Racism post September 11, 2001: Perceptions and Experiences of Vancouver's

Muslim Community

by

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Abstract

Canadian Muslims remain a somewhat silent and apprehensive community since the attacks of September 11, 2001. This exploratory qualitative study explores the perceptions and experiences of Vancouver's Muslim community post-9/11 from a critical race theory perspective. I assert that Canadian Muslims have become a racialized community post 9/11, facing racial stereotyping from state and enforcement officials as well as difficult experiences in their social and professional lives. Four focus groups were conducted in 2004-05 in Vancouver with adult Muslims. Participants narrated personal experiences in social interaction, workplace, travel, and perceptions of media portrayal and Canadian government legislation post 9/11. They also spoke about their fears, insecurities and emotions in face of overt and covert racism.

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Introduction

Few would disagree that September 11, 2001 has changed our world, but not many are willing to acknowledge, operationalize, or take responsibility for the extent and direction of this change. In what the United States calls the "war on terror", two Muslim countries Afghanistan and Iraq have been bombed beyond repair: 5000 civilians died in Afghanistan within two months of 9/11 (BBC, 2002), and the latest civilian death toll in Iraq is calculated at 100,000 in the past two years (Stein, 2004). For Muslims living in the West, this change has transformed them into a vulnerable, visible, and racialized community, synonymous with the attacks of 9/11. On a personal level, as a Muslim first generation immigrant in Canada, this change impacts me directly. As a social worker who believes in political community development and social action, I choose to react passionately and forcefully.

The Canadian response to 9/11 was initially ambivalent. Canada, under a Liberal government, did not join the war in Iraq (although it did send troops to Afghanistan), and did provide relative safety and security to its Muslim population in turbulent times. Jean Chrétien's government, following on the heels of similar legislation in the United States and Britain, speedily passed the Anti Terrorism Act in 2001, amending twenty laws at once, including the Criminal Code (ICLMG, 2003).

These were aggressive measures to curtail the rights of permanent residents and refugee claimants in Canada, leading to instances of human rights abuse. Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen of Arab descent, was arrested while in transit in United States, and deported to his country of birth, Syria, as a security threat. There, he was detained and tortured for a year, and is now at the centre of a public enquiry. Twenty one Pakistanis were arrested in 2003 and abused by RCMP in Toronto under a high security operation named "Operation Thread" and labeled as 'terrorists', where they actually turned out to be guilty of obtaining student visas through a bogus business college in Scarborough – a crime they shared with more than 350 other 'non-Muslim' students (Shepard & Verma, 2003). Sunera Thobani, a University of British Columbia professor and Muslim by birth, was sharply criticized by the Prime Minister of Canada in the House of Commons for her critical comments on United States' actions post 9/11, made in a conference in October 2001(Thobani, 2002). The Museum of Civilization in Ottawa cancelled a long planned art exhibition by Arab Canadian artists titled "The Lands within Me" in October 2001, fearing a public backlash in wake of 9/11.

Presently nearly 600,000 Muslims call Canada home and nearly 55,000 of these live in the Lower Mainland, most of which are first generation immigrants (Canada, 2005). New immigrants traditionally are afraid to voice political opinions, and this situation has only worsened for Canada's Muslims after 9/11. I know first hand how

long it takes a first generation immigrant or refugee to begin to feel secure in her position, knowledge and social role in her adopted homeland under ordinary circumstances. New arrivals suffer quietly as they take responsibility for their choice to immigrate; many have experienced harsher forms of racism, exclusion or insecurity in their countries of birth; others belonging to dominant privileged classes in their home countries keep denying the prejudice and loss of privilege they face in their adopted countries (Fleras & Elliott, 1999). Studies undertaken since 9/11 in Canadian urban centres have indicated a rise in stereotyping and prejudice against Muslims as well as heightened feelings of insecurity and fear (Ekos, 2002; Canadian Arab Federation, 2003; Khalema and Wannas-Jones, 2003; Hussain, 2004; Helly, 2004; Tadlaoui, 2003). My research aims to add depth to existing research by exploring the perceptions and experiences of Muslims in the Lower Mainland in wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001 and contextualize them within the legislative, political and social changes occurring in Canada since then. The objective is to undertake an honest political dialogue to understand and articulate the experience of racial profiling of a religious minority immigrant community that has become highly visible in the political milieu of post 9/11. For this purpose, I conducted four focus group discussions with adult Muslim residents of BC between February 2004 and April 2005.

In more ways that one, I respectfully and gratefully acknowledge the rights and freedoms that my adopted country provides me. I also recognize that my critique and those of diaspora voices like my own (Bannerji, 1995; Thobani, 2003; Dossa, 2004; Manji, 2003) come within the comfort of a relative freedom and security, and by virtue of belonging to an elite class created by colonization in our countries of origin. In most parts of the world, people still risk their lives when raising their voices, and in the United States, thousands are silenced into a fearful conformity post 9/11. The recent violent backlash against British Muslims following the London bombings of July 2005 is another reminder of how lucky I am to be a Canadian Muslim in present times. I also recognize that the experiences of visible minority Muslim elites as first generation immigrants in Canada are not comparable to or a reflection of what civilians are facing in Iraq, Afghanistan, United States or Pakistan.

But I also know first hand the polite face of racism in Canada - more subtle, more difficult to challenge, harder even to change. My initial reaction post 9/11 was shock melting into a search for defense mechanisms. I suddenly began identifying myself more and more as a Muslim Canadian, which was a contradiction in terms, given my agnostic beliefs. I guess I wanted some answers – because I was afraid of my present and wary of my future. I began this journey with pent up anger and indignation. Through the past two years, as I immersed myself in this research and a continuous process of self reflection, my anger has subdued into a steady resolve

and commitment to dialogue and critical self awareness as the means to get past misunderstandings.

This exploratory community based research is my effort at an ongoing conversation with a community racialized post 9/11. I seek to contribute to critical social theory on race, and raise consciousness about present oppressions, while endorsing the possibility of progress against these oppressions (Agger, 1998). I acknowledge the structural, anti-racist and feminist influence in this research, along with my belief that a connection must be made between people's everyday lives and large scale social structures. Connecting the 'personal' to the 'structural' is vital to my practice and writing. I agree with Bob Mullaly (2001) that "claims to universality, reason and order often mask the interests of those making them" (p. 5). I also understand that this research is only one attempt to understand the multiplicity of oppressions faced by the participants in this study, and by no means the 'last decided word' generalizable to the community. But I am also a believer in universal values of social justice and therefore believe in identifying issues in the locality and addressing them globally. Agger (1998) distinguishes between conservative postmodern writers and progressive critical (theory) modern writers. Best and Kellner (2001) propose to merge "modern notions of solidarity, alliances, consensus, universal rights, and institutional struggle with postmodern notions of difference, plurality, multiperspectivalism, identity and micro politics" (p. 116). Mullaly (2001)

advocates for a progressive model of practice combining the universal values of modernity with the critical lenses of post structuralist thought for anti oppressive social work practice. I seek to therefore situate myself as a progressive social worker in a similar vein.

Chapter 1 sets the theoretical and political stage where I seek to contextualize the racialization of Muslims post 9/11 in the Canadian context. I present a review of literature that informs my understanding of racism, Muslim stereotyping in Canadian media, and a discussion of legal and political measures undertaken by the Canadian government post 9/11. Chapter 2 covers methodology issues while justifying the selection of focus groups and analyzing choices and methods of analysis. Chapters 3 and 4 present themes emerging from the focus groups, focusing respectively on participant experiences of racism and the impact of these experiences on their perceptions and emotions. I conclude with a summary of analysis.

Chapter 1

On Racism: Theory and Practice in the Canadian Context post 9/11

"I come back to theory....not theory as the will to truth, but as a set of contested, localized, conjuntural knowledges, which have to be debated in a dialogical way. But also as a practice which always thinks about its intervention in a world in which it would make some difference, in which it would have some effect."

Stuart Hall (in Lystyna, 2005:1)

I have struggled long and hard with what constitutes racism. Why do we, as humans, struggle so much with difference when difference is precisely what distinguishes us? This chapter represents my interaction with the body of knowledge that informs my understanding of racism. What does production of discrimination, oppression, racism or social injustice imply? What prompts my engagement in a dialogue with Muslims post 9/11? I review and define racism in a globalized context, followed by a discussion of racist discourse against Islam/Muslims post 9/11 in Canadian media, and a critical discussion of the Canadian government's recent legislation and policies post 9/11. My intent through this review is to critically examine how communities are racialized in present times, and how have Canada's Muslims

become a racialized community post 9/11 through interplay of individual prejudice, media and academic discourse and government legislation.

Racism today: A Socio-historical Construct in a Globalized World

Racism is a concept that has traditionally involved the biological construction of an origin as a basis for a community or collectivity (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992), but, more so, it is a socio-historical and political construct created in a certain time and cultural space (Winant, 2004). Universal rights movements that sprung after the end of World War II and strong anti-colonial movements around the world led to the general belief that racism and white supremacy, in its strongest sense, was a thing of the past or had at least evolved into much milder versions. Racism has, nevertheless, continued to thrive both globally and locally in this century. It has been challenged among others by critical race theorists (Winant, 2004; Mullaly, 2002), diaspora writers (Bannerji, 2000; Dossa, 2004), postcolonial (Said, 1978) and subaltern theorists (Chaturvedi, 2000; Guha & Spivak, 1988), but has continued under the guise of multiculturalism, globalization, and colour-blindness (Abu Laban, 2002). Howard Winant (2004) defines it as a concept "symbolizing socio-political conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies" and relevant to "all political sites including the global system, the nation state, social movements and political cultures" (p. x). The International Council on Human Rights Policy

(IHCRP, 2003) argues that racism today takes forms that are linked to wider political issues, such as changes in the nature of the state, gender discrimination, or marginalization due to developments in the global economy.

Contemporary theorizing about racism broadly falls in a spectrum between human/individual agency in racist attitudes (Essed, 1990; Guha & Spivak, 1988; Henry et al, 1995) and the imperatives of systems and structure of power (Baez, 2000; Mullaly, 2002; Back & Solomos, 2000; Reilly, Kaufman & Bodino, 2002; Winant, 2004). From writers who prefer the "commonsense" and everyday definition of racism to those who strive to highlight systemic and institutional racism, the debate is rich and ongoing. Mine is more a structuralist and political interpretation of racism, as state and power structures are key, in my understanding, in sustaining racial politics. As Winant (2004) aptly states:

> Modern state carries out racial classification, surveillance, and punishment of the population; it distributes resources along racial lines; it simultaneously facilitates and obstructs racial discrimination; and it is both structured and challenged by political mobilization along racial lines." (p. 3)

The concepts of racialization and racial profiling are very useful in this understanding. Racialization of communities or defining minority groups on basis of differences from the perceived majority community (Martin & Douglas, 2004) remains a pervasive and divisive political issue today, as it "implies a common or

shared fate for these groups" (p. 4). Miles (1989) defines it as the "process by which (negative) meaning is attributed to particular objects, features and processes so that they are given special significance and are embodied with a set of additional meanings (in Henry et al, 1995: 4)." A related concept is that of racial profiling which is defined by the Ontario Human Rights Commission as "any action undertaken for reasons of safety, security, or public protection, which singles out an individual based on stereotypes of race, colour, ethnicity, religion, ancestry or place of origin rather than on reasonable suspicion (CBC, 2005). Canadian immigration has always been a racialized policy (Abu Laban, 2002; Bannerji, 2000; Henry & Tator, 2002; Fleras & Elliot, 1999), which has become increasingly more so post 9/11 through racial profiling by enforcement authorities as well as through the mainstream media and government policies.

