elements within a wider, configurational, distributed geography" (p. 178). She resolves, "Not even islands are islands unto themselves. There is a constitutive interdependence. Space is relational" (p. 21). If space(s) are relational, so too are our experiences of them. Using this particular imagining I want to explore the 'relational' elements of belonging; that is, the ways in which belonging becomes known, or at least communicable, through relating to a previous experience. Arguably this type of analysis proves valuable as it enlivens the stagnant quality of statistics on belonging (such as the one above) by qualifying and complicating the numbers we see.

Place(s) and selves

There is an extensive literature on immigrant connections to home countries and countries of birth (Jenks 2008; Ghosh 2007; Ong and Nonini 1996). It is widely accepted that transnational ties (Vertovec 1999) and cosmopolitan behaviours (Roudometof, 2005; Kofman 2005) shape migrant subjectivities in place (Lee and Park 2008). Furthermore, there is a

growing body of critical scholarship on second-generation immigrants negotiation of home and identity (Driskell *et al.* 2008). However, for the purposes of this analysis I want to move away from conceiving of belonging in these terms, as these studies often require conceiving of stable individuals and stable places. I want instead to focus in on the stories told about places, about *belonging to places*, as a way to enliven a ‘relational’ understanding of these feelings, one that also takes seriously the contingent and changing construction of the self.

When Mina begins to tell me about herself, in Canada, she immediately narrates her feelings about Afghanistan. She says “...being Muslim in Afghanistan was like being Muslim in prison. As a woman it was a forced kind of religiosity (long pause). Here my heart is Muslim now, here my heart is it, I don’t have to cover. There I *had* to cover but I didn’t *feel* it, now I do [feel it] and I don’t have to cover.” Mina’s words, in combination with the intense violence she and her family faced (both from the Soviet occupation and the increasingly powerful Taliban) constituted a negative perception of belonging to that country. Mina is happy here and locates this firmly within freedom of religion and the general safety Canada affords. Feelings towards Afghanistan inflect her current feelings of belonging to Canada; arguably the one cannot be understood without the other. This was echoed by all of the women from Afghanistan. Current research on the Afghan diaspora suggests that “war, civil war and foreign occupations” (Moghissi *et al.* 2011, p. 44) present the primary reasons for leaving the country. The Soviet invasion, the rise of the Taliban, and the ongoing occupation and violence associated with the U.S. and Canadian military presence, all contributing to painful emotional constructions of (belonging in) Afghanistan.

However, the story was never this simple. Memories of Afghanistan’s past, and imaginings of its future, came to trouble any easy notion of belonging to either Canada *or* Afghanistan (or one place more so than the other). Women told stories of the immense

comfort and happiness felt there, locating these feelings in their youth, fond memories of food and music, the smells, and the people of that place. There was, for Mina and others, a sense that home would always be in Afghanistan, even if they were now happier in Canada. For Mina, some sense of belonging remained in that country, with memories of her (now deceased) husband, the birth of her children, and a connection to the land she was raised on. These complexities enliven a relational notion of belonging. This is neither a story of an escape from a violent and war torn Afghanistan, nor is it one of “an imaginary homeland frozen in an idyllic moment outside history” (Gopinath quoted in Garvey 2011, p. 767). Not only is the place that she remembers a changing and negotiable one (slipping back and forth between home and away, stable and unstable, peaceful and war torn (and all that is in between)) it also sits in relation to her perceptions and feelings about Canada (feelings that are no doubt just as complex). On days when memories of her husband are ‘most important,’ Mina may occupy a distant and (un)belonged space in Canada. When she thinks of her religious freedoms and safety, this moves back into a more stable conception of self. These are not ‘fixed’ understandings but instead are “full of shifting meanings” (Staeheli and Nagel 2006, p. 1612); her belonging is “a bundle of contradictions” (Staeheli and Nagel 2006, p. 1599) conceived of through a relational sense of the places she has known as home.

Similarly, Kadira cannot imagine belonging in Canada without drawing on feelings of her home of Saudi Arabia. She says “...for me being in Saudi and coming here... [Canada is a] land of freedom! Like you know the people are so nice, in comparison to there!” She is at times overwhelmed with the opportunities she is given in Canada. She explains her education, the constant intellectual and social events, as well as the numerous spaces for political activity as presenting occasions for her to be involved in a way she had not known in Saudi Arabia. She goes on, “Over here you have more options, there are more trains of thought, more

events happening.” This gives Kadira a sense that belonging to Canada is easy, something she is happy to do. Kadira’s notion of ‘intellectual’ belonging in Canada is directly influenced by her perception of barriers to the same kinds of practices in Saudi Arabia.

This is however not all that Kadira dreams of when she imagines belonging. She misses her family and community and wonders if she stays in Canada how this will affect her in the long run. She explains, “...the thing is, I do feel scared of being alone here. Because the community, I don’t really connect with the community, because...the community is very young, the Muslim community. And I haven’t really met many people who are on the same level of thinking as me.” Kadira’s desire to critically engage with Islam as well as her particular socialization in Saudi Arabia, give her the sense that she is outside of many of the Muslim communities she has come into contact with in Vancouver. Kadira’s story reveals not only the complex interplay between Canada and Saudi Arabia, but also the simultaneous ways her own self-identifications and desires play into this. “Modern subjects lie at the nexus of ambivalence, contradiction and heterogeneity...consequently subjecthood can never fully be truly captured as a single subject position in which the self undergoes a consistent and uniform journey of self-fashioning” (Hafez 2011, p. 12). Kadira maintains a desire to be connected with Saudi custom and belief, her family, and people who are invested in her particular relationship to Islam, at the same time as she finds comfort, belonging and interest in Canadian norms of intellectual freedom and debate; her belonging is relational (and contingent) on both the places she has lived, and the complex visions she holds of herself.

The interplay between places, as well as self-interests and identifications, was also made evident in conversation with Katrina, a convert who grew up in Vancouver but has lived all over the world. Challenging me on the possibility of one definition of belonging she says

I want to ask you [Molly] I think the question is, to whom do you want to belong?... I don't feel like I so much belong... and its sort of because I don't really *want* to belong. Because why would I want to belong to a people whose fundamental beliefs I have a difference of opinion with? But its really a question because when my kids went to school in Saudi, my son went to a Montessori school and most of the mothers wore niqab and I didn't have that much in common with them...but our deep beliefs were the same. So now he is at a public school [in Dunbar], same age, and I don't have much in common with the mothers even though our culture is the same. So you really have to find your niche and I think that's the same for most people on earth...

Katrina feels at home in Canada when she is with her family, her loved ones, and other converts in the Muslim community. She was raised in Canada and acknowledges that she should feel more comfortable here because of the 'cultural' similarities between her and the other mothers in Dunbar. However, Katrina's interest in raising her children within a strong Islamic community, a faith centered society, and with access to the religious support they need, causes her to question whether or not she can, or *wants to*, belong in Canada. The 'lack' she feels here is narrated in direct relation to a 'presence' in Saudi Arabia. As she explains her own sense of belonging she constantly relates Saudi to Canada, New York to Malaysia, moving between (and through) her perceptions of belonging. She imagines each place as providing her with certain comforts and not others; parts of her become fulfilled, as others do not. From this perspective home, and belonging, should be understood as "more ambiguous and ambivalent...constantly negotiated, constructed, and linked from multiple points of reference" (Stacheli and Nagel 2006, p. 1604).

(Over) time

It was not just place, but also time, that came to take on relational meaning in narrations of belonging. For some this was an instantaneous occurrence, belonging in one moment and not in the next. As Hafsa explains

For me belonging kind of is, its not a static place to be, it's a shifting sort of thing and there are things that will happen to you that will disconnect you from that feeling. And when I feel like I belong, and I am walking around I feel like I am entitled to public space and I feel like I am a part of society, or whatever, who I am and my identity is welcomed, and then something will happen, then I am pushed out of that feeling.

Over the course of a few moments Hafsa goes from feeling ‘entitled’ (and belonging) to ‘pushed out,’ to (un)belonging. It remains important however to view this ‘relation’ as ‘non-linear’ (Garvey 2011, p. 761); it is not as though she has now arrived at a permanent point of exclusion. This is instead a story of drifting through belonging and (un)belonging, and gives us a sense of the speed at which these two feelings can overtake one another.

If this happened quickly for Hafsa, it was a dreadfully long process for others. Many women expressed the feeling that time really does heal all, and longings, pains and the sadness of relocation simply got better over (long) periods of time. They missed family members less, they felt more connected to Canadian society, and eventually felt some sense of stability. As Parand explains, “I didn’t used to feel comfortable here but now I do.” When I ask ‘what’s changed?’ she simply responds, “I can’t say exactly, I just got used to it, gradually I became more myself.” This echoes a theme in migration studies and points to the process of migration as one that takes time to get over. This response also highlights the commonly accepted belief that “the longer new immigrants are in Canada” the more their social outcomes of pride, trust and even belonging come to match that of the Canadian born (Soroka *et al.* 2007, 583). However, instead of accepting this finding uncritically, a relational reading of Parand’s words allows us to hear both the comfort of the now, the difficulties of the past, and the ambiguous understanding of how one became the other.

A relational understanding of belonging allows us to draw out the complexities embedded in claims that Muslim’s in Canada express high levels of ‘belonging’ (Zine 2012a, p. 7). While most women I spoke with were quick to tell a story of feeling a home, or feeling belonging in Canada, these were more often than not placed in relation to another time or sense of the same feeling. “Meaningful senses of space emerge only via movements *between* people and places” (Davidson and Milligan 2004, p. 524). Furthermore, and explored in detail

in the next section, these narrations were often followed by feelings of exclusion or pain associated with discrimination and Islamophobia.

Islamophobia and racism

“The bus driver, he looks at me (long pause) and he stares at me. He doesn’t want to put the lift out for me to get on. I am old and I can’t step up (begins to cry). It hurts to step up this high. He won’t make it lower (crying). He refuses to help me.”

Fruzan and I had known each other for months before she felt comfortable enough to tell me this story. She initially had little interest in interviewing with me but was always very friendly. Over time we became quite close, she introduced me to many friends whom she wanted me to speak with, and eventually decided that she wanted to do an interview with me. A few weeks after we spoke she came in to the community group early one morning and told me this story. On her way to MOSAIC she had a troubling run in with the bus driver. He had refused to lower the step so that she could easily get on the bus. Fruzan is in her mid 60s, wears hijab, and often uses an aid for walking. She struggled to get on the bus and was in both physical and emotional pain after the experience. It is exceedingly difficult to understand the multitude of factors that lead to discriminatory behaviour (why did the bus driver do what he did?) It is however much easier to listen to, and take seriously, peoples’ experiences and perceptions of discrimination; in that moment Fruzan felt deported from normative belonging (Moghissi *et al.* 2009, p. 13).