Since contemporary patterns of domination and discrimination cannot be understood without contextualizing them within their historical and structural context, racialized communities also do not remain static, and are continuously redrawn over time to serve the political and economic purpose of certain dominant groups in a localized time and space. Racialization of communities, therefore, must be understood in this structural context, as racist practice is specific to a certain time and space (Henry, Tator, Mattis & Rees, 1995). Globalization and international migration, both forced and voluntary, are redefining demographics and social setups

in western countries, leading to newly emerging racialized communities. For example, the Muslim migration to Canada truly started only in the nineties (Helly, 2004; Abu Laban, 2002). As subordinate communities seek to coexist with the majority community under unequal opportunities, tensions take the form of prejudices, stereotypes and discrimination – leading to oppression and racial profiling of minority groups politically and socially. I agree with Winant (2004) and Craig (2002) that globalization is very much a "racialized, capitalist social structure" (p. 133) which is evident both in the labour market patterns in the North – South divide as well as relations between majority and diaspora communities in the West.

But I also recognize the power of agency, both individual and collective, to transform society. In today's world, racism is not just a concrete theoretical body of knowledge that states, organizations, communities and individuals practice (Barker, 2002), but it must also be understood as the interaction of individual agency with structural oppressions in a localized context. It has to be intricately dug out from within our everyday experiences. It is guised in simple acts in everyday life, in unspoken institutional norms and written regulations, in state legislation, and through the power of structures; it filters through media images into public perceptions; it is concealed in apparently innocent everyday language. Philomena Essed (2002) conceptualizes race as a process to highlight the lived experience of racism. Racism, she argues, is routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices.

It is a process in which "socialized racist notions are integrated into meanings that make practices immediately definable and manageable, and underlying race relations are actualized through these routine or familiar practices in everyday situations" (Essed, 2002: 190). Bannerji (1995) terms it as a "diffused normalized set of assumptions, knowledge, and so called cultural practices" that form part of the every day 'common sense' racism, and which can silence minority groups.

Postcolonial writings strongly influence my understanding of race and racialization. The concept of the Other has been developed in line with discourse of racism by postcolonial writers. Todorov (1992) studies the forms of relationship between the colonizer and the colonized as a model to understand the dynamics of one's relationship with the Other. On the one hand, the colonizer saw the colonized as a human being, who was not seen as an equal, which led to assimilation. Or else the colonizer started from difference which translated into superiority and inferiority. The Other was seen as an imperfect state of oneself – not as something truly other of human substance. The world might have shrunk in time and space (Harvey, 1990), but acceptance of the Other continues to be a laboriously slow process in most social setups. Fanon (1968) asserts that "we only become what we are by the radical and deep-seated refusal of that which others have made of us (p.17)". He lists a number of racist practices including infantilization (treating the other as

children), denigration (assuming defect in the other), distrust, ridicule, exclusion, rendering invisible, scapegoating, and violence (in Schmitt, 1996).

Edward Said (1978) powerfully articulates the concept of 'orientalism' as "a manner of regularized, or orientalized, writing, vision, and study, dominated by the imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases suited to the Orient" (p. 35). It is the image of the 'Orient' expressed as an entire system of thought and scholarship. He calls into question the underlying assumptions that form the foundation of Orientalist thinking. This entails a rejection of biological generalizations, cultural constructions, and racial and religious prejudices. Contemporary Orientalism can be found, according to Said (1981) in current Western depictions of Arab cultures. The depictions of "the Arab" as irrational, menacing, untrustworthy, anti-Western, dishonest, and -- perhaps most importantly --prototypical, are ideas into which Orientalist scholarship has evolved. These notions are trusted as foundations for both ideologies and policies developed by the Occident. Said (1981) writes:

> The hold these instruments have on the mind is increased by the institutions built around them. For every Orientalist, quite literally, there is a support system of staggering power, considering the ephemerality of the myths that Orientalism propagates. The system now culminates into the very institutions of the state. (p. 16)

Another strand of postcolonial writing that challenges the racial hierarchy in representation of social and political history is that of Subaltern Studies. Initially

started as writings on South Asian history to revise the "elitism" of colonial and post colonial writers in the early eighties, this discourse in cultural studies has now a place in global theorizing on including the voices of the marginalized in social discourse (Chaturvedi, 2000). Theirs is the concern of "writing histories from below" (p. xi) as a self conscious effort to correct social history's traditional bias from the perspective of elite classes. In her now classic article, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Spivak (1988) suggests that dialogue with and knowledge of the marginal Other, or subaltern, is not possible from the privileged subject position of Western hegemonic institutions (in Hovey, 2004). These writers believe in a dialogue so that socio-political history is not written only through the narratives of "state officials, of newspaper editors, and those to be found in institutional collections of 'private papers" (p. 286). What is at stake here is "the ability to hear what we have not heard before" (p. 286). This urge to dialogue with communities who are directly impacted and rarely consulted stimulates me in this research, and I will refer to again in Chapter 2 on methodology.

My understanding of racism is also coloured by my feminism. I strongly agree with bell hooks (1990) that issues such as race, gender, and media's impact on contemporary culture must be addressed and understood as being interconnected. Himani Bannerji (1995) speaks about how racism produces silences, gaps and fissures in our knowledge and lived reality, as "people like us were never present in

what we were taught and read" (p. 45). Enakshi Dua (1999) laments how 'Canadian' culture and institutions create and maintain racial difference through media images in stories and narratives dividing Canadians into a normalized group and other racialized groups. Fatema Mernissi (1992) speaks about the need for progressive Muslims to use Islamic texts to present a different understanding of Islam, than the standard racialized interpretation of Muslim ideology as encouraging terrorism.

I am only too familiar with how interlocking oppressions work in the lives of women of colour in general, and for Muslim women in particular. My choice to have a separate group discussion for women reflects the reality of sexism that prevails in Muslim cultures, and that would prevent women from airing political opinions in a mixed gathering. I am cognizant of Muslim women's multiple oppressions where race intersects with class (new immigrants) and patriarchy (imposed through religion) to define their understanding of racism post 9/11 in Canada. Yasmin Zine (2004) writes authoritatively on how the experience post 9/11 for Muslim women is coloured and impacted by the West's reaction to Islam as a whole. She asserts:

> In the post–9/11 era, Muslim women navigate between both racialized and gendered politics that variously script the ways their bodies and identities are narrated, defined, and regulated. Located within this dialectical dynamic, the rhetoric of Muslim women's liberation is all too often caught up in the vast undercurrents of religious extremism, on the one hand, and racism and Islamiphobia, on the other. Muslim women's feminist praxis is shaped and defined within and against these discursive terrains. (p. 2)

I agree with Zine that many Muslim women's reaction to 9/11 has been one of being less vocal about the sexism operating in their households, as they are "immediately subject to the racism and Islamiphobia that negatively essentialize these experiences as the defining referents of the Muslim community" (p. 11). She also points to the political divide between secular and religious Muslim feminists with regards to colluding with Western ideologies, which has come in the way of a unified front to resist multiple oppressions. While acknowledging my own secular leanings, I attempt to bridge this gap to reach out to both secular and religious sections of Muslim diaspora in Vancouver.

I seek therefore to take an interdisciplinary, socio-historically constructed, and comprehensive definition of racism which is applicable to the socio-political and historical time and space within which I operate. The terms discrimination, racism, prejudice, oppression, and social exclusion are being used interchangeably in this study to describe and examine the experience of visible/cultural minorities in a globalized world, as I recognize that they are all reflective of social inequality leading to differential treatment.

Henry et al. (1995) present the concept of 'democratic racism' to understand why and how racism continues in the Canadian context. This involves a "set of justificatory arguments and mechanism" for the coexistence of social justice values

and racist ideologies reflected both in the systemic and individual levels. The term "new racism" has been used similarly in the United Kingdom (Gilroy, 1987) and "averse racism" in the United States (Gaertner and Dovidio, 1981 in Henry et al. 1995: 19). The argument goes that state intervention to create egalitarian public policies can only be done through public support, which is currently not present in both the liberal and conservative sections of the population. Hence such changes would go against the principles of democracy. This approach presents a strong linkage between individual, systemic and institutional/structural racism in the Canadian context, and racialization in the Canadian media and Canadian government policies post 9/11 can be contextualized in this background.

'Covering Islam': Racial Stereotypes in Canadian Media

Mullaly (2002) asserts that a major way in which dominant groups reinforce their power and privilege is through stereotypes – biased, oversimplified, universal, and inflexible conceptions of a social group. Further, these stereotypes "defy logic, are unduly hurtful, and resistant to challenge and change (p. 85)." Popular Canadian print and electronic media have consistently portrayed negative and stereotypical images of Muslims (Helly, 2004; Enns, 2002) ignoring the fact that they are over one billion in numbers, in majority in nearly sixty countries, and belonging to multiple ethnicities. Edward Said (1978) presents compelling analysis of how the Western

media's portrayal of Islam has been consistently prejudiced and negative. His book *Covering Islam* highlights how North American news media portray "Islam" as a monolithic entity, dangerous by design and threatening in intent - synonymous with terrorism and religious hysteria. Said reveals the hidden assumptions and distortions of fact that underlie even the most "objective" coverage of the Islamic world:

> Only what we, and our American instructors, say about the Arabs and Islam -- vague re- cycled Orientalist clichés of the kind repeated by a tireless mediocrity -- is true. The rest isn't realistic or pragmatic enough. "We" need to join modernity, modernity in effect being Western, globalised, free-marketed, democratic -- whatever those words might be taken to mean. (Said, 2003: 2)

Eqbal Ahmad (Barsamian, 2000) writes about the demonization of Islam in media and academia in the post-Cold War period of world politics. Modern imperialism, he argues, needs a "legitimizing instrument to socialize people into its ethos, for which it needed a ghost and a mission" (p. 43). The mission now is human rights and the ghost is Islam. He points towards the selective media coverage of Islamic fundamentalism around the world, highlighting women's oppression in countries such as Iran while overlooking Saudi Arabia, one of the worst offenders of women's rights. Ahmad writes prior to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks but provides insights into how the United States fostered militant Islam as a counterweight to communist parties in the Muslim World, and in Afghanistan as a direct threat to the Soviets. He argues that the notion of *'jehad* as just struggle' had not existed in the

Muslim world since the tenth century till the US revived it for its own interests during the Cold War period: Osama Ben Laden was the product of this policy.