Islamophobia is a reality in Canada. While this should be placed within a long history of Orientalist visions of the world (see Chapter 1) it must also be understood as part and parcel of existing racism in the country (Tator and Henry 2006, p. 202). As Carol Tator and Frances Henry (2006) have argued, racism is reproduced through law and legal practice, the court and justice systems, education, and media in Canada (p. 39). Furthermore, racism has become entrenched in the public sphere through widespread acceptance of discourses of fear

as both an explanation of, and even justification for, the perpetuation of discriminatory practice (Tator and Henry 2006, p. 39; Razack 2008, p. 6). Islamophobia should thus be understood as a particular kind of racism (Saeed 2007, p. 456) legitimized through existing racialized (and racist) definitions of acceptable difference and diversity within Canada.

While Chapter 1 focused primarily on discursive Islamophobia and racism, these discourses can, and do, have real material affects (Painter 2006, p. 752). This is because “state effects are actualized in everyday life” (Painter 2006, p. 770); discourses have a direct impact on law, regulation and ultimately social behaviours (van Dijk 2004, p. 15 quoted in Riaño and Wastl-Walters 2006, p. 1694), not to mention violent and painful consequences for those targeted (Perry and Poynting 2006). The naming of certain ‘Muslim’ practices as ‘barbaric’ (Post Media News 2012) or ‘terrorist’ (CBC News 2011) has come to be common (not to mention acceptable) in Canada and constitutes Islamophobic rhetoric with real affects (Zine 2006a, p. 240). These rhetorical constructs and racist attitudes must be understood as incredibly powerful precisely because they are often constructed as outside of power, or as constitutive of ‘absolute truth’ (Foucault 1975 in Lemert 2010); the state’s “official documents, white papers, legislation [and] political rhetoric” (McDowell 2003, p. 864) as well as the media’s reporting, come to appear as ‘fact’ rather than representation (Faust *et al.* 1992).

Listening to stories of discrimination, feelings of exclusion, and the pain associated with them, provides one way of disrupting these constructs. Connections can (and should) be made “to galvanize emotional and political responses...to individual lives rather than a generalized racialized population” (Pratt 2012; p. xxix). All of the women I interviewed narrated either being the direct target of discrimination or knowing someone who had been.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Because of the incredibly sensitive nature of this kind of question, I shied away from pushing people to talk about experiences of discrimination. Towards the later half of the interview there were explicit questions about it, but these were often skipped when I felt that they were inappropriate. Instead, I attempted to make a

For some, this produced immense pain and fear, while for others it was simply the condition of being Muslim in the West today. To be sure these were the primary sites at which normative belonging was felt to be denied, experiences of ‘exclusion’ producing an extremely ‘negative emotional impact’ (Davidson and Milligan 2004, p. 525). In this section I want to explore the fear associated with Islamophobia, as well as the pain and sadness linked to ‘tangible’ experiences of it. I then want to look to some of the more banal and increasingly systemic ways these experiences were narrated before moving to consider the consequences of this for Muslim women in Canada. “Emotions can clearly alter the way the world *is* for us, affecting our sense of time as well as space. Our sense of who and what we are is continually (re)shaped by how we *feel*” (Davidson and Miligan 2004, p. 524). These next stories give insight into some of the ways feelings of belonging develop (or are denied) in relation to Islamophobia and racism in Canada.

Fears

Discourses of fear are omnipresent in the post 9/11 world (Pain 2009). However, there is a tendency to discuss fear without thinking about “whose fear it is that we are talking about” that is, “who names fear, who claims it, and who actually feels it? How is it experienced, and what do people do with it? How is it shaped and differentiated by varied lives, communities and places” (Pain 2009, p. 471). I thus want to turn to Muslim women’s narrations of their own fear and argue that these are not just unfortunate consequences of Islamophobia; they are in fact a particular manifestation of it.

In conversation about the death of Shaima Alawadi, an Iraqi woman who was fatally beaten outside her home in California (Associated Press 2012), Kadira explains that this is a

comfortable space to talk openly about experiences of belonging, which often led to people bringing up experiences of discrimination and Islamophobia.

triggering event for her. She feels that Canada and the U.S. are quite similar (in some respects) and this leads her to question her own personal safety. This 'distant' incident also reminds her of something in her own community. She says

K: I was really upset [after the death of Alwadi]. And I got scared. It happened...but also, there was an incident in [a local] mosque, where people wrote 'Sand Niggers', did you hear about that?

MK: no, no I didn't.

K: it happened, I dunno, a few months ago, and have you talked to people at [that mosque]?

MK: I haven't no...

K: well they have had like a lot of issues, like before this, and there was this person...like someone wrote 'Sand Niggers' and stuff. And so even though [Alwadi's death] happened in the states...and when I walk I have never had any incidences, except maybe 2 or 3 times, but I remember the [local] mosque with the writing of the 'Sand Niggers' and stuff like that, I felt like there could be people that are loaded with hate and that they could try to kill me. So I avoided being in places, dark places, alone. I could understand how people might feel disturbed by seeing a woman covered, especially now, with it being the summer, yesterday, it was hot, I usually go out running, and I wear like a jacket and my Abaya, and usually no one notices, but now that its summer, people are going to start taking off their clothes, and I'll be the odd one out, wearing this, and actually running, and everyone is going to start looking at me like oh 'she is weird.'

Kadira's fear is located from within recognition of Alwadi's death (and a feeling of interconnection between the U.S. and Canada) as well as the acknowledgement of instances of hate crimes directed at a local mosque. Not only does she down play her own experiences of discrimination (first saying she never has had any, and then saying she has 2 or 3 times been harassed on the street) she also begins to internalize the idea that seeing a woman in an Abaya⁴⁷ is 'weird.' In this construct she becomes the problem, rather than the Islamophobic and racist perception of a covered woman as a 'threat' (Ahmed 2004, p. 8). Furthermore, this fear has begun to affect Kadira's feelings of safety, as well as her actual movement (both at night and during the day for her runs). While the story is told matter of factly, it remains a direct (and violent) barrier to full belonging in Canada; the "daily awareness" of the potential for Islamophobia is an "insidious traumatization" (Burstow 2003, p. 1308).

This potential was real for many, and there was a generalized fear of not being able to do anything about Islamophobic encounters. For some there was a sense that laws simply

⁴⁷ Abaya refers to a long, cloak like dress that is worn by some Muslim women in Canada and in parts of the Islamic world.

didn't exist to protect them, while for others there was an acknowledgement that they didn't know what rights they had, or how to exercise them. In 2003 "Riad Saloojee, the director of CAIR-CAN, issued more than 30,000 copies of the guide *Know Your Rights* to Muslims" (Patel 2012, p. 281) in Canada, in an attempt to address this very issue. However, there remain barriers to access and many women (even those who had seen this document) continued to feel fearful. As Souri tells me "In the street if I see something against my, against Muslims, I don't say anything because I don't have power. I don't know what to do. They could take me and they could do something to me. So I don't do anything." Her words speak to the issue of feeling powerless in the face of discrimination and the fear associated with this. Majida feels similarly, but directs this insecurity squarely at the government when she tells me "I don't trust the government to protect me [from Islamophobia]." While it might be argued that this fear is misplaced and irrational as Canada does have anti-discrimination laws and widely accepted protections of minorities, in a climate of increasingly 'draconian' legislation (Razack 2010), these feelings have much credence. With high profile cases such as the unlawful imprisonment of Omar Khadr, the mishandling of Maher Arar, the detention of Suaad Mohamud and many others (see Razack 2008; Razack 2010; Flatt 2012; Patel 2012; Went 2009) commonly known and discussed, the fear of being 'denied the right to have rights' (Razack 2008, p. 7) presents a very serious barrier to feelings of belonging for Muslims in Canada. These are "consequences that may appear insignificant when viewed in isolation" but ones that "become deeply problematic when viewed from a community perspective of systematic exclusion" (Bahdi 2003, p. 315). The fear of Islamophobia, as well as the feeling that little can be done about it, presents a site of (un)belonging for Canadian Muslims; a site of "social vulnerability" to the racism of Canada (Garvey 2011, p. 761).

Experiences

Beyond the perception that discrimination *could* happen, was the exceedingly normal occurrence of having experienced harassment that was racially motivated. To place these conversations in context, it remains important to note that following 9/11

CAIR-CAN and the Canadian Muslim Civil Liberties Association, recorded 110 incidents of harassment, threats, death threats, attacks on personal property, physical assaults, and attempts to burn down Islamic centres and places of worship in the two months following 9/11. Police in Ottawa and Calgary reported that 'hate crimes doubled in the thirty-day period after the terrorist attacks while police in Montreal, Calgary, and Ottawa reported forty, twenty-four, and forty-four hate-related incidents, respectively (Bahdi 2003, p. 314)

Islamophobic hate crimes became a reality for many Muslims across the country (Perry and Poynting 2006).

However, there exists a common understanding in Canada that these types of incidents are grossly 'under-reported' (Bahdi 2003; Robert 1995, p. 12). This is because even when hate crimes are "*reported to police*" they are "less likely to be *recorded by* them. In Canada, police are not required to record statistics of hate crime" (Perry and Poynting 2006, p. 3, emphasis in original). It also stems from individual victims "fear of retribution, lack of surveillance, and...apprehension of the criminal justice system" (Perry and Poynting 2006, p. 2); "all too often when immigrant groups express dissent or are critical of the conditions of their adopted homeland, they are met with claims of disloyalty and ungratefulness" (Zine 2012a, p. 7). Furthermore, it remains difficult to name (in any hard and fast way) what one's experience of discrimination is, what it means, and what should be done about it (Burstow 2003, p. 1303). In my own research this often meant that women would start by saying that they had no direct experience of discrimination, but knew someone who had. This was quickly followed by a story that candidly contradicted the previous claim, personal narrations of discrimination and Islamophobia a commonality among almost all of the women I spoke with. There is thus a disconnect between actually occurring discrimination, and the capacity or desire to 'name'

experiences of oppression (Burstow 2003, p. 1308), as well as a tendency to downplay them when they are spoken about.

In one of the group interviews, discussion turned to the current government and the increasingly Islamophobic tone in Canada. This conversation occurred only weeks after Stephen Harper called Islamicism “the greatest threat to Canadian safety” (CBC News 2011) and Sourì narrates her experience with (what she feels are) the consequences of this statement.

S: Once after Harper said that stuff, I was coming from the Mosque and (really heated and upset)...a guys on the street came to me (starts to cry) and spit onto me. I was really, really upset. This was an effect of his words!

MK: oh my, what did you do?

S: I ran away. I didn't know what to say, I didn't know what to do (panicked) I just ran away, it was late at night.