Canadian print and electronic media initially portrayed a situation under control with regards to racism post 9/11. An October 2001 article in the *National Post* argued that 'only a handful of serious so-called "hate" incidents against Muslims and Arabs 'and 'perhaps several dozen minor ones (racial slurs, anonymous threats, graffiti)' had occurred (Blatchford, 2001 in Abu Laban, 2002: 468), but figures reported by Alexa McDonough, House Leader of the New Democratic Party in the House of Commons in Oct 2001 indicated 173 publicly identified incidents of racism post 9/11 in Canada (Abu Laban, 2002: 469).

Racialized reporting became strongly evident in wake of 9/11. In the early days after 9/11 Sunera Thobani, a Women's Studies professor at University of British Columbia, was maliciously slandered in the media for voicing anti-American feelings while presenting a critical analysis of US foreign policy at an academic conference in Vancouver. Thobani (2003) presents a powerful analysis of the Canadian media's reaction to her infamous October 2001 speech against the United States foreign policy, terming it an effort by the media to "dehistoricise the 9/11 attacks... to enable claims of American innocence to be publicly upheld" and secondly "by repeatedly reconstructing her status as a non-white, immigrant woman.. it reiterated the

historically racialized discourse of who belongs to Canada and who can speak for it" (p. 401). She quotes Bannerji (2000) on the visible minority immigrants' "paradox of belonging and non-belonging" that is aggravated by the racialized reporting of elite controlled media. Michael Ignatieff (2004), a prominent Canadian academic, writes in a similar vein that there is no such thing as a foreign story anymore in a globalized world. While addressing a media conference in Alberta last year, Ignatieff cautioned mainstream Canadian media to be cognizant of the fact that first generation visible minority Canadians "lived their foreign allegiances passionately and they compete with each other to detect bias whenever 'your' reporters are reporting from their 'war zones' (p. 4)". I find the underlying racism in these comments puzzling, as this respected Canadian academic cautions mainstream Canadian media regarding the suspicious allegiances of hyphenated visible minority Canadians. First generation immigrants always struggle with multiple allegiances whether they are a visible minority or not, and globalization might have compounded this multiple allegiance, but certainly has not initiated it. Sometimes a problem is compounded by misallocating its source, and that can be said of the relationship of media and visible minorities in Canada, Canadian Muslims being a case in point.

Yasmeen Abu Laban (2002) suggests that the unfolding discussions in Canada since September 11 demonstrate the rise of cultural essentialism in media and academic discourse. She cites John Ibbitson's article titled "Why racial profiling is a

good idea" published in the *Globe and Mail* in 2002, which stated that "given the clear and present danger posed by the most extreme elements of Islam, Canadian law enforcement officials should differentially target Arabs and Muslims in the name of 'public safety'" (Abu-Laban, 2002: A15). Jonathan Kay, page editor of 'Comments' for the *National Post* and winner of the 2002 Canada's National Newspaper Award for Critical Writing, is another prime example of biased and essentialized reporting against Muslims post 9/11. He wrote in an article titled "A healthy dose of bigotry" that we could not afford 'multicultural pieties' post 9/11 and advocated for devoting a disproportionately large part of our investigative apparatus on Arabs and Muslims and ethnic profiling at airports (Abu-Laban, 2002: 470).

Henry and Tator (2002) point towards media discourse as a significant contributing factor in the production of 'democratic racism' in Canada. They undertook a detailed discourse analysis of Canadian English language press including *The National Post, Toronto Sun, Globe and Mail and Toronto Star.* Canada, they argue, is a liberal democracy, with policies of multiculturalism, and a human rights code, but on the other hand there is still a racist ideology that permeates the discourse presented in its media. Such an ideology may be implemented in discriminatory hiring practices, as well as in the structures and strategies of news and opinion articles. They are also very critical of the fact that nearly 40% of mainstream newspapers in Canada had all white employees in the late nineties. In 1998, only 2.5% of mainstream Canadian

news professionals were visible minorities, a drastic under representation of their actual strength (Henry & Tator, 2002). Visible minorities are so underrepresented in mainstream Canadian media that they are resorting to their own alternative media.

Right after 9/11, there was a spurt of literature in Canadian media where terms such as Islamic terrorism, Islamists, and *Jihadist* were used liberally to imply potential or real terrorists (Enns, 2002; Said, 2001; Helly, 2004). The fervour of those early days passed away, but it has played a significant role in shaping Canadian public perceptions towards Muslims as potential terrorists in the past four years. *The National Post*, a prominent Canadian newspaper, has been consistently critiqued by Muslim Canadian organizations (Helly, 2004; Abu Laban, 2002) for using anti Muslim, stereotyped writing by using regular columns from writers such as Daniel Pipes who claimed Islamism to be a deep, up-to-date phenomenon that has the power to terrorize not only in Afghanistan, but right here in Canada. His most recent book, *Miniatures: Views of Islamic and Middle Eastern Politics* appeared in late 2003, and his website is a frequently accessed source of specialized information on the Middle East and Islam in North America. To the credit of some Canadian media, however, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, *Toronto Star,* and *The Globe and Mail* are credited by organizations such as the CAIR CAN for presenting a more balanced portrayal rather than the popular terrorist image of Islam and Muslims.

In his book *The Lesser Evil* (Ignatief, 2004a), Michael Ignatieff tells the Canadian public that it is acceptable for their governments to undertake terrible projects for a 'righteous' cause including pre-emptive war, targeted assassinations, "coercive interrogations" and indefinite imprisonment of suspects without trial or counsel. Samuel Huntington (1993) identified conflict between civilizations as the latest phase of the evolution of conflict in the modern world in general and as the source of conflict between Muslims and Non-Muslims in particular. In his book *"The Clash of Civilizations"*, he foresaw a future global conflict between the West (because it was at the peak of its power) and the Muslim civilization (because it was beginning to rally around global Muslim causes and was decisively anti-Western). This racist rhetoric became a self-fulfilling prophecy on 9/11. After 9/11, Huntington wrote in strong racist overtones about the "Age of Muslim Wars" in *Newsweek* claiming that Muslims, who make up a sixth of the world's population, are involved in two-thirds of global conflicts:

> Contemporary global politics is the age of Muslim wars. Muslims fight each other and they fight non-Muslims far more often than do peoples of other civilizations. Muslim wars have replaced the cold war as the principal form of international conflict. These wars include wars of terrorism, guerrilla wars, civil wars and interstate conflicts. These instances of Muslim violence could congeal into one major clash of civilizations between Islam and the West or between Islam and the Rest. (p. 31)

Racial stereotyping, therefore, continues to be a reality in mainstream Canadian print and electronic media with particularly grave implications for Canadian Muslims in the post 9/11 milieu.

Racial Profiling and Canadian Legislation post 9/11

"In beds, in workplaces, in suicides committed over deportations, the state silently, steadily rules our lives with regulations. How much more intimate could we be – this state and we? It has almost become a person – this machinery – growing with and into our lives, fattened with our miseries and needs, and the curbing of our resistance and anger." (Bannerji, 2000: 89)

State apparatus and legislation provides the majority ruling groups with legitimate techniques of domination and social control, and Canadian immigration policy over the past century provides a solid example. John Porter (1965) described the Canadian ethnic stratification system as a 'vertical mosaic' while asserting that Canada's visible minority immigrants experienced the most formidable barriers to upward mobility. Kallen (2003) uses the term 'legal racism' to define the legal and policy initiatives used by Canadian authorities to keep ethnic and racial minorities in lower socio-political and economic status. These are the means employed by the ruling majority in a democratic society to maintain the status quo while denying the social reality of discrimination against visible minorities. Barker (1981) presents the "genuine fears" idea as an ideological ploy used frequently by these governments –

an idea particularly relevant to understand the policy reaction of Canadian, US and UK governments' post 9/11. The underlying premise is that the majority in these countries is normally fair and tolerant, but that these qualities are over strained by the visible minority immigrant populations. This idea is therefore used to justify state policies specifically undertaken to remove the perceived threat. This approach does not believe in traditional scientific racism, but implies the belief that there are natural boundaries between human populations based in immutable cultural differences. Kallen (2003) argues that in Canada, an open constitutional commitment to multiculturalism and anti racism has meant that the "old racism has gone into the closet where it has been transformed, in cultural guise, into a new racism" (p. 47). This new racism operates through more covert channels such as generating perceived security threats to bring in targeted legislation, limiting opportunities for new immigrants, and not putting enough money into settlement for new immigrants.

It would not be fair to out rightly categorize Canadian legislation post 9/11 as blatantly racist in nature, but there is urgent need to critically examine the nature and intent of Canadian security and immigration-related legislation post 9/11 to determine the reason behind its negative fallout for visible minority groups in general and Muslims in particular. Legislation initiated to curb 'terrorism' and heighten security measures is resulting in unequal focus by enforcement authorities on one community in far too many cases. This has been pointed out by several legal experts

and human rights organizations (ICHRP, 2003; Human Rights First, 2003; Goldfarb, 2004; Canadian Council for Refugees, 2005; BC Civil Liberties Association, 2003). The ensuing discussion is one effort in this regard to detail the measures taken by the Canadian Liberal government post 9/11, and document their impact on the Muslim community. It must be recognized that no actual studies have been done in this regard to document comparative impact on other communities. It is still safe to assert that since more protest and criticism on these measures have come with reference to the Canadian Muslim community, the impact of these measures has been felt more by them.

Canadian government and legislators' ambivalence was visible post 9/11. With high moral rhetoric, MPs in the House of Commons unanimously passed an NDP motion calling on political, community and religious leaders to speak out against any racism directed at Muslims, Arabs, and other visible minorities (Abu Laban, 2002: 472). On a more 'practical' note, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's Liberal government invested $280 million in immediate security measures -- such as enhanced policing, security and intelligence -- in the wake of 9/11 (DFAIT, 2005). Legislative changes included the Anti Terrorism Act 2001, Immigration and Refugee Protection Act 2002, Creation of the Canada Border Services Agency, increased stress on identity documentation including fast-tracking a fraud-resistant Permanent Resident Card for new immigrants; more front-end security screening

for refugee claimants; increased detention capacity; increased deportation activity; hiring of new staff to enforce upgraded security at ports of entry; redeployment of over 2000 federal police officers to national security duties; technology upgrades, equipment purchases and training. On surface, these measures do not name any community, and the language of the legislation seems fairly clear and non-directed at any community. However, it should not be forgotten that these measures came in the post 9/11 milieu with the intention of fighting "terrorism" – and the community at the centre of the storm are none other than Muslims. It becomes easy in such a situation for Canadian Muslims as well as enforcement institutions and officials to internalize the connection between these measures and Canadian Muslims – almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Canada's new national security legislation, Bill C-36, followed on the heels of similar US legislation in December 2001 - a record three months after the 9/11 attacks. The Anti-Terrorist Act was a part of this legislation which can be summarized as follows (CBC, 2004; Goldfarb, 2004):

- It gives the police sweeping powers to act on suspected terrorism.

- Suspected terrorists to be detained without charge for up to three days.

- Now it is easier for enforcement authorities to use electronic surveillance, which used to be seen as a last resort. Terrorist offences can be wiretapped without the suspect's knowledge for up to one year (90 days for usual offences).

- Preventive arrests and detentions are now allowed in terrorism cases.

- Judges can compel witnesses to give evidence during an investigation. It is an offence to refuse to give information for suspected terrorists.

- It allows for the designation of a group as a terrorist organization.

This Act has been severely criticized by human rights and legal organizations, for the broad assumptions and sweeping powers that it gives enforcement authorities while failing to define 'terrorism' clearly. Mazer (2003) asserts that the dangers of such hastily passed 'omnibus' legislation as Bill C-36 are manifold and continue to surface through implementation, as this Act touched on and radically altered core Canadian values such as individual human rights, racial and religious inclusion, human security and liberty (p. 2). Goldfarb (2004) conducted 22 focus groups across Canada, for Justice Canada, to gauge public knowledge about the Anti Terrorism Act, and concluded that the general Canadian public is generally unaware of the nature and implications of this important legislation. The deportation of Maher Arar, a Syrian born Canadian citizen and an engineer by profession, to Syria from United

States, was a very serious example of the fallout and perilous repercussions of a misconceived legislation for innocent civilians. Arar suffered abuse for a year in a Syrian prison on suspicion of being a terrorist with links to Al-Qaida, and was only returned to Canada after a vehement campaign by his wife, Monia Mazigh, now a prominent NDP politician. Despite a public enquiry presently being underway in Arar's case, his lawyers do not have access to all the evidence against him citing national security and the anti terrorism legislation, and much evidence is not being made public citing similar reasons.

This was not the only legislation heavily peppered by this language of security. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act - 2002, the Smart Border Agreement, the Safe Third Country Agreement, creation of the Canada Border Services Agency, increasing stress on Identity Documents including the introduction of Permanent Resident ID Cards, are all measures taken after 9/11, some of them under pressure from the United States. The use of Security Certificates, though an earlier practice, has also re-emerged as a controversial issue.

The *Public* Safety Act, introduced on November 22, 2001 amended some 18 federal laws to further strengthen the Government's ability to protect Canadians, prevent terrorist attacks and respond swiftly if a significant threat should arise. Highlights included: security requirements for the design or construction of aircraft, airports and facilities; screening people and goods entering restricted areas; making

it an offence to engage in any behaviour that endangers the safety or security of a flight or persons on board; requiring air carriers or those operating aviation reservation systems to provide basic information on specific passengers or flights when it is needed for security purposes; and amendments to the *Immigration Act* to speed implementation of measures, including: suspending or terminating refugee determination proceedings if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the claimant is a terrorist, senior official of a government engaged in terrorism or a war criminal; denying wanted persons the ability to evade justice by going to a country of their choice rather than to the country where they are wanted; imposing stiff increases in penalties for people smuggling; and giving immigration officers the authority to arrest and detain foreign nationals in Canada who are unable to satisfactorily identify themselves. Such measures served to enhance an environment of fear leading to increased racial profiling in state, institutional and public interaction.

In 2002, the US and Canadian governments negotiated the Safe Third Country Agreement which came into force on December 31, 2004. This law allows Canadian immigration officials to turn back refugee claimants coming over land borders from the United States to make their claims in the United States, considered a safe third country for them automatically. The Canadian Council for Refugees has termed this as a "None is too Many" agreement where refugee claimants, most likely to be

visible minorities, many of them Muslims, are turned back to face possible detention, discrimination, and a possible denial of protection (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2005). Statistics released by the CIC for January to March 2005 indicate a drastic 40% reduction in refugee claims at US-Canada land borders since the implementation of this act (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005). The intent of this legislation might not be racist, but its application post 9/11has led to cases where Muslim refugee claimants were turned back to US only to be detained. The rush of Pakistani families to cross the border before the Act came into force only served to show that the US was not a safe third country for Muslims post 9/11, and this legislation impacted them more than other communities (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2004).

In 2002, the Canadian government also announced the creation of a data bank containing foreign air travel of all Canadians (ICLMG, 2003). These changes gave Customs officials access to information collected by airlines under the Advance Passenger Information Initiative, with data to be maintained for six years. Concerns have also been raised recently regarding a 'No-Fly List' unofficially being kept by the CBSA, which gives them the authority to stop certain people from air travel. A Canadian of Muslim Origin, Shahid Mehmood, was barred from flying several times in 2004 and has since worked with Libby Davies MP to make this issue public knowledge.

Security certificates, although not new after 9/11, have become a very contentious issue in Canadian politics once again. Five Muslim men have waited a combined total of over 207 months in Canadian jail cells without bail, charges or evidence that even their lawyers cannot access, facing risk of deportation. Adil Charkhoui was released on bail into house arrest in February 2005 after two years. Three men are imprisoned in Toronto: Mohammad Mahjoub, a refugee from Egypt who has been in prison since June 2000 (almost five years in prison without charge); Mahmoud Jaballah, a refugee from Egypt who was arrested in August 2001 (four years this summer), and Hassan Almrei, a refugee who has been facing deportation to Syrian torture, just like Maher Arar, since October 2001 (two and a half years in solitary confinement). The fourth man, Algerian refugee Mohamed Harkat, was arrested in Ottawa in December 2002, ironically on Human Rights Day.

The culture of Canadian law enforcement and security intelligence has altered post-9/11, and the change has not been for a better or more secure Canada. In fact, it has added to the racial profiling and insecurity of a particular subsection of its citizenship and residents. Hence the absolute need to hear the voices of those whom it has impacted the most. My contention is that despite the relative safety that the Canadian society provides its Muslim minority in these troubled times post 9/11, they are not a safe community in more ways than one post-9/11. Canada's political

institutions and laws continue to allow racial profiling leading to discrimination against visible minorities in general, and Muslims post 9/11 in particular.

Chapter 2

Methodology

> If you are here to help me, then you are wasting your time. But if you come because your liberation is bound up in mine, then let us begin. (Lili Walker in Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994, pp. 183-184 as cited in McNicoll, 2000)

Methodological issues have taken a significant portion of my time, as I have grappled with issues of design, personal location, sampling and measurement error. I will broadly address these issues in this chapter before presenting the study findings and analysis. The method of enquiry for this study is focus group discussions, a choice influenced by its cultural and topical appropriateness as well as by my preference for Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is simply defined as research with a community, where the participants and the researcher are jointly involved as much as possible in the research. It is valuable for understanding collective experiences of marginalization (Pollack, 2003), and often happens when researchers are "both part of the population to be researched and beneficiaries of the findings" (McNicoll, 2000: 1). Further, it is research that measures its success in terms of its usefulness to that particular community and opportunity for social change that it generates.

I do not claim this to be a PAR research, but one strongly influenced by PAR goals of mutual learning, power sharing and capacity building. Hick (1997) provides a PAR quadrant continuum representing two dimensions of participation for researchers to locate their research: who directly controls decision making for the research, and who actively conducts the research activities. He further asserts that research can be active or passive and direct or indirect depending on how the involvement of ordinary people in the community is operationalized. Under his criteria, this research would probably be categorized as "indirect-passive" as I was the primary researcher and decision maker. I would however disagree with this due to several reasons. The scope of this research – for a Masters' thesis – was limited and so were the resources at my disposal. It was not possible therefore, to initially undertake this research as true PAR. However, I continually consulted with my peers, community members, and Muslim friends to develop the design and research questions. As participants volunteered, they were encouraged to be active members of the research team, and some took up that role. I did not consider co-facilitators from the community, and in retrospect, that could have enhanced the PAR component. The desire to empower participants, however, remained strong throughout and reflects the PAR aspect of this research.

Barnsley and Ellis (1992) suggest that people often "don't see themselves as being important enough to present information about their lives" (p. 14). Once they

are made to feel included, they become motivated and energized on issues directly impacting them. I experienced this firsthand, when having difficulty in finding women participants, I approached a few acquaintances who gave me terrified looks and asked me to talk to their husbands or their children. "Why would you want to talk to me? I don't know that much about politics," one remarked. My only response to them was that it was not about who knew more or less, but what they knew was important for me. Two of these women volunteered to participate in the women's only focus group, and commented later on the group as a positive experience: "I would never have thought my experiences and political judgment was worth something." I take pride in the fact that one of these women offered to review my analysis, and gave valuable feedback.

Altpeter, Schopler, Galinsky and Pennell (1999) list six common characteristics of PAR: it exposes and addresses social problems; involves collaboration, cooperation and co-learning; is a scientific method of investigation; is a cyclical process, creates competencies, is capacity building and can be empowering (39). They further assert that for PAR to be effectively carried out one needs to assess the readiness and commitment of the participant group, expect variations in participation levels, assess readiness of the researcher and her reflexivity, and maintain sensitivity to equity and how language is used. These aspects of research were addressed in a sensitive and detailed manner, and this makes me more

comfortable in acknowledging the PAR leanings in this research, though limited by the purpose, scope and resources available for this research.

PAR helps in breaking the academic and elitist monopoly in research and knowledge production (McNicoll, 2000). Research, McNicoll asserts, is used by the ruling classes to "justify or maintain unfavorable or exploitative positions" (p. 8), and alternative research can lend a voice to important but unrepresented stakeholders in policy formulation and decision making. Subaltern writers emerging in South Asia and Latin America have also contributed significantly towards this goal by presenting revised accounts of social history, adding hitherto suppressed voices into socio-historic narrative (Guha & Spivak, 1988; Rodriguez, 2001). They assert that since the modern state continues to serve the purposes of elite classes, the reality of a majority of civil society and marginal groups is rarely accessed or incorporated into political histories and social policies. The assumption, however, that PAR is better suited to Third World situations with low literacy levels is a faulty one (Morgan, 1997), as it provides alternate analysis of social issues from the perspective of the disadvantaged – a situation equally applicable to marginalized communities in the West.

PAR can work to reduce the power differential between the researcher and the researched, and allow participants to feel empowered by the support of the group. Maguire (1993) asserts that participatory research highlights the "centrality of power

in the social construction of knowledge" (p. 163), seeking not only to empower others, but being "open to transform ourselves and our relationship with others" (p. 175). I would be falsely idealistic to state that my own goals as researcher in a focus group take a backseat to benefits for participants, but it is my hope that we all stand to gain a deeper understanding of our oppressions through this process. As researcher in participatory or action research, I aim to learn and benefit along with the participants, and with this backdrop, I will now address the pros and cons of focus groups as the main method of enquiry for this study.

Why Focus Groups?

Focus Groups have both its strong opponents and proponents, who present their case with passion. I strongly felt focus groups to be both culturally and topically appropriate to undertake this study in an inclusive and sensitive manner. Culturally, many Muslim participants of the opposite sex would be more comfortable in a group setting than in a one to one setting. Further, on sensitive issues such as racism, where fear and insecurity contributes to their earlier silence, focus group participants can feel they are not alone, and have been heard by others. By reaching beyond their silence and fear, by verbalizing and contextualizing their concerns, participants engage in a joint and constructive process against their oppressions.