S: [Harper] is putting people against each other, that's why the young man who spat [on me] came and did this. At the least he should say, 'some people are terrorists' not all people. So many people kill each other, a guy who takes so many women and rapes them...are all of these terrorists too?

Boosah: I am so weak, I can't even breathe [because of asthma], how can I be a terrorist?

When stories like this were told, the group would typically stop; emotions running high and tears on many faces. To be sure, this is an incredibly violent story, which will have long lasting impacts on Sourì's capacity to feel safe walking down the street (or generally in this country). It is also illustrative of systemic Islamophobic attitudes in Canada since, as Young (1990) explains, “violence [directed at an individual] is systemic because it is directed at members of a group simply because they are members of that group” (p. 62). Furthermore, it affects travel, “the oppression of violence consists not only in direct victimization, but in the daily knowledge shared by all members of oppressed groups that they are *liable* to violation, solely on account of their group identity” (Young 1990, p. 62). Thinking back to Kadira's words, the fear that this *can* or *will* occur to everyone who identifies (or is identified) as Muslim, signals not only a very serious barrier to emotional well-being and belonging in Canada, but also highlights the presence of systemic and widespread Islamophobia in the country. While only a

handful of narrations were told with this level of ‘direct’ contact, people relayed stories of friends who had cars broken into, stores and homes fire-bombed or written on, as well as innumerable instances of street harassment (the most common of which involved being told to ‘go home’).

The much more mundane, and often terribly commonplace stories of discrimination or suspicion were the most common. Many women narrated a feeling that general systems in Canada were working against them: the bus driver, the teacher at school, the employer and many more. As Katrina explained of her house hunting in Vancouver,

I think...I don't think I got an apartment because I was wearing [hijab]...then I took it off, I'm like, I need an apartment, I am going to test, so at first I tested it with a woman and um, she did, she said 'oh I see your husband is Syrian, hmm, that means he doesn't drink? How does he feel about us drinking? Because we have *wild* parties above and I don't want him to be really conservative" and stuff, and I don't think she would have said any of that had I been wearing [hijab].

Katrina feels as though she has been actively denied housing because she is Muslim. In ‘testing’ this theory out she confronts a racist and Islamophobic assumption about her (and her husband’s) particular choices. “There is no common nature that members of a group share” and the assumption that there is constitutes an essentializing, albeit banal, kind of discrimination (Young 1990, p. 47). Not only has Katrina been denied housing because of this type of assumption, it continues to make her uncomfortable and certainly (un)belonged, even when she attempts to work around it. We might better understand the violence of this as “not belonging in a chain of not belonging” (Garvey 2011, p. 759). Katrina’s hijab makes her not belong; she takes it off (a violence in and of itself) and has to face the direct and racist perceptions of her religious practice.

For others, there were the countless times where being Muslim had ‘provoked’ suspicion or concern. This was present in Kadira’s story about her MSA using communal meeting space at her local university and being ‘found out’ by security. She says

the security noticed that we were meeting there every week and they just complained about us and they went to our group on facebook and they printed out all of our conversations on facebook and then they said, they contacted my friend who was also part of the MSA and they said, I mean, you are not a registered group you know, you should not be doing the meetings there, and um, because, there were some of our friends who were not [university] students, but the majority were [university] students, so um, then they stopped us from [meeting], and it really frightened us at that time, even though there was just one meeting a week...

Kadira's story might read as an ambiguous instance of discrimination. Were the young women being tracked by security because they were breaking school rules and regulations? Or, was it because they were Muslim, the content of their meetings appearing 'suspicious' because of their religious affiliation? It is common to dismiss these types of narratives by saying that this is an 'over reaction' or a 'misplaced' feeling (Wente 2009; Asad 2009; Mahmood 2009). However I want to draw on Bonnie Burstow (2003) and her elaboration of the dominant (or 'normal') perception of events versus the 'oppressed' to counter this. She explains that the way normalcy operates in society is through the assumption and prescription of the idea that "the world is essentially benign and safe" as such "general trust is appropriate" and "people who have been traumatized have a less realistic picture of the world than others" (p. 1298). This works to delegitimize the aforementioned examples by dismissing them as hypersensitive and 'looking' for a problem. Burstow challenges this view by arguing first that the world is neither 'safe' nor 'benign' for those people who live under systemic oppression. And more importantly, events of oppression (or violence) remove the assumption of 'invulnerability' that we are socialized to accept as normal. Thus oppressed peoples "actually see the world more accurately than the less traumatized" as they cannot simply "edit out anything that tells them that the world can get at them" (p. 1298). Kadira reads this experience as 'frightening' because she has had enough other experiences to tell her that it is.

Consequences

How can we begin to understand the consequences of these types of experiences? That is, without ‘gentrifying trauma’ (Pratt 2012 (citing Edkins), p. 71), by trying to “contain and control it through narratives of rescue, redemption, and overcoming.” My modest attempt to do this includes giving primacy to the feeling of exclusion that these experiences produce. That is, first and foremost, acknowledging that many women feel (un)belonging as a direct result of Islamophobia and racism in Canada. As Majida so clearly explains

hmmm, it’s very tenuous, that word [belonging]. Because at 9/11, when 9/11 happened I was thinking, we need to pack up now and leave (laughs), even though I was born here, and it was a common feeling among people and friends, who are socially conscious, because people can snap, and I am thinking people can snap, any minute, and Canada, I don’t really trust it here.

For Majida, belonging in Canada is not a reality, even though she was born here. She doesn’t trust that things will be ok and has accepted a fairly tenuous kind of (un)belonging as a result. She finds strength in her community and makes her own sense of home and strength out of this (discussed more in the next section). While all women had particular ways of explaining these feelings (some focused on the guilt of not belonging ‘properly,’ others focused on the anger of being denied this) there was a tendency to view Muslim identity—at least the dominant and stereotypical perception of it—as preventing normative belonging in Canada.

However, the story is (as has been shown) much more complex. Women resist, they struggle and they do overcome. This is not to dismiss the above experiences but rather to make space for the ways in which Muslim women have become particularly mobilized around their identifications. There has been an intense politicization of Muslim identity in Canada (and the Western world in general) since 9/11 (Massoumi 2010). Provoking an analysis that would remain attuned to this Rachel Pain (2009) asks, “Isn’t fear reacted to, thought about, reformulated, resisted and reshaped into other emotions and actions? Don’t feelings have transformative power of their own?” (p. 474). Muslim women are not only engaged in

political activism related to Islam (Bullock 2012), they are also increasingly taking “interpretations of Islam into their own hands” (Massoumi 2010, p. 67), in both cases asserting a desire to define a particular Islam that challenges Western stereotypes, and carefully engages with ongoing questions of gender roles within the religion.

Yalda’s story (echoed by many others) exemplifies this as she discussed taking up the hijab post 9/11 so that she could ‘talk more’ with people about what it meant to be Muslim. She tells me “before I came to Canada I didn’t wear hijab and September 11 happened. I told you, my daughter told me we should go to the restaurant and eat out that day. And that day, on purpose I said ‘ok I am going to wear hijab and go [out]’ and so when somebody will ask me [about it] they will have to know what’s going on.” Yalda decides to veil in hopes that people might ask her questions about her religious and political practice. This action is a direct consequence of Islamophobia but should be understood as having ‘transformative power’ of its own (Pain 2009). “9/11 has encouraged greater political participation, social representation, and civic involvement by Muslim attempting to claim *their* Islam...it has actually produced a deeper sense of civic engagement” (Memon 2012, p. 203, emphasis mine) for many Muslims (including Yalda).

While this resistance is important, it remains necessary to understand Islamophobia in a broader structural sense; there now exists widespread and systemic Islamophobic attitudes in Canada. Young (1990) outlines the language needed to understand this as a particular kind of oppression. She explains,

...oppression also refers to systemic constraints on groups that are not necessarily the result of the intentions of a tyrant. Oppression in this sense is structural, rather than the result of a few people’s choices or policies. Its causes are embedded in unquestioned norms, habits and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules...In this extended structural sense oppression refers to the vast and deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions, media and cultural stereotypes, and structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanism—in short, the normal processes of everyday life (p. 41).

Thinking back to Fruzan's story about the bus driver, we might then reflect that his actions have become the 'normal processes of everyday life' for many Muslims, with less and less space to criticize them in Canadian society. These kinds of 'deep injustices' reverberate through individual lives and into the social structures present in the country. Thus "When decision makers operate against a backdrop of ingrained, but often-unconscious stereotypes, they are likely to filter and interpret facts or events through the lens of stereotypes rather than by making an individual and rational assessment based on the particular facts of a given case" (Bahdi 2003, p. 305). This allows people like Kenney to claim that the niqab is an inherently patriarchal practice, without considering the myriad ways it is taken up (Zine 2012a, p. 12). It also legitimates headlines such as "The Future Belongs to Islam"⁴⁸ in which Canadians were warned of the 'growing threat' of Islam the world over, and what 'we' should do about it. In both cases 'overt' as well as 'un-conscious' stereotypes operate to position Islam, and certain Muslims, as permanently other.

Finally, this leads to the further reification of Islam as outside of normal difference in the country. In a 2006 Environics poll, while the general Canadian public and Canadian Muslims alike agreed that Islamic identity in Canada was on the rise, the two groups had intensely contradictory opinions about whether this was a positive or negative development; 56% of the population at large believes that this is negative, with 85% of Muslims believing it's positive. This should signal an ingrained and un-questioned (Islamophobic) assumption about the particular meaning of religious identification, and an issue in need of serious thought and attention. Arguably this is the 'transformation' of Islam into a "fetish object" in which its mere existence becomes the "grounds for declarations of war," discrimination and

⁴⁸ This article ran in Macleans magazine with the subheading "The Muslim world has youth, numbers and global ambitions. The West is growing old and enfeebled, and lacks the will to rebuff those who would supplant it. It's the end of the world as we've known it" (Steyn 2006).

securitization, as it is always already the source of threat and violence (Ahmed 2004, p. 77). In the following section I turn to consider some of the ways the state is implicated in questions of Islamophobia in Canada.

Many multiculturalisms

In what ways do feelings of belonging have anything to do with the state? As Spivak and Butler (2011) provokingly ask “What state are we in that we ask these questions about global states? And which states do we mean?” (p. 1). For the purposes of this section I want to think of the state, as defined by *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, “as a set of institutions for the protection and maintenance of society. These institutions include governments, politics, the judiciary, armed forces, etc. and guarantee the reproduction of social relations in a way that is beyond the capability, or commonly the opposition, of any individual or single social group” (Gregory *et al.* 2011, *state*). However, I want to think beyond this definition and argue that in fact “everyday life is permeated by state-ness in various guises” (Painter 2006, p. 753) making the ‘state we are in’ deeply tied to the formal state that we hold citizenship too. The Canadian state is thus both a formal and institutionalized operating system of government (Gregory *et al.* 2011, *state*) as well as a diverse and far-reaching set of discourses and practices (Desbians *at al.* 2004).