Frey and Fontana (1991, in Campbell, 2002) are critical of the 'group think' that could emerge in focus groups, and say that social norms and social desirability bias may impact the actual opinions of individuals in a group setting: "group responses can be affected by the size of the group, by the members' view of the purpose of the interview and by the differences in the background of the members" (p. 185). That limitation is offset by the semi-public, communal nature of this methodology and the combined and insightful perspective it provides. I believe that focus groups can reduce biased information on an issue, as participants are more aware of the group's presence than in personal interviews.

For a community worker, dialogue is a preferred method of laying out issues impacting communities, and focus groups provide a good forum to that end. Further, community based research and practice ought to be reflected in community interaction, and not solely on individual interviews, surveys or observation. Focus groups make the participants more aware of the factors underlying their issues, gives them an avenue to voice their concerns and reach out to others, providing them with an opportunity for jointly brainstorming possible plans of positive actions to help address their issues. It is a first step in organization, political thinking, and capacity building for many marginalized groups and communities.

Focus groups are also naturalistic, as compared to surveys, in the sense that they allow participants more room to express themselves, and bring out important

insights (Krueger & Casey, 2000). They tend to resemble the ways in which individuals exchange and negotiate meanings and interactions in everyday life. Their strength also lies in providing direct comparisons on similarities and differences in participants' opinions and experiences, which are more difficult to detect in individual interviews. I disagree, therefore, with the critique of their controlled social setting (Morgan, 1998; Gaskel, 2000). I acknowledge, however, that in comparison with individual interviews, focus groups do not provide a detailed or in-depth documentation of each participant's lived experiences.

The role of the facilitator/moderator/researcher in focus groups is at the centre of some controversy. Morgan (1998) asserts that focus groups are driven by the researcher's interests, and Campbell (2002) critiques that the moderator can negatively influence group interaction in the name of maintaining focus. This problem is not unique to focus group research, as I strongly believe that research is guided by researchers' attempts to focus on their area or question of interest with any methodology. In fact, the role of the facilitator in group process can be less controlling and directive than that of an interviewer in individual interviews. The use of a co facilitator can also be an additional check on an overbearing facilitator. This issue merits the following detailed discussion, as the location of the researcher is central to any research study, and must be reviewed to assess the positive as well as negative implications she has on the study.

Personal location, biases and ethical dilemmas

My personal involvement and experience as a first generation Muslim (by birth) immigrant woman was the motivation behind this research, but while this acknowledgment helps situate myself as a researcher within the community, it also added to my ethical dilemmas. Francisco Ibanez-Carrasco (2004) states that "our quest for making knowledge public is biased, nomadic and licentious (p. 2)." Writing about motives behind research, classified as 'biases', he asserts that researchers desire a way of making knowledge public, and by favouring it, they betray other perspectives. He uses the term cultural workers who "inhabit these intimate borderlines between academic institutions and communities" (p. 7) and who strive to 'go native' and capture an intimate experience from the 'Other's perspective'.

My dilemma between producing a 'valid, bias-free, objective, legitimate' research for academic purposes on one hand, and my desire to vehemently and subjectively make a statement on behalf of a community on the other has been an overriding concern. This torment was highly visible in my thesis proposal defense, where several comments were made by the committee regarding the tension between the participatory nature of the study and my concerns with bias and non objectivity. It was recommended that I distinguish between bias and personal location, and seek to explain how my personal location mediates the research process in each stage. I have, therefore, tried to acknowledge my personal location at each step in my writing

to bring my reader at par with where I stand, and how I operate and interact with my research. My work as a constituency assistant at a member of parliament's office in Burnaby proved very useful in broadening my perspective, and bringing me into contact with scores of Muslim refugees and first generation immigrants, who were facing added troubles after 9/11. The number of Muslim constituents that I served in the past year was disproportionately large as compared to their numbers in Burnaby, and working with them gave me invaluable insight into how bias is reflected in social interaction.

Participatory research requires a high degree of personal involvement and connection which can expose the researcher to risks as well as positive experiences (Kidd & Kral, 2005). While exploring my biases during a discussion in a qualitative research course, a peer's comment got me thinking about how my own near radical and agnostic beliefs could colour my final analysis, or subconsciously alter views from more religious and conservative sections of society. Consequently, I nearly forced myself to take membership with the BC Muslim Students Association at UBC, joined two email listservs for BC's Muslims, and started attending the association's social gatherings. This was a difficult choice for me in more ways than one. Having grown up in a moderate Muslim household, I was consistently challenged by what I observed during these social interactions. Gatherings were completely gender segregated, and so were the social roles. Whereas, the women

there seemed comfortable with it, I squirmed in my seat most of the time. I remember coming home from these socials feeling very frustrated, hypocritical, and unsure of what I was trying to achieve. I almost felt like the outsider trying to understand an 'exotic' event. As I thought about my rationale for doing this in hindsight, I come up with several reasons. First, I wished to increase my connectivity and comfort level with a section of the community which was most likely to be impacted by racism post 9/11. Secondly, I had hardly any connections with Arab Canadians, and this was the ideal opportunity for mutual cultural learning. Thirdly, by connecting with them at a personal level, I wished to strike at my own biases about their conservative religious beliefs. It was hard to be the only woman without a head scarf at these gatherings. It was hard for me to approach men and talk to them, when others would stare. But there were times when it was certainly worth its while. I remember the time that I went with about thirty Muslim families for a barbeque at Stanley Park in 2004. As usual, we sat in gender segregated groups, and the women were mostly wearing long coats and head scarves (except me...). A man with a camera came up to our group and asked if he could take a picture for a local newspaper. I asked him why he wanted to photograph our group, and his reply was that it would be a great photo (of the veiled women) in the back drop of the crowded outdoor pool. I still remember the rising anger that I contained at that moment, and the sudden identification I felt with my group. I sternly refused the

man, and asked him to leave immediately unless I reported him to his newspaper. In retrospect, I made a connection that day with these families which helped me in understanding their particular vulnerability post 9/11.

The issue of coercion was another important one for me ethically. I knew and interacted with so many Muslim families, that it was hard to avoid this one. I worked on this issue by consistently trying to not talk about my research when visiting with friends or interacting at socials during Muslim association gatherings. I soon found out how difficult this was to do practically, as many friends were on list serves where I advertised my focus groups, and some volunteered to be in my study. When I was unable to get enough volunteers for group in a Muslim School, I personally requested the Principal to contact or nominate persons I could speak with, and he put me in touch with some people.

Confidentiality and privacy issues were addressed clearly with all participants prior to conducting the research (see Appendix 1-3 including poster, consent form, and letter of initial contact). Confidentiality of data was maintained, and names or identifying information have not been used in the data. Audiotapes and computerised notes are being securely kept, and data would be only accessed by the principal investigator, co-investigator and participants. Participants to focus groups were reminded beforehand of their responsibility towards the confidentiality of fellow participants, but it was acknowledged that what other participants do with

the information discussed cannot be controlled completely. Some of the data was shared in class presentations and poster displays, but all identifying information was removed.

Design

I initially conceived this research rather ambitiously as comprising of four focus groups, interviews with experts/knowledgeable persons in the field, and analysis of local media. After receiving feedback on my research proposal suggesting that I concentrate on the focus groups as main method to make this project manageable, I revised the design considerably and limited the main method of enquiry to focus groups. I also toyed with the idea of adding a quantitative component to my study in the shape of a survey, but later decided against it. In hindsight, it was a wise decision to omit the survey option, as I would not have been able to do justice to such a project.

There were times when I felt that the focus group design was not suited to everyone, given that the issue of racism and racial profiling was a very sensitive one, and some people did not feel totally comfortable discussing personal situations in a stranger group situation. I felt at times that confidentiality would have been better ensured through individual interviews and my data would be richer if I had provided that comfort zone. There were times when participants would be willing to

speak to me over the telephone, or in person, but not in a group setting. On the other hand, I think that the credibility of my data was enhanced due to the group setting of my design, where people felt greater accountability for the accuracy of their account. I also felt that it helped quieter participants to listen to stories from more vocal participants, and do more disclosure. At times, my own self disclosure helped the participants to be more comfortable with the topic. After having gone through this experience, I appreciate more the benefits of mixing more than one qualitative research method to obtain richer and more inclusive data in social work research.

In my search for similar studies on perceptions of racism post 9/11 in Canada, I came across two quantitative and three qualitative studies. One quantitative study was conducted in Toronto by EKOS (2002), surveying 1300 people of mixed background selected randomly over telephone. Findings indicated that 37 per cent of respondents had negative feelings towards Muslims, and 48 per cent, nearly 1 in 2, found it acceptable that security officials specially scrutinize individuals of Arabic origin. Another survey was conducted on telephone by the Canadian Arab Federation (2003), and worked with a non-random sample of a thousand Arab Canadian families. Over 85% of respondents felt negatively stereotyped with images of violence and terrorism, and one in four had experienced racism personally. Both these surveys were conducted in the months after 9/11 and could

be negatively impacted by the limited time elapsed and extensive, hostile media coverage.

Another research was conducted in Edmonton, Alberta (Khalema and Wannas Jones, 2003) through a grant of Canadian Race Relations Foundation, comprising of focus groups to gauge perceptions of racism post 9/11. About a hundred participants in 18 groups were of mixed ethnic origins in Edmonton. Feedback of participants and press coverage of this research were also analyzed. This research runs parallel to my proposed research, but also differs in several contexts: it was a government funded research, based in another province, and taking into account the views of all ethnic communities in Edmonton on racism post 9/11. Several Muslims might be hesitant to speak about sensitive issues given the mixed gathering and government sponsorship of research. Another similar research was funded by Heritage Canada via the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, Ontario (Hussain, 2002), where fifteen focus groups were conducted across Canada in Montreal, Toronto, Halifax, London, Ottawa, Niagara Falls, Regina, Edmonton and Vancouver. Despite the huge scope of this research, I also find some differences. The focus group in Vancouver was completely based on availability sampling, and the number – 16 – was too large for a ninety minute group. Further, discussion was not audio taped and only hand notes were taken, and analysis was undertaken by one person and focused on participants' feelings more than personal experiences.

Justice Canada also commissioned a recent nationwide focus group study to gauge the perceptions of multiracial participants regarding the Anti-Terrorism Act (Goldfarb, 2004). 22 focus groups were conducted in major Canadian cities in 2004, and participants generally felt comfortable with the new legislation and felt it to be the need of the times. In this case too, discussions were not audio taped and analysis was undertaken only by a legal firm commissioned for the study.

As previously acknowledged, the decision to have an exclusively female focus group was welcomed by the women, and protested by male participants, who thought women had nothing to fear from them. This only substantiated my premise that women would not be adequately represented if I had not held a women's only group. The ideas and experiences that came out in the women's groups were also distinctly different from the men's group in some ways. Women were more open to my focus on personal experience and feelings, while men tended to avoid feeling questions, rephrasing them for a general critical commentary. My questions, presented later in the chapter, were open-ended and specifically designed to evoke a discussion of feelings, personal experiences and emotions while avoiding general statements.