Conceptions of power as all pervasive and oppressive, as a ‘coherent force’ located from within the state (Ehrkamp 2012, p. 3), often neglect to engage with the myriad ways individuals and communities respond, negotiate, challenge and work through these systems. While there is little doubt that the multicultural state asserts coercive power over Muslim women, both through representations of those who belong and those who do not, as well as through targeted surveillance and policing of Muslim migrant populations (Khan 2007, p. 114), there are productive and powerful responses from these communities that must be

further explored. There are, as well, stories of comfort and trust that emanate from within a vision of everyday multiculturalism. As Pratt (2004) explains “contradictions within and across discourse come to light through the day-to-day practice of living within and moving through them. If we understand discourses as situated practices produced in particular places, we can also understand agency and critique in more embodied ways” (p. 20). This perspective “allows for a consideration of the creative ways in which individuals maneuver their own space to counter the state’s hegemony over its disciplinary institutions” (Hafez 2011, p. 16) and permits a view of the world that goes beyond the often simplistic categories used to think about tactics and conditions of power (‘sovereignty’ or ‘bare life’) making more space for the differential ways in which resistance (and existence) operates (Spivak and Butler 2011, p. 42).

A specific focus on these stories not only allows us to better understand the contradictions of multiculturalism for Muslim women in particular, it also enlivens and complicates simplistic depictions of their agency. Echoing Mahmood (2005), we might thus understand agency as ‘capacity’ to both resist, subvert, or accept power depending on the situation and conditions under which one is living (p. 8-9). Or, returning to Spivak and Butler (2011) we might then understand action as ‘eluding’ or ‘stalling’ state power (p. 42) even while existing within it. This particular construct of the state allows the next set of stories to be situated within a particular vision of multicultural Canada, one that includes the formal and informal ways it becomes manifest, as it is actually lived and interpreted. I want to argue that while some women place their belonging firmly within a vision of multicultural (and accepting) Canada, most have complex, contradictory and often oppositional feelings towards the policy. I begin with the encouraging stories that reinforce the value of a multicultural state vision before moving to consider the more apprehensive and opposing ones.

Multicultural belonging

One of the most positive affirmations of belonging in, and to, Canada was made in reference to the presence of a 'multicultural' landscape. For many, the feeling that other people were different, that "No one is the same," reinforced some level of safety and comfort. Describing working at an immigrant serving organization Naderah says "they have seen so many people. So many immigrants, they have seen so many situations, so they understand, they know, person is person, it's not the name or title...it doesn't matter to them." Naderah works at an organization that engages government policy on anti-racism, anti-discrimination and equitable workplace practice. She feels extremely positive about this and references what she has learned at work as helping her understand her own experiences and allowing her to assist others (racialized Canadians) in understanding theirs. Naderah's feelings of belonging are strongest in the context of institutionalized multicultural policy.

Similarly, Atoosa, a second generation Iranian who grew up in Montreal but moved to Vancouver a few years ago, tells me that for her being around intense diversity, young people who are from all over, helps her feel less 'weird.' She finds that the more 'visible' the differences, the more she feels at home. This level of comfort was also present in conversation with Kadir. She explains "when there is lots of diversity I feel physically safer." Teca, a woman in her mid 30s from Albania, locates this feeling of comfort in the multicultural as most present in young people, 'curious minds,' who are more open to different cultures and religions. For her, school was thus a place that she felt most 'belonged.' Many women expressed that "despite imperfections, Canada remained the best space and environment for Muslim culture and identity to flourish" because it is an inherently 'pluralist' state (Malak 2008, p. 75). The country's "active promotion" of multiculturalism was felt to be useful in combating racist attitudes and negative depictions of Islam.

For two women this comfort, and even safety, was felt to be because of (not in spite of) the Harper government. For Hasti, her own personal opposition to things like niqab, as well as the Taliban presence in Afghanistan, allowed her to feel confident in the current government's protections of her rights and freedoms. She appreciated the intervention into religious practice and felt that this was a good management of the 'constitutional' and 'religious' requirements at play. For her, belonging was affirmed through the religious protection of the right to wear hijab (and she contrasted this to the French ban) at the same time as it was felt to be protected by the government's mediation of what she perceived as 'non-religious' practices.⁴⁹ Hasti noted that the current multicultural landscape was being managed well and in such a way that she was able to be religiously and culturally included (at the same time as Canada asserted itself in restrictions of certain practices that she felt to be 'too far').

Confused and variously felt

For some the comfort in multiculturalism waxed and waned, moving between a sense that the policy had a good impact and, that it was not really enough to make people tolerant and respectful. Often in the same interview women would shift from expressing deep comfort in Canadian society ("I love it here") to a thoroughly more questioning position ("I am not sure if I am really accepted"). Sometimes this was evident in even one statement. Naderah explains "But here, it's very good, mostly, [people] are very respecting, they don't mind the skin colour, or religion, but still you see the differences, you see the people, you see that people look at you as a stranger." Naderah's sentence moves from a positive assessment

⁴⁹ There exists an intense debate about the niqab being 'outside' of acceptable difference because it is not a 'religious practice' as stated in the Quran and thus not something that Canadian law and society should have to tolerate. When Kenney argued for the ban he made the claim that on Hajj women are not allowed to where the niqab and thus it is not a religious requirement. However, in Canada the Supreme Court defines 'religious requirements' as that which is within the "sincerity of the individual's beliefs." This means that if "a woman honestly believes that it is part of her faith to cover her face, the state cannot counter that" (Zine 2012a, p. 15).

of Canadians as generally accepting, to a more troubled feeling of being perceived as a stranger. This shifting statement might be because *both* acceptance and discrimination exist simultaneously (Hunter 2007). It might also be because symbolic acceptance is not translatable into everyday experiences of the Canadian landscape (Kobayshi and Ray 2000, p. 12). For Naderah, this manifests in a confused and maybe even contradictory feeling about the value of multicultural acceptance; people are ‘respecting’ at the same time as she feels like an ‘outsider;’ it is a qualified belonging.

However this contradiction also worked in the inverse, providing evidence for the argument that multiculturalism (in a symbolical sense) delivers the necessary tools to overcome feelings of exclusion and difference (Ley 2007). As Atoosa explains about the societal privileging of white skin, “Darker skin...oh not good, oh ‘not cool’ I guess, and that [feeling] played with my confidence, like ‘am I not what I am supposed to be?’ But moving to Vancouver was great because it...well, I mean it’s really multicultural...yeah it’s really mixed, like [my skin colour is] not even what people are looking at.” Atoosa begins with a candid read of the value of white skin in this country (Mahtani 2012), her own dark skin ‘not good’ and ‘not cool’ in comparison. She even notes that this ‘played with her confidence’ growing up, and in a later part of our interview she explained the difficulty of ‘getting over’ this feeling. However, she quickly moves to say that coming to Vancouver, a place much more accepting of the multicultural than her old home of Montreal, gives her the sense that her difference is “cool, and it’s not a bad thing.” She locates this within the presence of diversity, the actual multicultures aiding in general acceptance of difference and diversity.

A ‘people’ (not state) multiculturalism

One way of navigating between these confused and contradictory feelings was by making a distinction between the government and the general population. For many it was the

(current) government's attitudes, not the general Canadian public, which was at the heart of their concerns. Discussing the role of multiculturalism, the government and increasingly Islamophobic rhetoric in the media, Souri and Boosah's conversation gets at this distinction.

S: I was comfortable before but not now.

B: (agreeing) and it's like asking us to go for a war against him [Harper].

MK: how does that make you feel?

S: he says terrorist and it doesn't matter- I get angry, I get nervous, I don't know what to do. I am not a danger for him. But the way that he talks about it he makes it seem like I am. It's a bad behaviour and he puts a barrier between people. He puts a wall between them. People might be living together but there is a wall between them with these words. He calls us terrorist but my son is a Dentist!

B: *He* doesn't understand. He is stupid and-

MK: so you feel comfortable saying that? Knowing that other people don't think that? Do you trust that?

B: Yes, I trust that. I trust people.

S: *He* brings discrimination.

Both Souri and Boosah emphasized Harper's 'bad' words and negative behaviours over the general public. They went on to explain to me that they had faith in the 'younger generation' in the country. Not only did they think that young Muslims would become more vocal and begin to work against Islamophobic attitudes, they felt that young non-Muslim Canadians were more educated about issues of religious and cultural diversity. For Boosah, the solution to her daily experiences of discrimination was fairly straightforward, "I pray, get rid of Harper." Without him, and his associated government and policies, there was a sense that *most* people, average Canadians, were not really interested in perpetuating Islamophobic attitudes.

This was a common theme in many conversations and people had a lot to say about Harper's role in spreading Islamophobia and legitimating discrimination against Muslims. As Runa explains

R: you know, Stephen Harper, being the leader, and leader of not just one religion but of Canada, I feel that whenever he talks he must put everybody in focus, not just one group. And I cannot understand, there was no reason to even bring up that word, about Islamicization. Because I heard his script when he was talking to Peter Mansbridge. I was shocked you know, because I thought he had more sense about it. It made me think that he is *creating* Islamophobia. He is creating fear amongst the Canadians on this. There is nothing about Islamicization—I don't even really know what this word means—but Islam is what Islam is, it is not Islam 1400 years ago, it is not Islam 2050. Islam is what Islam is. It's a truth you know. It's a religion and there are people who belong to it. Probably 1.75 billion now. I felt that he created unnecessary fear amongst the Canadians.

MK: does it make you afraid because of this?

TA: no, he is just a leader. He has a lot of influence but I'm sure there are other good people. I'm not really scared of him. He cannot do very much if other people won't support him. But you know there are challenges that Muslims will always have. I am not worried; my focus wasn't even there. I didn't want to bother even wasting my energy talking on that...no we just ignored it, we didn't even bring it up—in my community here—we didn't even bring it up. We talk amongst ourselves how stupid can he be. I mean being a leader he should project something, which is neutral. Or, don't even bring it up; there was no reason for him to be bringing it up.

Runa is angry about the statements made by Harper. She even goes as far as to say that his words *create* Islamophobia in the country. She understands this to be a totally unnecessary (and misplaced) statement about Islam, one that personally challenges her own comfort in Canada. She sees this as a “political discourse that reaffirms and legitimates the negative evaluations of difference which give rise” (Perry and Poynting 2006, p. 6) to more violence, more hate, and further separation between Muslims and non-Muslims. However, when I ask if this makes her ‘afraid’ she is adamant that it does not, it *will* not, because there are ‘other good people’ in Canada that do not support this kind of rhetoric. For her, the current government, as much as it presents a concern or problem, cannot represent the whole of Canadian society. She draws strength from her community and a general sense of faith in society in the face of hostile or negative depictions of Islam. In this way she doesn't believe that *all* Canadians are racist, but rather, that the government props up an ignorant (and inflammatory) view of Islam.