Sampling

The concept of a global Muslim community or "Ummah" is developed in Islam's Holy Book, *The Quran*, in an effort to reach across ethnic, racial and geographical

boundaries. It is a concept that practicing Muslims take pride in, and extreme interpretations evoke empathy for an endangered entity. Unfortunately, it is also a term adopted by the Western popular media after 9/11 to portray a unified terrorist threat against the West. Benedict Anderson (1983) contends that the present imagined communities of nation states evolved out of – and against – the cultural systems of religious community and dynastic realms and have to be understood in the cultural context. One could argue on this premise that the notion of a religious community, such as the Muslim community, clashes with the concept of nationalism as developed in the West within a global capitalist framework and therefore creates a tension. Nevertheless, the term continues to be owned by both its protagonists and critics, albeit in different connotations, and I will use it as my study population with the unit of analysis being adult self identified Muslim residents of the Lower Mainland. The Muslim community in the Lower Mainland consists of nearly 52,000 people according to the 2001 Census by Statistics Canada. This population is classified very diversely under at least 15 different ethnicities and six visible minority groups, not to mention the several religious denominations within Muslims. Given the limited scope of this research, I did not seek any proportional representation of these denominations or ethnicities in the study sample.

Non-probability sampling was used, specifically purposive, quota, and snowball sampling. My dilemma to conduct unbiased, credible research initially influenced my

sampling strategies, as I sought to have a large sample for statistical significance. It was hard for me to reconcile my over enthusiasm with the fact that this research was limited both in scope and resources, and the aim was to gain a rich, more representative, and saturated data within realistic parameters. I initially used quota sampling to determine the demographics of three of four focus groups to ensure that women, single males, and persons associated with Muslim Schools and Associations in BC were represented among the participants, with the fourth group being a mixed group. Five women participated in the first group and five men in the second one. The third group comprised of five single male adults, and the fourth of three persons associated with local Muslim associations and schools. Response for the fourth group was low despite my efforts to schedule this a few times, and I would be more inclined to term this as a group interview rather than a focus group.

Participants responded to advertisements posted at email lists of Muslim organizations, around UBC, at local mosques in Vancouver, and at Muslim businesses around Vancouver. Criteria for participation included being an adult self-identified Muslim and a resident of the GVRD since 9/11. Two sets of emails were sent to three email groups, and seven participants responded to these emails and posters. At this stage, I made use of snowball sampling to complete numbers for my focus group, requesting participants and persons active in Muslim associations to suggest or nominate people.

Women respondents, once they contacted me, were given the choice to participate in a women's only group or a mixed one, and all five preferred a women's only group. This choice was given in the light of my own knowledge of the gender segregation that is the cultural norm in majority Muslim households. Further, since the topic of discussion was intensely political, a separate group gave women more freedom to express themselves openly. Participants were consulted individually as to whether they would be comfortable in mixed or segregated groups. Males preferred to be in mixed groups, while women preferred a women's only group. Reasons they cited included hesitancy to bring their children to a mixed group, and that they would be hesitant to undertake political discussions with men, perceiving themselves to be at a disadvantage. Interestingly, the only female participant who wished to be in a mixed group did not show up for the discussion, having lost her way.

Out of the eighteen participants, five women and six men responded to focus group advertisements and emails, and seven others were recruited through snowball sampling. They were Canadian citizens and permanent residents of Pakistani, Iranian, Egyptian, British, and Indian origin, and ranged from 18 to 55 years in age. Ten were first generation immigrants to Canada, four held university degrees from within Canada, and four were university students. In terms of employment, they were working as primary caregivers to their children, engineers,

doctors, community planners, nurses, and community assistants in student residences.

I consistently strived to make the research process as inclusive as possible. Dates and venues for focus groups were selected in consultation with participants, and participants were asked to add to my questions to cover subjects I might have missed. To ensure more balanced participation, I requested that participants respond to every question and went around in a circle for this purpose.

Measurement Error: Reliability and Validity Concerns

Gauging measurement error in qualitative research with tools refined for quantitative research, such as reliability and validity, continues to generate debate among social researchers (Maxwell, 1992; Rubin and Babbie, 2004). Researchers, in the meantime, are still expected to address these issues in as rigorous a way possible. According to Chioncel, Van Der Veen, Wildemeersch and Jarvis, the "aggregated definition of validity could be accuracy and that of reliability might be replicability" (2003: 7). Random error impacts the reliability or replicability of the research, while non random error is a systematic or constant bias in the study which can impact the validity of the research, and is a more serious error (Rubin and Babbie, 2004).

Maxwell (1992)'s typology for validity in qualitative research is useful to determine validity in focus groups, where he refers primarily to measuring the validity

of participants' accounts. Descriptive validity deals with the factual accuracy of the account, raising the question: was there a problem of mis-transcription or mis-remembrance? I tried to deal with this issue by self transcribing, and by reviewing the transcript while listening to the audio again. One participant from each group reviewed the transcript for errors, and thankfully few were reported! Secondly, interpretative validity aims to ground accounts in the language of the participants, relying as much as possible on participants' vocabulary and terminology used. I agree with Maxwell that a researcher always draws inferences while constructing a narrative out of the participants' accounts. To try to prevent this, I invited participants to review my analysis and two of them accepted to do this. Another way to enhance interpretative validity would have been to request a neutral person do a separate analysis of the same transcripts, but I was unable to find a volunteer to do this for my research. Thirdly, Maxwell talks about theoretical validity or concept validity, which is similar to the more used concept of construct validity. This implies how the accounts of participants are linked to an overall theoretical framework and are correlated with all the concepts and propositions that comprise the theory. To strive for construct validity, I undertook an intensive literature review of critical race theories as well as community based research methodologies, seeking to understand how best could participatory methodology be utilized to devise appropriate focus group questions for this particular topic. I also looked at prior research on experiences of Muslims in

Canada post 9/11 and reviewed and revised my own research plan in light of their experiences.

Another set of much used validity criteria are Jane Kronick's four criteria which include internal consistency of the developing argument, complete interpretation taking all the evidence into account, conviction that the most compelling argument is presented in light of the evidence, and meaningfulness of the interpretation (in Rubin and Babbie, 2004: 204). I believe that Kronick's criteria are well intended, but more difficult to establish in measurement terms. Maxwell does a much clearer job of presenting concepts that can be utilized to enhance validity in qualitative research. If I was to try to explain conviction and meaningfulness to establish validity of research, whose conviction I would be talking about? Rigour, peer review and methodological thoroughness is equally relevant for qualitative research as they are for quantitative research. These are checks and balances that will only improve our narrative, not take away from it. Campbell (2002) warns social science practitioners to document methods and procedures used in group interviews, and discuss problems of "adjusting techniques to local conditions and specific research requirements such as gender, religion, and culture, thereby addressing the extent to which a technique fits with respondent competence, culture, etc" (p. 26).

For increased reliability, I pre-tested the focus group questionnaire with my peers in my qualitative research class, my thesis supervisor, committee members,

and focus group participants. I facilitated and audio taped the focus groups and transcribed all the tapes myself for consistency. To enhance reliability of my coding and analysis, two participants have reviewed my initial emerging analysis and recommended addition of some comments that were left out in the analysis. In particular, one female participant commented on how her comments, which were more positive than other participants, were given less space. Additions were made to the final analysis in light of her comments. The comments of my thesis committee were vital to revise my focus group questions for clarity and simplicity. Further additions were very usefully made in light of the comments made in the first discussion group.

Research Questions

My research questions evolved over two years starting from the simple question I posed in my MSW admissions proposal in 2003: What are the perceptions of the Muslim community in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia on racism since September 11, 2001? When I defended my thesis proposal in 2004, I put forth the following set of research questions:

- What are the perceptions and experiences of Vancouver's Muslim community with regards to racism post 9/11?

- How secure do they feel vis-à-vis enforcement authorities?

- What are their experiences of inclusion and exclusion within mainstream Canadian society post 9/11?

- How do they perceive the role of media and Canadian government?

- How do they perceive their own future in Canada and BC?

What then emerged from these broad research questions were the focus group questions. The feedback I received from my committee and participants of the first group pointed towards the academic language, lack of clarity, as well as the need for a purposive sequence necessary for focus group questions, and the following set of questions evolved from their feedback:

- Introductions and norms for discussion (Introduction)

- How would you describe your experiences in the days and weeks following the attacks of September 11, 2001? What were some of the good experiences? What were some bad ones? (introductory question)

- How did these experiences change with time? Looking back at the past three years, how has 9/11 changed your life both negatively and positively? (transition question)

- What has been your experience at your work place or at your educational institution with regards to racism and racial profiling? (key question)

- What has your experience been with domestic and international travel post 9/11? (key question)

- How secure do you feel as a Muslim Canadian post 9/11? What are your concerns and fears, if any? As a Muslim Woman, how do you feel about your identity post 9/11? (key question)

- How you think has the electronic and print media in Vancouver in general and Canada in particular portrayed Muslims post 9/11? (key question)

- What is your impression of the Canadian government's reactions post 9/11? Are you aware of the Anti Terrorism Act, Maher Arar Case, Security certificates, and the Safe Third Country Act? (key question)

- How do you perceive your future in Canada? (ending question)

- What role can you play as a Muslim Canadian in improving our present situation? (ending question)

- Brainstorming, summarizing, and Thank you's. (Conclusion)

Data Analysis

I began with three themes of exploration: racism, (in) security, and social exclusion, and my questions were initially based solely on these areas of enquiry. However, by exposing my research methods and goals to participation and feedback from participants, and by presenting my analysis not under these three categories, but under a simpler version recommended by participants, I have also leaned towards a

grounded theory approach. My approach to data analysis for this study is therefore a mix of inductive and deductive theory, and not grounded solely in my data.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) detail three phases of data analysis in grounded theory: open coding, examining data within each conceptual category, and developing theory after a detailed and interactive analysis of data, open coding and existing literature on the issue. Open line by line coding was undertaken to filter themes from the participants' accounts. Secondly, I also wrote extensive theoretical memos on the computerised transcript which aided me in categorizing comments under themes. These themes were then compared to my three original areas of enquiry – racism, security, and inclusion/exclusion – to check for similarities and differences between anticipated themes identified by myself, and emerging themes as identified by participants. To minimize misrepresentation in analysis, participants were also given the option to review focus group transcripts and analysis. Two took that option and have reviewed my analysis. Additions were made to my initial analysis in light of their comments.

I undertook exhaustive reading and coding of focus group transcripts to make my analysis holistic and reflective of participant views. I recognize, however, that analysis was still impacted to some extent by my own preferences and prejudices and by those of my reviewers. Data was reviewed for internal consistency of

participants, frequency, intensity and extensiveness of comments, specificity of responses and the context in which they were offered.

In review, a sustained effort was made to make sure that themes for data analysis were derived from the participants' views and then corroborated or contrasted with my own analysis and views, as well as with references to other studies and writings on these themes.

Chapter 3

Experiences and Perceptions of a Racialized Community

Incidents of racism against Muslims in Canada rose markedly in the months following 9/11. Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC) reported a 1,600 percent increase in reported hate crimes against Muslims in the year following 9/11, including twelve attacks on Muslim places of worship in the first two months (Helly, 2004). In Ottawa, an Arab teenaged boy was viciously beaten by 12 boys (Abu Laban, 2002); in Montreal, a female Saudi doctor was choked in an elevator (Hunter, 2001 in Abu Laban, 2002) and a Pakistani family was beaten by Caucasian youths in a Toronto park in 2002 (Helly, 2004).

This chapter focuses on both the positive experiences as well as instances of everyday and systemic racism that study participants experienced in social interaction, travel, and the workplace. It also presents their opinions and perceptions about the institutional and structural racism reflected in the media and Canadian government policies and legislation post 9/11. I agree with Henry et al. (1995)'s views that systemic and institutional racism are concepts that are easier to define but difficult to measure and separate from individual or everyday racism. And are institutional policies not usually reflective of a certain powerful group of individuals' preferences and prejudices?

This research took a life of its own as it progressed: dynamics that impacted me as well as the participants beyond the scope of this research. Personally, I now have a much deeper and fuller understanding of how difficult it is to clearly term behaviour as racist, and yet, our reaction to difference remains tenuous at best, and events such as 9/11 expose our apprehensions, insecurities and racist tendencies. I am more grounded in my knowledge of how this event impacted and continues to impact Muslims of different ethnicities and shades of belief in Vancouver. I was also overwhelmed by both the positive and negative experiences that participants shared, and the manner in which they sought to explain them. There were several times when we disagreed as to whether the experience narrated constituted racism or not. At times, someone would narrate a deeply disturbing incident, and I would lament the racism involved. "But that is not racism, it is just ignorance or prejudice," they would promptly respond. I kept it beyond the scope of my role as researcher to question their assertion for fear that I would be impacting their opinions. However, raising this discussion to that level could have added another layer of action to this analysis, which I chose to omit for fear of transferring my opinions on the issue to participants. This, then, must be a dilemma continually facing researchers attempting to undertake research on PAR lines – the extent to which participants' opinions can be challenged, critiqued and channelized towards action without adding the element of coercion.

Following are personal accounts of people facing racism in its everyday, systemic and structural manifestations in the days immediately after 9/11 as well as in the past four years. But racism was not the only reality experienced by these participants, as there were also numerous positive narratives of hope, support and acceptance. Focus group participants who reviewed my analysis also requested that I state the positive before the negative, because their gratitude to those who had helped them should not be lost amid the critique.

"Lucky to be a Canadian Muslim in the post 9/11 world..."

Almost every participant had something positive to say about their post 9/11 Canadian experience. Both men and women acknowledged the encouraging vibes that they received from neighbours, colleagues, and friends in those early traumatic days.

Canada was perceived of as a relative haven when compared to the United States. Almost every participant had family members or friends in the US, who were living with blatant racism and persecution. A single male spoke about his experience in Denver, Colarado soon after 9/11, where he was a university student. His recollection was that nearly eighty percent of Arab students left the university within months of 9/11 and never returned, and local Muslim student associations were barred from any social or community activities altogether. Participants also felt

themselves to be better off and more protected as compared to Muslims in most other parts of the world, including some Muslim countries. As one person reflected, "I had more chances of being persecuted in any other Western country after 9/11 than in Canada."

In terms of political representation and inclusion, participants remembered how happy and represented they felt when Canada decided not to join the war against Iraq: "I liked everything the Canadian government did at that time, all the Canadian media coverage and everything," one woman reminisced. Similar feelings of pride and belonging were expressed by others: "I was a proud Canadian Muslim in those days when Jean Chrétien refused to tow the Bush line," remarked another female participant. One person who had moved to British Columbia from Quebec praised the measures taken by the Quebec provincial government towards the social inclusion of its Muslim population, which he felt were more proactive as compared to the BC provincial government. Participants could not think of any proactive measures taken in this regard by local city councils or the BC provincial government in those days. His comments regarding Quebec are corroborated by Denise Helly's account of regulation changes in Montreal both before and after 9/11:

> Girls were given the right to wear a more modest uniform during physical education courses and Muslim pupils granted a two-hour period in order to observe Friday congregational prayer. In certain Canadian National units, the work schedule was adjusted to create three free periods per day to allow Muslim

employees to pray. In the municipal swimming pools, a three-hour period has been reserved to young Muslims and divided between boys and girls, and in three universities Muslim students were given spaces for prayers. (Helly, 2004: 14)

Community networks also offered support to Muslim families. One participant spoke about the help of people at his university who "deliberately reached out" to organize talking circles, interfaith meetings, and support groups, "We just sat and talked abut our feelings and our different impressions through the night. There were Americans in that group, people from different parts of the world, all speaking about their experience. So I felt less alone in my self persecution." One female participant, a community assistant at a local community centre, was hired soon after 9/11 with one aspect of her job being to assist Muslim families in the area and make them feel welcome and included at the community centre. Another person, who lived at the University of British Columbia campus with his family, had only good things to say regarding his experiences: "I have not found any hatred or racism in Canada. My children are also happy. They don't feel any of these sorts of things. Specially, UBC is a multiracial community....If there is racism here, it is not in here." Another female participant spoke about her next door neighbours coming over and offering help:

We had good neighbours at that time who were almost all Caucasian. One of them knocked at our house and asked us if we needed any help, and if we are

facing any problem about any thing, we can come to them. We really appreciated that gesture and it was very nice of them.

Students at a Muslim School received cards of support and friendship from children at a private Christian school in the months following 9/11. "That was a pleasant surprise for us, and unexpected too," remarked one parent. Parent participants with children attending public schools reported few problems. As one female participant commented, "I didn't have any problem. My son's school, my job, nothing. Not a single time. Never had I heard any comments or anything in that way in the last two years."

Several people acknowledged that their non-Muslim friends were showing an increased interest and sensitivity in finding out more about Islam, and why "normal people were resorting to extreme measures and driven to become suicide bombers". There was also more effort to understand the cultural aspect of Islam. "For the first time in my life, in those early days after 9/11, I sold out all the copies of the *Quran* at my store, and most customers were non-Muslims," remembered one *'Halal'* Meat (Muslim equivalent to Kosher) shop owner. "Now everyone knows when Ramadan is or when Eid is…. It's tokenistic but at least people are aware that there are a billion people who practice this religion," remarked one participant jokingly.

Individuals and community groups reached out to their Muslim friends and neighbours in the days and months following 9/11, and it seems unlikely that their

kind gestures would be forgotten by them any time soon. As one female participant remarked, "I remind myself everyday how lucky I am to be a Canadian Muslim as compared to anywhere else in the world these days."

Navigating through Overt and Covert Racism

Measuring what constitutes racism today is a challenge, as racist attitudes and policies as well as oppressive behaviours have "gone underground" (Mullaly, 2002). Covert expressions of racism by individuals are termed as 'prejudice' and not racism (Fleras and Elliott, 1999), and the legal definition of racism as a hate crime in Canada is still limited and narrow (Henry et al., 1995). There were few reported hate crimes in BC in the months following the 9/11 attacks (Enns, 2002; Abu Laban, 2002). Swastikas were printed on four businesses in Vancouver owned by Iranian Muslims, and a Vancouver man was charged after making several calls to local mosques and Muslim cultural centres threatening to blow them up in retaliation for 9/11 (Miller, 2005). Instances of overt racism were reported by fifteen of eighteen focus group participants in the days following 9/11 ranging from hate mail, racial slurs and exclusionary comments to racial jokes and harassment at work. Many others spoke about uncomfortable glances and loss of opportunity, but were hesitant to term it as racism. While reporting these experiences, I acknowledge that my definition of racism is historically located and encompasses the entire spectrum of hostile attitudes,

perceptions and reactions as well as institutional and structural practices aimed at these participants as Muslims post 9/11 under racism.

One woman faced a very uncomfortable situation when she was confronted by a senior while shopping at a London Drugs store shortly after 9/11:

> I was alone in that aisle. I turned my back and saw an old Caucasian lady, and she screamed: "Oh my god, what are you doing here? (I was wearing a *hijab* (head scarf) you people - you have to be everywhere, I cannot do my shopping here now. She just ran away like I had a bomb in my hands," reflected the participant with a wry smile.

A young male participant took the sky train the day following 9/11 to school. He realized quickly that despite the train being crowded, no one was sitting or standing next to him, and there were a few awkward glances at him. He became stressed enough to get off the train on the next stop. His experience is in line with the argument of several race theorists that racism is sometimes so subtle that it is only visible to or can be felt by its victim (Henry and Tator, 2002; Bannerji, 2002). A female participant also recalled tension on her soccer team once they found out she was a Muslim. Her teammates were curious to know why she wore pants while playing soccer, and when she responded that she had to dress modestly as she was Muslim, she felt a sudden distance between herself and the team. "I could feel a tension, but could not put my finger on it," she reflected. She did however have words of praise for her soccer coach who continued to encourage her.

Focus group participants with common Muslim names faced both overt and covert racism through racial jokes, bullying, social discomfort, and loss of employment opportunities. One person spoke about his cousin named Osama who was attending a local high school in Burnaby, BC and was forced to officially change his name after extensive bullying in the form of racial jokes. Another participant spoke of his brother named Hussain, who was continuously facing racial jokes by friends at work, and extensive questioning while traveling. I wonder how difficult would it be for a teenager to change his name? Or how easy is it for an adult to hate her name? The participants' accounts of racial jokes about names is corroborated by the Directeur de l'Etat civil in Quebec who spoke about a "phenomenal" increase in "requests by Muslims" to change their names since September 2001 (Helly, 2004). Similar statistics were not available for BC. These comments are significant considering that nearly 30 percent of Canadian Muslims live in Montreal. CBC aired a documentary on this issue titled "Being Osama" (Cohen, 2005) regarding the negative impact of the name "Osama" on the lives of six Canadian Muslims from Montreal. Ironically, participants of this documentary faced hostile interviews from CSIS and Citizenship and Immigration Canada after the airing of this documentary, and the Director of the film, Mahmoud Kaabour – an international student in Canada– returned to Dubai to live with his parents after facing what he termed as continuous harassment from enforcement authorities

(Gropp, 2005). He had unsuccessfully waited four years for Canadian permanent residence status.

Internet hate crimes were reported by two participants. One university student spoke about an "incredibly offensive" email that he received hours after the 9/11 attacks on an email list to which he belonged, "It basically said now you all know what Israel has to deal with. Now the world has experienced the terrorism of Islam, the Arabs, and the Palestinians, what these people are all about. In a way that was really quite sweeping." Another participant spoke about receiving two hate emails from people with strange names whom he did not know but remembered that they were really hateful anti-Muslim e-mails which he deleted and did not share with anyone.

Name calling and racial jokes were reported by participants from within their social circles. These comments of a young male participant about racial jokes which he faced "jokingly" from his friends at university are insightful:

A new joke is emerging for brown people – you call them terrorists.... I didn't mind too much initially, but my friends kept calling me a "terrorist" for almost two three years. If it was someone who was more religious or sensitive, he could feel why he was being called a terrorist because of his religion. You can't attack anyone's religion like that. You can joke about my curry and my accent but not my religion. This is too much.