This distinction between the government and the general public is made most visible within stories and reports of the non-Muslim responses to 9/11. As Barbara Perry and Scott Poynting (2006) explain “Prime Minister Chretien's failure to condemn the hate-motivated violence perpetrated against Canadian Muslims after 9/11, a failure roundly criticized by Muslim organizations...[suggested] sympathy with the perpetrators rather than the victims, and thus lent legitimacy to the reactionary violence” (p. 7). The Canadian government spoke little of the need to stand in opposition to Islamophobic behaviour in the days after 9/11. However in direct contrast to this a CAIR-CAN survey of 500 Muslim Canadians stated

“more than 60 percent...report[ed] acts of kindness and support by their fellow citizens in the wake of 9/11. Numerous interfaith dialogues, town-hall meetings, and open houses [were] evidence of the spontaneous outreach extended by fellow Canadians” (Khan 2009, p. 32). Many women narrated a similar trend, claiming a sense of disappointment in the government’s responses to 9/11 (and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan), at the same time as telling stories of support and kindness from ‘average’ Canadian citizens. Feelings of belonging were thus located in relationships with people, community groups and other religious institutions, and outside of, or ambiguous towards, the Canadian state.

Multicultural (un)belongings

For others, it remained important to call out the state for this perceived lack of protection. One of the primary ways in which the women I spoke with narrated the process of belonging was through conversations that directly challenged the multicultural state. This often took the form of recounting their own sense of multiculturalism at the same time as questioning its credence as they reflected on experiences of racism, Islamophobia and discrimination. While the interpretations of this state varied depending on the particular lived experiences of these women, certain trends of oppositional (un)belonging emerged.

After a long discussion about the increasing surveillance of Muslims in Canada, Nimali, a young woman from Sri Lanka who has been in Canada since she was 15 years old, explains her work with anti-colonial and migrant justice groups as a way to push back against the state. She says:

its those communities that give me belonging. If it weren’t for the work that I do [I wouldn’t have it]. It’s something that I can *do*. [My belonging] is located very firmly in the state as a reality. So it’s like, ok the state surveils Muslims, I am a Muslim, how can I feel comfortable living here? But what can you do with that except for find other people who feel the same way?...So if I didn’t have that community of politically engaged and really brave people then I would feel really isolated, because then I wouldn’t know that there are other people who wanted to change the way things were.

Belonging is made difficult through the state's increasing suspicion of Muslim populations. State claims of multiculturalism become debunked by Nimali's acknowledgement that every one of her Muslim friends "knows someone, at least one person, if not many, who has been under surveillance" by CSIS. Her allegation of increasing surveillance of Muslims is firmly rooted in shifting policy and security landscapes in Canada. The meaning and consequences of the IRPA, Bill C-36 and the subsequent "use of 'special' legal proceedings, secret evidence and detention without charge or conviction" (Bell 2006), as well as the high profile cases of Maher Arar, Omar Khadr and the 'Toronto 18' (Khan 2009), are not lost on Nimali. We spent much of our time together discussing how these measures of securitization and practices of surveillance make her feel. She admitted that while in some senses she feels entirely 'evicted' from the law that governs her fellow (non-Muslim) citizens (Razack 2008, p. 176) her active participation with groups that undermine the state both confronts and challenges this feeling. She recognizes this state—one that surveils her as Muslim—as a reality, at the same time as calling out the absurdity of 'not-belonging' because of her religious identity ('what can you do with that..?'). For her, the question is not whether or not she can belong (because she feels actively disallowed this) but how to create belonging with people who share similar experiences.

Nimali also called out the state's attempted appropriation of her "multicultural labour;" her 'minority' body/labour/identity essential for state legitimacy. She noted that working with aboriginal and migrant justice groups' allows her to push back against this appropriation. That is *being* the 'multi-culture' without allowing the state to benefit from this. Here she specifically locates her oppositional stance to the state in various socio-political events and policies; the Canadian governments increasing interest in importing and benefiting from cheap migrant labour; its denial of aboriginal land rights; and its military presence in

Afghanistan. However she explains that she actively resists these state actions by not necessarily identifying as Canadian, and instead working towards troubling the very definition of Canadian. Echoing much anti-colonial work currently taking place in Canada (see for example Chazan *et al.* 2011) she defines community and belonging by not being the Canadian she is supposed to be. She thoroughly un-settles myths of Canadian multiculturalism through her activism and political practice. This is, what Garvey (2011) calls, a ‘taking of space’ to make (un)belonging (p. 760).

This opposition to the state was also apparent in Majida’s story. Majida grew up in Canada; it is the only home she has ever known. But, as was noted above, when 9/11 happened, she lost faith in the government’s interest in protecting her as a Muslim. Experiences of discrimination, an unreasonable focus on Muslim women in the media, and government policy disproportionately directed towards Muslims ejects Majida from normative belonging. Describing how this affects her she says

Basically, I don’t have that trust that I need to feel like I *belong* completely, basically ‘you are going to take care of me’, no, I have never had that really. So its pretty...so I don’t trust the Canadian government, people, whatever, to have my back. They are not going to say ‘you know actually, I think you are not a terrorist, you are probably ok,’ I don’t think anyone is going to stick up for us. I think you are going to have to stick up for yourself. Yeah so it’s difficult to say that I have belonging especially post-9/11...So with 9/11 I remember feeling like- and maybe this was a bit of an extreme thought- but it was like, well you know, where would we go? ...Its, yeah, the belonging thing is really difficult. For me its my home, my family, my community, my friends, even that, I hope that I belong with them, and I hope that that’s the extent of [belonging] really, I don’t really think that there is any sure thing there [in Canada] to belong to, that exists.

Majida feels that no one ‘will stick up’ for her (and Muslims in general) and this gives her the sense that she is ‘alone’ in trying to combat the affects of Islamophobia in Canada. She cannot belong, not because she doesn’t want to, but because she is denied this right. However, much like Nimali, Majida finds strength in her family and community, people who she feels are ‘socially conscious’ of what’s going on. Further she explains finding solidarity in looking at

and learning about “the struggles of the [indigenous] peoples of North America...” as one way of understanding her own experience.

Noting the extreme economic discrepancies between immigrants and ‘Canadian-borns’, an oppositional approach to the state is echoed in Hafsa’s conversation with me. She argues that part of her belonging comes from an acknowledgement of the harsh realities of the migrant experience. Hafsa is a second generation Pakistani/Canadian who finds herself constantly negotiating the complex reality of belonging in Canada alongside the challenges she knows her community, and other immigrants face, in terms of economic integration into Canadian society. Much like Nimali and Majida, she sets up her own sense of belonging in direct opposition to claims of a multicultural, and in this case economically equal, country. She explains:

So to hear the anger of being constantly denied belonging, that’s also part of creating an environment where belonging happens, so to hear um, to hear instead of hearing the good immigrant narrative to hear, ‘you know what I came to this country and I couldn’t get a job in my field and I have been working as a taxi driver and I can’t spend any time with my kids and I didn’t think it would be like this and this really pisses me off. So to hear that, I think that’s really important too. And to hear the hurt that comes from that too, so I think creating a sense of belonging involves hearing those difficult and marginalized kinds of narratives

For Hafsa, the refusal to discuss the pain and sadness experienced by highly educated and well-off migrants that immigrate through the point system and remain stuck in low paying jobs significantly hinders her ability to belong.

While economic integration is a key barrier to the full belonging of many migrants, there are also barriers that arise in regards to religious freedom (explored in detail in Chapter 3). Hafsa notes that another element of belonging is important: space to talk about the multicultural state’s disavowal of her religious, spiritual and political identity. She tells me:

I guess what [belonging] would look like is that everything that you are, like all those dimensions, the religious or spiritual dimension, are welcomed, there is space for those. And there is also space...to hear the uncomfortable parts...and to hear the hurt that comes from that too, so I think creating a sense of belonging involves hearing those difficult and marginalized kinds of narratives and being inclusive with all those dimensions of the self...So its not just if you fit with the dominant narrative of Canadian identity then you get to [belong] and then you are a well integrated immigrant and we will use

you as the token of multiculturalism...But there is this sense instead of I'm not going to *lose* my belonging, or I am not going to be pushed out when I express something that is in contrast to that dominant story

Hafsa considers her religious and political identities, merged into one, and called by the Prime Minister last summer the “greatest threat to Canada” (CBC News 2011), to be constantly placed ‘outside’ of acceptable differences in Canadian society. Not only is her understanding of economic disadvantage (faced by immigrants) undermined in multicultural narratives of Canada, she also feels that she is given too little space for her own conceptions of community. She identifies with religious, spiritual and even political beliefs that are tied to her Muslim background. However, she explains that this is rarely presented as acceptable within the frames of diversity and difference in the country, especially since 9/11. She makes a very precise and important distinction here that helps us better understand (un)belonging: she does not want to belong in the way she is supposed to—to that dominant narrative—or what Garvey (2011) calls the ‘bordered’ and ‘bounded’ unit of ‘the immigrant’ (p. 768), she would like to be able to exist outside of this. However, Hafsa asserts this in a very different way than Nimali. She admits that wearing hijab but loving the Canucks and participating fully in many dominant ‘Canadian’ activities such as various sports associations, high school clubs and volunteer groups allows her to claim space for her particular kind of belonging. For her, (un)belonging is less about questioning the category of Canadian and more about claiming her own religious and political version of it. She is both typically—‘normally’—Canadian as well as engaged in political activism and social work that challenges what this means.

Multicultural contradictions

There was, for many, a sense that Canada (and its multiculturalism) was a bundle of intense contradictions. The image of a multicultural and accepting state (see Chapter 1) was often drawn upon in stories of belonging. However this was not always a positive endeavor

and included some level of disappointment for many. This was primarily focused on the incapacity of the state, and its associated policies, to address actually existing issues of discrimination, employment inequity or the general anti-immigrant tone in certain aspects of society. As Kobayashi and Ray (2000) explain “Marginalization for many contemporary visible minorities remains fundamentally rooted in the contradiction of having attained civil rights guarantees but still experiencing risk, poverty and injustice due to a denial of social, economic and political rights” (p. 412). Furthermore, this was felt to be a surprise; the multicultural vision believed to be true and later found out to unattainable or non-existent. As Carly says, “There is still the same ignorance here (as in the U.S.)” and “I thought people here would be more open to asking questions.” This was a disappointing realization for Carly and presented a contradiction that she didn’t exactly know how to reconcile. She had assumed that because Canada was ‘multicultural’ and the U.S. (her place of birth) was more ‘assimilationist,’ that it would be easier to belong here, easier to be Muslim.

Hanna, a Chinese-American convert also from the U.S., explains to the focus group her feelings about the differences between Canada and the U.S. She says

Openness and sharing and understanding doesn’t happen because people don’t talk to each other here. Its kind of an ‘ignoring’ racism...kind of just be silent and they will. Like they will, it seems to me that an American would be like ‘Hey! Fuck you, you Muslim!’ and I actually appreciate that because at least you are being upfront with me. But this [in Canada] is like a walking past me on the street, no one else is on the street and they make eye contact and then they quickly look away.

Hanna goes on to qualify how difficult this is explaining “I feel that in Canada its not outright racism, its subtle racism. And that’s harder because you walk away thinking, ‘what, what, what part of me does he not like? What part of me can he *not* connect with?’” ultimately concluding that it’s “the constant ruminating over the problem” that causes major stresses for her. Hanna’s attempt to belong comes face-to-face with the reality of a “false sense” (Flatt 2012, p. 245) that this is possible. This is a contradiction in her mind not only because of the promises of a multicultural (and tolerant) state but also because it signals some level of

‘dishonesty’ on the part of the general public. In her mind an out-rightly hostile approach would be better, because at least this way she wouldn’t be the one stuck wondering what exactly it was about her that makes people uncomfortable.

For Dema, this wondering produced a troubling feeling, a sense of deep (un)belonging and outsider status in Canada. She narrates the sentiment that no one *really* wants to ‘get to know’ people that are ‘different’ from them, and this is extremely difficult for her to accept. It is also completely contradictory to state claims of multiculturalism, claims she had hoped would be true. She feels pushed to question what exactly it is about her that makes people ‘uncomfortable.’ She says

D: so I don’t know...I have noticed here that people are like. Well the difference is that in Jordan people will actually come up to me and say ‘why don’t you take [the hijab] off, this is silly!’ its very different. That’s my environment. But in Canada, I don’t feel that, but I don’t know if it’s something that’s not said. Do you know what I mean?

MK: yeah, tell me more?

D: yeah, and then so. I am always thinking like ‘is it me?’ or is it something else?

Dema wonders if something about her produces the negative reaction she receives in certain public spaces and social situations. She relates this back to Jordan where people directly challenge her choice to wear hijab and she can at least address their concerns this way. She goes on to explain that what is ‘not said’ in Canada is that acceptance is much more about the formal ‘rules’ of the country than any true interest in engaging with diversity and difference.

D: and I think it’s just acceptance because you have to, not necessarily because you...because in Canada there is this rule, its very important to, like there are all these rules about how you deal with people, right? So [acceptance] is something you *need* to do, you have to do, because its part of society, it’s the way the system is, but you don’t necessarily [do]...and then there is also a lot of...people don’t know that much right?

In Dema’s narrative institutionalized multiculturalism is only distantly related to the actual practices and behaviours of the average Canadian. “The superficialities of celebrating cultural diversity...serve to camouflage and veil underlying racial animosities” (Mahtani 2002, p. 75).

The ‘acceptance because you have too’ covers up the ambiguous, confused or outright Islamophobic attitudes she receives on a daily basis.

Finally, Atoosa narrates a similar feeling about dominant narratives of cultural acceptance in the country as something that conceals her actual experiences. She feels positioned as an ‘ethnic other’ (Banerji 2000, p. 91); her belonging premised on a negative construction of her difference, at the same time as she feels like political rhetoric and multicultural discourse work to delegitimize these feelings. When I ask how this makes her feel she responds, “I feel *half-fine*. I feel like I have been told that it’s fine. And sometimes, I don’t really think of [discrimination] but I think its subconscious.” As she elaborates her words become directed at the contradictions of multicultural policy and rhetoric. She says

multiculturalism...I feel like, when I came to Vancouver, everyone is telling me, that its really multicultural, and I did see that, but there is this sense that...they are doing this out of politeness, or that they *should* be doing this...but like that doesn’t take away the perspective they have in their mind. They act like they don’t see anything different, but it doesn’t seem like they actually believe that.

For Atoosa, the reality of multicultural spaces helps; diversity and presence of difference give her a sense of belonging. However, as she opens up, and the interview winds on, these words melt away into feelings that multicultural acceptance is a bit of a front for non-accepting, or even racist, perceptions of ethnic minorities. She feels that more often than not acceptance is “what has been taught” rather than something that people actually feel. ‘Half-fine’ is certainly a conditional (un)belonging.

When Atoosa and I move into conversation about her own ‘self-identifications’ she clarifies the powerful role Islamophobic rhetoric has had on these identities. She explains

I used to yeah [identify] as Canadian before the whole ‘are you Muslim?!’ I used to feel like everyone else, of course. And then, I guess there was some sort of pride in me, like oh I am different *and* I am doing ok...but then with everyone else’s perception, after I found out what people really think, I sort of thought, oh maybe its not a good thing, maybe it’s bad that I am from somewhere else, and maybe I am not like everyone else...I think what people think of you affects how you see yourself. So I have been told...I don’t fit here...because of being Muslim.

As Atoosa begins to see herself as a ‘Muslim’ other—to experience discrimination based on being Muslim, and to be repeatedly read as Muslim even if her self-identification had been previously weak—she starts to feel distanced from her ability to belong, to identify as

Canadian. For a while she thought the difference might be a ‘positive’ thing, something she could get behind and even take pride in. However, as she lives this identity it begins to wear at her, the feeling that she doesn’t ‘fit here’ because of her Muslim identity thoroughly troubling a normative conception of belonging to Canada. Her “difference is not a simple marker of cultural diversity” but rather is “measured or constructed in terms of distance” from the dominant, normative, ‘Canadian’ identity (Banerji 2000, p. 107). She acknowledges that ‘what people think’ of her affects her understanding of herself; in this case the pervasive nature of Islamophobia affects her feeling of belonging as Muslim in Canada. This is a contradictory multiculturalism in which we are *told* to do one thing but *enact* another.

Making sense of contradictions

How do we reconcile the apparently discrete and oppositional elements of multiculturalism? That is, how do we understand the contradictions these women speak about, alongside a program and policy dedicated to diversity recognition (and even anti-racism)? Making sense of these apparent contradictions means acknowledging the fact that the policy might in fact include both racism and anti-racism (Abu-laban 1998, p. 198-9). As Lauren Hunter precisely summarizes

Multiculturalism has emerged from an historical system of deeply racist values that are problematically acknowledged in contemporary times. The policy contains embedded aspects of this system...However, the situation is more complex, because Canadian multiculturalism as a policy has been used to combat racism in the system- in effect, multiculturalism contains the fundamental potential to battle itself, pitting the embedded racialized values systems against [it’s] goal of inclusion and equality...the policy doesn’t change masks before different public audiences; it literally contains fully formed oppositional elements struggling continuously over the outcome. (Hunter 2008, p. 11)

However, if Hunter’s work remains tepidly optimistic about the potential for these ‘oppositional elements’ of multiculturalism to battle one another, I caution against such a reading. Arguably the two contradictory elements are not oppositional at all, but rather, the one—anti-racist policy—is mobilized as part of a broader “smokescreen that obscures the

deep racial inequalities of' Canadian society (Zine 2008, p. 157). Diversity recognition through multicultural policy becomes understood as 'value-free' or 'power neutral', with the associated "social relations of power" concealed and easily forgotten, "social *being* becomes a matter of cultural *essence*" (Bannerji 1998, p. 36 emphasis mine). The discursive production of multicultural Canada, even with its associated anti-racist policy, works to quiet the presence of experienced racial discrimination (Jiwani 2006), economic inequalities (Hiebert 2006) and differential citizenships (Pratt 2004, p. 73-77) at the same time as it legitimizes these as simply material conditions of the country. This is a "particular formation of power and coercion that is designed to produce and maintain the condition...of the disposed" (Spivak and Butler 2011, p. 5). The policy is used to create the conditions of diversity management as necessary, rather than actually address the structural inequalities and persistence of institutionalized racism within the country (Mahtani 2002). Finally, the contradictory nature and meaning of multiculturalism—and its associated integration strategies—allows the policy to be 'strategically' deployed (Foucault 1990, p. 8) depending upon state interests and the political climate at any given time—the niqab/burqa ban being a poignant example.

'Un-settling' multiculturalism

I want to end this section by considering a body of scholarship premised on critical, anti-racist, post-colonial readings of the Canadian state in order to think through these apparent contradictions and various interpretations of multiculturalism present in this chapter. I want to present this work under the heading of 'un-settling' multiculturalism because it actively attempts to disrupt that which seems "commonsensical" (Chazan *et al.*, p. 1) about the policy. Furthermore, and inspired by the recent edited collection *Home and Native Land: Unsettling Multiculturalism in Canada* (Chazan *et al.* 2011), this scholarship is premised on

the belief that the “meaning of multiculturalism is not, and never has been, fully settled” (p. 1). It remains necessary to highlight that multicultural policy has deep structural flaws that many have claimed make it unsuited for addressing any real conflict, and thus unfit to engage with racism and discrimination (Kobayashi 1993, p. 206). As Himani Bannerji (1998) and many other anti-racist feminists in Canada have argued (Thobani 2007a; Razack 2008; Rahnema 2006), the policy must be understood as an ideological tool—mobilized by and for the state—not simply to manage diversity and difference, but to actively produce, reinscribe and reify multiculturalism as the most important element of the nation (Razack 2008, p. 6; Thobani 2007a, p. 149).

Engaging with this line of thought means re-reading histories of Canada in order to highlight the fact that multiculturalism was adopted to appease French and English tensions of the time and did not reflect a grassroots move to accept cultural diversity and difference (Wood and Gilbert 2005, p. 681-2), a way to “solve long-standing tensions between French and English Canada” by way of introducing the concepts of bi-culturalism and bi-lingualism (Chazan *et al.* 2011, p. 2). Only later did the policy move beyond constructs of ‘two-founding’ nations to include the ‘third founding nation’ (the indigenous population) and a more inclusive migration policy (Chazan *et al.* 2011, p. 2). As Patricia Wood and Leitte Gilbert (2005) explain “the policy was never more to [Trudeau] than a necessary appendix to the Official Languages Act, and...it was not the embodiment of a vision...Indeed, the policy was more about acknowledging past tension than developing an alternative vision for the future” (679). Critical Canadian histories not only reveal the ‘unsettled’ nature of the policy’s purpose, they also make space for modern criticisms to be waged; criticisms that can in fact be read as deeply rooted in the condition of the policy’s creation.

Furthermore, some have argued that the policies shortcomings today arise out of multiculturalism's adoption as an economic and demographic crisis management strategy (Walcott 2011). While its adoption in 1971 signaled a move away from more racialized and exclusionary policies and even towards positive norms of inclusion (Card and Freeman 1993, p. 7), it also represented an active desire to attract skilled, educated and often wealthy immigrants to the labour market (Banting *et al.* 2007). As well, some historians have argued that the policy was joined by its counter part of temporary labour, in the form of the Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program (NIEAP) and thus cannot be viewed as separate from it (Sharma 2001; Sharma 2011, p. 93); on the one hand the new points program brought in long term, skilled migrants, and on the other, the NIEAP brought in a rotating base of temporary unskilled labour (Fudge and MacPhail 2009). This critique takes on new meaning this year as the number of temporary labour migrants has become equal to permanent immigrants to the country (CIC 2011); the meaning (or purpose) of multiculturalism and immigration being more 'un-settled' than ever.

Sunera Thobani (2007a) argues that the adoption of multiculturalism was thus grounded first and foremost in economic interests. That is, the Canadian government's explicitly racist policy of excluding certain immigrants evolved into multiculturalism only once it became economically desirable to have access to cheap labour (p. 147); the 'multi-culture' only being legitimate when serving the dominant 'Anglo-Canadian' culture (Bannerji 1998, p. 78). This was, and remains, a qualified inclusion that is grounded in a racialized logic (Bannerji 1998, p. 16); the ethnic 'other' is to immigrate and integrate into the dominant 'Canadian' society (Thobani 2007a, p. 50). Even when multiculturalism is imagined in its most progressive form, the underlying logic remains the same; the multiculturalist "'respects' the others identity, conceiving the other as a self-enclosed 'authentic' community towards which

he, the multiculturalist, maintains a distance rendered possible by his privileged universal position” (Žižek 1997, p. 44). In her influential work on the concept of tolerance, Wendy Brown (2008) provides the language necessary for assessing the dangers of this particular, tolerant, view of respecting the ‘other.’ She explains, “tolerance can function as a substitute for or as a supplement to formal liberal equality or liberty; it can also overtly block the pursuit of substantive equality and freedom” (p. 9). This is because the talk of liberal tolerance and acceptance depoliticizes actual issues of race, racism, discrimination and oppression (Brown 2008; Mahtani 2002). In the Canadian case the adoption of multicultural policy has worked to ‘side-step’ “non-white persons’ ongoing experiences of racism” (Sharma 2011, p. 86) by employing the notion that ‘we are all immigrants’ in Canada; eliding much needed discussion of how the status of ‘immigrant’ operates differently for racialized bodies than for white ones (Sharma 2011).

Conclusions

In this chapter I have explored a few of the ways issues of belonging and place come together. I began by showing that belonging can, and does, happen for Muslim women in Canada. I positioned this as a relational belonging in order to complicate the often-simplistic notions of belonging to one place (or time) over another. I moved then to consider some of the experiences of racism, discrimination and Islamophobia that have influenced the aforementioned feelings and make difficult simple narrations of belonging for Muslim women in Canada. I turned then to think through the way in which the state and its associated project of multiculturalism become implicated in this conversation. Belonging was shown as narrated both in support of the formal multicultural state as well as in direct opposition to it. In this final section I presented a multitude of perspectives on multiculturalism in order to complicate the picture of belonging for Muslim women. These stories not only reveal the

multifarious ways identifications occur; they also expose the Canadian state and its multicultural policy as promising belonging at the same time as being directly implicated in the impossibility of actually achieving it. I closed with a body of scholarship on multiculturalism that provides the language necessary to understand how the diverse experiences presented in this chapter come together for Muslim women within Canada. That is, how do we reconcile the presence of discrimination (both institutionalized and much more everyday) with the state's celebration and propagation of multicultural acceptance and tolerance? I have argued that this is not a contradiction, but instead an inherent component of the policy.

Promises of cultural acceptance and inclusion become deeply problematic in the face of policy that names some 'others' too 'other' to belong. The discourse of multicultural Canada works to silence the persistence of an uneasy-ness to specific cultural groups within both the policy and Canadian society. It further quiets the precarious and often painful nature of (un)belonging that results. Much like earlier 'rights discourses', this has the potential of attributing all social failure to the individual, rather than social structures or institutions (Pratt 2004, p. 104); it is thus your responsibility if you cannot belong here, as 'we' have granted you the ability to do so. While this works for some (belonging is felt and comfort obtained) it provides a violent and painful experience of (un)belonging for many others. As well, with the persistence and prevalence of experiences of Islamophobia a reality for many women I interviewed, these contradictions should be understood as deeply problematic and extremely frustrating for many.

Multicultural policy is not (and never has been) power-neutral, nor is it's naming of certain 'cultural' practices as in opposition to Canadian ideals, value-free. "Diversity discourse portrays society as a horizontal space, in which there is no theoretical room for social

relations of power and ruling” (Bannerji 1998, p. 50). Yet, these exist, they operate on economic, political, social and psychological levels in Canada. Discrimination and racism are realities in the country. Furthermore, in a post 9/11 world, they arguably disproportionately affect Muslim migrant populations at the same time as reinforcing the inevitability of this; the inherent ‘clash’ of civilizations is the problem, rather than the “ideological constructs of citizenship and belonging in Canada” (Flatt 2012, p. 244) which name some difference ‘too’ different to be acceptable. I want to turn now to think through the consequences of these stories, the importance of them, and some possible imaginings of future (multicultural) relations in the country.

Conclusion

One thing remains clear: acceptance and tolerance of diversity within multicultural Canada is strained (at best) and non-existent (at worst) for Muslims. Understanding the consequences of Jason Kenney's comments, or the general Islamophobic rhetoric in Canada, requires a careful engagement with the embodied experiences of being Muslim in Canada today. In this thesis I have argued that this rhetoric and these comments matter—particularly in the context of a multicultural Canada. The stories we tell about Muslim women, and Islam more broadly have real effects on these women; they are stories of “epistemic violence...with material consequences” (Zine 2006a, p. 240). Furthermore, the increasingly entrenched acceptance of securitization, surveillance and discriminatory practices within the court and justice system, as well as the immigration and settlement processes, is evidence of a troubling time in this country. These issues are of great importance not only to a society that prides itself on cultural acceptance, diversity and multiculturalism, but also to the comfort, stability and ‘belonging’ of the people who call this society home.

I have thus argued that we might better conceive of stories of being a Muslim woman in Canada as stories of (un)belonging. I have located this *within* multicultural Canada in order to call attention to the ways in which the state is implicated in questions of belonging. Statements such as Harper's and Kenney's paired with increasingly Islamophobic policy measures, matter for the women I interviewed as they affect their ability to feel belonged in this country. Through piecing together their stories, I have explored both the importance and complications associated with Islamic identifications and the way these are taken up through variously felt gendered subjectivities (Chapter 3). The prevalent depictions of Islam as oppositional to gender equality remains troubling for many and causes one site at

which (un)belonging becomes manifest. However, women resist, they negotiate and they work through the identifications that are important to them; often they assert their religious and gendered identities alongside one another in order to make space to challenge simplistic framings of their gendered and sexed identities. Furthermore I broadened the analysis to think through the ways these stories were narrated in confluence with, or in opposition to, the formal Canadian state and its associated multicultural policies (Chapter 4). Here I examined the way in which these narrations expose the state project of multiculturalism and its claims for acceptance and inclusion as deeply problematic, especially in the face of racist, sexist and Islamophobic policy and rhetoric.

Additionally, hearing these stories weakens simplistic and divisive depictions of Muslim women. This remains a worthy theoretical and political exercise as it unearths the complex, varied and differential notions of gender and religious beliefs (not to mention political or spiritual ones) among these women. This further challenges Orientalist and Islamophobic representations of Muslim women, thereby making space for more honest and critical engagements with their everyday(s). Moreover, this forces Western feminists and feminism(s) to critically examine ideas of agency and resistance by reimagining what these concepts mean and how they become manifest. Finally, this approach remains key to challenging the deployment of feminism as oppositional to ‘cultural’ rights and freedoms by listening to embodied practices of ‘cultural’ or religious notions of feminism.

There remains an on-going discussion about how multiculturalism and gender equality (and women’s rights) may or may not contradict one another. This debate signals both a long-standing concern as well as a new and invigorated interest in this topic. In the past, “many feminists have understood Western states’ reluctance to condemn practices of violence against” women in migrant communities as a consequence of the “triumph of

multiculturalism over universal values” (Razack 2008, p.104). True acceptance of the ‘multi-culture’ is perceived as at odds with women’s rights, as the ‘multi-culture’ is less gender equal than ‘Canadians’ are. Not only does this interpretation reinforce the notion that ‘Canadians’ are culture-less (they have values) and immigrants are steeped in culture, thereby reifying a difference between ‘true’ Canadians and migrants ‘others’ (Abu-Laban 2002, p. 464), it also props up an essentialist vision of cultural groups and behaviours. In recent years, under the leadership of the conservative government, this has led to explicitly racist decision-making shrouded in the language of feminism (Razack 2008, p. 104). More importantly, infamous anti-woman policy makers such as Jason Kenney,⁵⁰ use the tropes of gender rights and equality for increasingly racist decision-making (Mahmood 2005, p. 190). A discernable shift can be seen with the most recent ‘Harper’ conservatives in that they more frequently push back against multicultural policy through a discourse of promoting and protection women’s rights (Sun Media 2011; CIC 2009, p. 9; Kymlicka 2010, p. 31). As Rona Ambrose, the Minister of Status of Women, explains, “violence directed at women and girls, which may be viewed as culturally acceptable, has no place in Canadian society” (CIC 2011, p. 38); acceptance of the multicultural will not come at the cost of gender equality. What is dangerous here is that not only does this conceal directly anti-woman policy,⁵¹ it also re-writes multiculturalism by establishing a limit to acceptable difference. Furthermore, this limit is based on a simplistic, even racist, view of certain populations.

However, in no way should my critique be read as a call for the abandonment of practically ‘living with difference.’ Multiculturalism’s failings are not a reason to abandon

⁵⁰ Jason Kenney- The current minister is known for his homophobia and anti-abortion campaigning from his university days (Cadre and Kassamali 2012).

⁵¹ The Conservative Government has defunded status of women offices across the country, eliminated funding for national women’s associations including Sisters in Spirit, as well as cut funding for Womens advocacy by 43% since 2006 (ShitHarperDid 2011).

‘multicultural’ acceptance. In fact, the opposite is true. These failings constitute sites at which productive and powerful negotiations and conversations about difference must occur. As Walcott argues “engaging with the policy and the idea of multiculturalism carries important political imperatives since a new multicultural logic is always possible” (Walcott 2011, p. 21). However, these discussions must begin with an acknowledgement of what multiculturalism means, who benefits from the dominant narrative and practice of it, and whose voices remain marginalized. Not to mention a far more serious engagement with the dispossession and violence directed at indigenous populations enacted and reinscribed through the policy (Chazan *et al.* 2011). There is thus a desperate need to critically engage with the concept of belonging in multicultural societies to better understand how it manifests itself within a diverse state. It is my hope that this type of analysis might be part of the discussion of what a Canadian society would and could look like if particular immigrant experiences of (un)belonging, which have largely been neglected, were seen and heard more often.

Not only are we living in a time of increasing surveillance and suspicion of Muslim populations, we are also living in a time when hates crimes and institutionalized racism persist. Unquestionable acceptance of multiculturalism works to quiet these realities while stories of (un)belonging do not. If the image of multiculturalism that we project does not succeed in its goals, that is, it is not ‘giving’ belonging, then what is its value? And furthermore, how do these stories of (un)belonging affect our capacity to ‘fix’ this debunked policy?

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Appendices

Appendix A—Email to organizations and community groups

Dear (specific organization name)

My name is Molly Kraft and I am an M.A. student in the department of Geography at UBC. I am writing to ask about possibly conducting some of my research with you and your organization.

My thesis focus is on conceptions of belonging and identity in Muslim women who have recently immigrated to Vancouver. I am hoping to explore the ways in which this group comes to identify with Canada in the initial stages of their settlement and integration.

For the purposes of this project I will be interested in interviewing up to 30 women who have immigrated to Canada and self identify as Muslim.

Please let me know what you think and if you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact me,

Thanks so much for your time and consideration in advance,

Molly Kraft



The University of British Columbia

Department of Geography
1984 West Mall
Vancouver, BC, Canada, V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-2663
Fax: (604) 822-6150
URL: <http://www.geog.ubc.ca/>

Becomings and Belongings in an Apprehensive State: The Integration of Muslim Immigrant Women in Canada

Are you interested in participating in a research study on belonging and identity in Canada?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the process by which female Muslim immigrants come to develop feelings of belonging in the face of hostile depictions of their cultural, religious and gendered positions within Canada.

The study seeks Muslim women who have immigrated to Canada and are able to commit to one 90-minute interview with the researcher. If you would like to participate in this study please contact Molly Kraft at m-----@gmail.com to obtain a research consent form.

All information will be kept confidential and has no relationship to the services or membership received at this organization.

Molly Kraft

m-----@gmail.com

Molly Kraft

m-----@gmail.com

Molly Kraft

m-----@gmail.com

Molly Kraft

m-----@gmail.com

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m-----@gmail.com

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m-----@gmail.com

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m-----@gmail.com

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m-----@gmail.com

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m-----@gmail.com

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Department of Geography
1984 West Mall
Vancouver, BC, Canada, V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-2663 Fax: (604) 822-6150
Url: <http://www.geog.ubc.ca/>

Becomings and Belongings in an Apprehensive State: The Integration of Muslim Immigrant Women in Canada

Principal Investigator:

Daniel Hiebert, Professor, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, office phone: 604-000-0000; email: dan-----@geog.ubc.ca

Masters Student:

Molly Kraft, MA Student, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, phone: 604-000-0000; email: m-----@gmail.com

'Becomings and Belongings' is a Masters thesis that aims to answer questions about the process of settlement and integration for female Muslim immigrants to Canada.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the process by which female Muslim immigrants come to develop feelings of belonging in the face of hostile depictions of their cultural, religious and gendered positions within Canada.

Project Timeline:

September 2011- December 2011

- Conduct interviews with Muslim women referred through partner organizations
- Document and transcribe the interviews
- Conduct focus groups with women who participate in the interviews

January 2012 to March 2012

- Write up and presentation of findings

Objectives:

- to clarify the ways in which female Muslim immigrants develop an understanding of identity and belonging while in Canada

- to identify whether or not this process is influenced by exposure to overarching narratives of what 'fits' in Canada and what doesn't (from the Canadian government through Citizenship and Immigration or elsewhere)
- and to investigate what other external factors (institutions, familial relationships, markets and religion) are contributing to notions of belonging in Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Department of Geography
1984 West Mall
Vancouver, BC, Canada, V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-2663 Fax: (604) 822-6150
Url: <http://www.geog.ubc.ca/>

Research Consent Form
**Becomings and Belongings in an Apprehensive State: The
integration of Muslim immigrant women in Canada**

Principal Investigator:

Daniel Hiebert, Professor, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia,
office phone: 604-000-0000; email: dan-----@geog.ubc.ca

Masters Student:

Molly Kraft, MA Student, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia,
phone: 604-000-0000; email: m-----@gmail.com

Purpose:

This consent form concerns the research for a project titled, "Becomings and Belongings in an Apprehensive State: The integration of Muslim immigrant women in Canada." The purpose of this study is to investigate the process by which Muslim immigrant women come to develop feelings of belonging in the face of hostile depictions of their cultural, religious and gendered positions within Canada. There are three main areas of questioning for the study:

- 1). How do female Muslim immigrants come to develop understandings of identity and belonging in Canada? Do these identity categories come into conflict with one another? Is this process marked by their Muslim and/or gendered identities in particular ways?
- 2). Further, is this a process that is influenced by exposure to over-arching narratives of what 'fits' in Canada and what doesn't (from the Canadian government through Citizenship and Immigration or elsewhere)? Is the Canadian government doing enough to integrate this particular group or are they prone to discriminatory or Islamophobic practices as elsewhere?

3). And finally, are there other external factors (institutions, familial relationships, markets and religion) that contribute to notions of belonging in Canada? Are these shaping the process or are they an unimportant background noise?

Study Procedures:

In order to answer the above questions, women who have immigrated to Canada and identify as Muslim will be asked to participate in one on one interview.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to give a 90-minute interview, consisting of a series of formal questions. The interview will be recorded with your permission. Please note that you may end the interview at any time or ask for further clarification of any or all of the questions asked. You will also be able to withdrawal comments at any time, including from the audio-tape once the interview is over.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. Data records kept on a computer hard disk will be password protected. Your name will not appear in any publications stemming from the research, nor will it be associated with any information you provide.

Potential Benefits:

The results of the research will be presented to you (and all others who agree to participate) at the end of the research study. When the research is complete you will receive a summary of the findings if you would like one.

Contact for information about the study:

If you have questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact either Daniel Hiebert (Principle Investigator) at 604-000-0000 or Molly Kraft at 604-000-0000

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:

If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca

Consent:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to you.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Subject Signature

Date

Printed Name

Appendix E—Interview Script

Part One: You

- Demographic profile: Age, country of birth, country of residency before Canada, length of time in Canada, citizenship, language, family status, current occupation, anything else.
- What do you feel are the most defining aspects of your identity?
- Can you tell me a bit about being Muslim? What does this mean for you? How do you engage with your Muslim identity or Islam more broadly?
- Can you tell me a bit about your gender identity? What does this mean for you?

Part two: Your Experience

a) As a Muslim, Canadian, Woman

- How does being Muslim and female fit together for you?
- How does being Muslim and Canadian fit together for you?
- Can you tell me a story of pride in being Muslim Canadian, a time when these two parts of you fit the most? Now, can you tell me a story of difficulty, a time when you felt they conflicted the most?
- How do you think being female affected the above stories?
- In your experience are these three things compatible? Or not?

b) Belonging

- Can you tell me what you think it means to belong?
- When have you or do you feel the deepest sense of that belonging?
- When have you or do you feel it the least?
- Do you feel like you belong in Canada?
- Do you feel like you belong more in your community than in other parts of Vancouver? Canada? Explain as much as possible.
- Do you feel you belong more at school? At work? At Mosque? Other?
- How would you describe the process by which you work towards belonging?
- Do you feel as though all parts of your identity belong? Do some more than others?
- Can you tell me a story of feeling very 'at home' or comfortable while in Canada? If not, can you tell me one from another country you have lived in?

c) Coming to Canada and the Immigration process

- Can you tell me about the process of coming to Canada?
- What sticks out in your mind as the most difficult part of the process? What about the easiest?
- Did your expectations of the process match your experiences?
- Did you receive any information from the government?

- Did you take any classes?
- Did you read anything about Canada either before you got here or once you arrived?
- What did you think of how the country portrayed itself? Did this match with what you experienced?
- Did you have any concern about being a Muslim and coming to this country?
- Did you have any concern about being a woman and coming to this country?

d) of discrimination and Islamophobia

My research has shown that many Muslims in Canada face discrimination and feel that Islamophobia is present in the country. With both global 'terrorism' and local discrimination in the news constantly I want to focus on your own personal experiences of this. In this next section I am going to ask questions about your understandings of discrimination and Islamophobia in Canada. I understand that these might be difficult questions so please take your time and if you need to stop at anytime just let me know.

- Do you feel that you are a target of discrimination? If so, can you tell me about this?
- Do you feel that Islamophobia is present in Canada? Can you define what this means?
- Have you ever felt like you were a target of Islamophobia? Is this different than discrimination?
- Have you ever felt that you were a target of discrimination based on your gender?
- Have you ever felt as though your gender identity affected how you were perceived as a Muslim? Can you explain?
- In your experience, do you see more discrimination towards Muslims than other immigrants?
- Do you think discrimination or Islamophobia is worse here than in other places you have lived?
- Do you feel that this is because of the government? The population? Or other factors?

Part three: Your Reflection

This next section is going to focus on anything and everything that you think and feel about some of the conversations we have had. I want you to take your time and try to reflect as much as possible on the experiences you have already described.

a) on belonging in Canada as a Muslim woman

- Can you talk a little bit about what it means to belong in Canada as a Muslim woman?

- Can you reflect on the difference between how you see yourself and how others see you? Does this challenge your own sense of belonging? Do these things fit together for you?
- Can you describe your ideal Canada? What would that look like?
- If you were giving advice to another Muslim woman who had just arrived, what would you say about the process of feeling at home in this country?

b) on the Canadian governments role in this process

- Can you reflect on the role of the Canadian government in this process?
- Was enough done to facilitate your integration into Canadian society? Could more be done? Less?
- Going back to your ideal Canada, can you reflect on the government's role in making this happen?

c) on what other factors help you develop a sense of belonging

- Can you think about what other elements of your life have assisted you in achieving that sense of belonging we discussed earlier?
- Can you reflect on what aspects were the most helpful? Least helpful?
- Again, returning to that ideal Canada, can you think about what should be done to assist Muslim women in settling here?

d) on Islamophobia and discrimination

- Do you worry about Islamophobia in the world in general? Do you worry about its presence in Canada?
- Do you have confidence that you will be protected against this kind of discrimination?
- Do you have confidence in the government's role in this? Or does it come from elsewhere?
- Reflecting on our previous conversations, how do you think discrimination or Islamophobia in Canada has affected your sense of belonging?

I want to take a minute to go over some of what we have just discussed (here I will ask if clarification is needed on anything, or if the interviewee would like to expand on anything else that has come up).