The quote indicates clearly that the increase in such incidents was not simply in the early days post 9/11, but that it continued to filter into everyday interaction for

Muslims, creating a "new language" that was generally accepted in the social milieu and indirectly legitimated verbal/racial harassment on an extended basis.

Racism at the Workplace

According to a survey conducted in 2002, three types of people had more difficulty in finding jobs in Canada: Blacks, people of Arabic origins, and visible Muslims (Tadlaoui, 2002: 20 in Helly, 2004). It was nearly a consensus view among focus group participants that the corporate as well as academic workplace in the US and Canada was an interconnected system, reacting similarly to Muslim affiliation of job applicants. Participants reported a loss in their job prospects in the North American market, as they had decided not to apply to the positions in the US for fear of persecution, and there were hardly any openings in their fields in Canada. This is another reference to the joint North American reality in many fields for Canadians, where hostility faced in the United States affects their life and life chances as much in Canada. Several others spoke of sending out hundreds of resumes to Canadian workplaces without so much as a word of acknowledgment in response. One participant spoke about the "lack of connections" which impacted his job hunt more than anything else. This issue is also mentioned by Helly (2004) in her observation that a big handicap in employment opportunities for Canadian Muslims post 9/11 is

the systemic racism that exists in Canadian institutions in the shape of 'cloning' (internal job postings only, and hiring through references) in hiring practices.

Murtada (2004) documents how institutional and systemic racism hinders job search for Muslim Canadians post 9/11, in particular for Arabs and visible Muslims. He cites a Canadian Arab Federations official's example of the Arab surgeon who was offered a job in a major Toronto hospital on the condition that he change his name to "something less Arab sounding." Similarly, one focus group participant, an engineer by profession, spoke about extreme difficulty in finding a job after graduating from UBC in 2002. After hundreds of failed applications, he was very frustrated and recalls the following conversation during a job interview with the vice president of the company:

> He asked me what the problems in my job hunt were. I said after September 11, being a Pakistani, and with this name (Mohammad), I mean everybody can recognize this name, I feel that I have a barrier in my career opening. He said, you are right. It gives a certain impression, and unfortunately it is a problem these days. I can see it could be a problem for you.

This person also ended up changing his name, and faced severe guilt in this regard, claiming that he had "lost a part of himself" along with his name. He now works for the government of Alberta.

Another participant experienced prejudice at his work place, as he was reported by his supervisor for expressing views supporting the terrorists' actions. Working as a nurse in a seniors' home on 9/11, he recalled that residents were:

"....very fearful that the world was going to come to an end. There was going to be a kind of a world war. So a lot of my evening was spent just talking to these people making them feel comfortable.... One of the residents asked me, you are Muslim, can you tell me why people would do something like this? And my response was a little bit, would say, too much in detail. I said the bombing of the towers was a terrible thing, but if you look at it as these people look at it... as a war situation, then you could some how explain the pentagon was hit. It is the place where war is planned. It is the head of the military...."

The following day, in a staff meeting, this participant was aggressively confronted by a colleague who made remarks about how all Muslims were responsible for 9/11, and such groups should not be tolerated in Canada. A few days later, his supervisor informed him that an enquiry would be underway about remarks he made to residents on September 11th justifying the terrorists' actions. Thankfully for this participant, the enquiry went favourably for him, and the matter was closed. However, that was the end of his expressing political opinions at his workplace: "I am very careful about how I speak. I don't have a political discussion anymore. Because I think that it is really unwise. Because the climate is still one of where you can be persecuted for your

views." Another participant, a single male, recalled a similar discussion with Caucasian friends at work regarding the Palestinian issue, 9/11 and suicide bombers:

> One boy questioned me on whether I thought it was right to target civilians. I said I couldn't say it was right, but I think it is important to find a method to show the international community that they are resisting and doing something. My friend countered that "is it ok to kill an Israeli child in place of a Palestinian child?" "Why not?" I countered, "Are Palestinian children without value that you can keep on killing them?"

A female participant, who wears a *hijab* (headscarf), ran into difficulties at her home daycare. She spoke about a subconscious prejudice when someone came to her home and how "sometimes everything was fine, but then they would look at me and I was wearing *hijab,* I don't know, they just stopped; they don't want to send their kids to my home." She later ended up with only visible minority children at her home daycare.

A female doctor who wears the *hijab* spoke about expecting discomfort and stares, but never actually experiencing a hostile reaction: "I have always felt in my heart that I may not be that much welcome but it has never been an issue openly. I volunteer at clinics, and I wrote exams with my head scarf. And I did everything with my head scarf and everybody just respected it."

The instances of overt and covert racism have intentionally been presented together to show the continuum along which racism today surfaces from its

"underground existence" (Mullaly, 2002). I have not presented them in any ranked order of gravity, as each represents a form of oppression which is processed and internalized distinctively by its recipient, leading to long term negative consequences, discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Travel Experiences

Questions about travel evoked the strongest reactions and unanimous consent regarding the hostile and open racism. People spoke about detention, extensive questioning, missing flights, invasive body and 'cavity' searches, luggage seizing, and extreme humiliation at hands of airport and security authorities at check in points around the world. Their Canadian citizenship or permanent residence status was of little consequence in front of their Muslim background.

Several people who traveled immediately after 9/11 faced direct and hostile questioning from enforcement authorities. One participant spoke of her brother-in-law's ordeal at Vancouver Airport where he was held for a few hours for a detailed interview:

> Oh my god. He was really really humiliated. It was just after September 11, and everything from his wallet to his person, they checked. They really interviewed him very long. They really humiliate him. He was very upset about that incident. He was body checked. And he didn't like it at all. He was really very low.

One single male, a university student, traveled to Europe in 2003 with two Caucasian friends. With a European Union visa, he knew he was ok to travel within Europe, and so they decided to visit Istanbul, Turkey, unaware that a G-8 meeting was being held there. He was not only denied entry while his other friends had no problems, but was also kept in detention over night in what he described as a dingy and dark cell. When he was released in the morning, he was informed by an "apologetic" guard that they could not have taken a risk with him due to the G-8 summit. He continues to be deeply influenced by the experience, and has not traveled internationally or outside the Lower Mainland since this incident.

One woman, a Canadian Muslim of Pakistani background, traveled to the UK in October 2001 and faced hostile questions at Heathrow Airport from both security staff and fellow passengers. "Are you a practicing Muslim?" asked the security staff looking at her traditional headscarf. "You are a woman; I don't think you are going to blow it up, are you?" A fellow passenger, sitting next to her, nervously smiled with his query.

An airline representative got cold feet and detained the family of one participant, including two children under five, at the airport for three hours because they were trying to verify the husband's identity: his name was Mohammad, a common Muslim name and also those of several of the plane hijackers on 9/11. Her story prompted at least three other participants in the female group to recall that male members of

their households, with the name Mohammad, had also faced one to three hour questioning at airports in the past three years. As I asked how they felt about it, not one of them identified this as racism, but as a "necessity of times" in a "war situation". In fact, another person reported what would have been a stressful experience in very positive terms due to the non biased attitude of the CBSA officer at the airport:

> My husband's name was Mohammad and he wears a beard. So he was a bit conscious about the whole thing.... I remember I had a small knife in my hand luggage. And we were stopped at customs in Canada. And the person was really nice. He told me to look for it in the luggage. And I couldn't find it, as it was in a very small pocket inside. But he was very polite. He asked me to check it again and again. It was several times over the next hour before I could find it. He was really polite with me. We were really thankful to that guy. We told him that.

Several participants reported self imposed limits on travel post 9/11. Most agreed that they used to travel frequently over-land to the United States for shopping and recreation, but had completely stopped doing that post 9/11.Linked to this restriction was the institutional and systemic racism inherent in treating naturalized visible minority Canadian citizens as distinct from Caucasian Canadians (Abu Laban, 2002; Bannerji, 2002). "Now I feel that even having a Canadian passport is something which cannot give you some sort of shelter or anything in US" remarked one participant.

One male participant, and a Canadian citizen, who studied in the US but transferred to BC after encounters with US police had this story to tell:

> I was just off the train with two of my friends, and we were studying a map on the wall. My friends just walked ahead of me, and told me that a policeman was staring at me continuously. He had a book in his hand. He would flip a page and look at me, flip a page and look at me, and continued doing it. I later found out that they had questioned five Canadians who had come from Canada and were suspicious of further bombings in New York. A second time, we were again going somewhere with friends and were stopped. The policeman asked for my ID, and when he saw it, he took me to a corner. Then several policemen came, there were four or five of them, and a senior person came with a fax. He had pictures that he was matching with me. He put out all the pictures in front of me and was trying to match them. It was the worst moment in my life.

His comments indicate that his Canadian citizenship paled in comparison to his religious affiliation while traveling to the United States, leading him into the "worst moment" of his life and his eventual return to Canada. His account is corroborated by the fact that in 2003, the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a travel advisory to Canadian citizens born in countries on the US Special Registration List (includes most Muslim Countries) to avoid traveling to the United States (Human Rights First, 2003).

Several persons spoke about the strong imperialist presence of US around the world, and particularly at entry points into certain Muslim countries. "You feel the

American presence throughout. You feel that the country is not at all involved with this but it is the Americans who are carrying out the security checks."

Minority groups are sometimes made to internalize oppression to such an extent, that they almost come to expect it as a norm. International travel experience narratives of focus group participants also seem to carry a subconscious acceptance of racist attitudes and behaviours directed towards them. In a pre-9/11 milieu, some of these occurrences could have triggered lawsuits and human rights cases, but unfortunately now seem like a part of life for participants in their lived reality post 9/11.

Perceptions of Racial Stereotypes in Canadian Media

As discussed in Chapter 1, mainstream print and electronic media in the West are frequently critiqued for portraying stereotypical and homogenous images of Muslims (Said, 1978; Barsamian, 2000; Chomsky, 2001; Monem, 2003). The depiction of 'the Arab' as irrational, menacing, untrustworthy, anti-Western, dishonest, and – perhaps most importantly – a terrorist – are the norm rather than exception (Said, 1981). Within Canada, the Media Watch Report by the Canadian Islamic Congress, which analyzes news content of eight Canadian dailies, criticizes the regular reference to terrorists as "Islamic militants" or "Muslim extremists" in world conflicts, which has a direct impact on how its Muslim population is perceived and treated

(Weld, 2003). As Wahida Valiante, vice-president of the Canadian Islamic Congress, explained: "We never refer to those involved in the Northern Ireland conflict as Catholic terrorists. In Bosnia and Kosovo, there were Christian and Orthodox terrorists, but they were never called that, though there was much discussion of Muslim Bosnian terrorists" (in Helly, 2004: 17).

With reference to media in Vancouver, Enns (2002) presents a content analysis of the *Vancouver Sun* in the month before and after the 9/11 attacks. As expected, the paper's stories about religion more than doubled from 82 to 204 sustaining what he terms as the "predominantly negative stereotypes of Muslims." He separately analyzes news stories, opinion editorials and letters to the Editor, finding a positive trend only in letters to the editor. Nearly two thirds of news stories and nearly 80 percent of op-ed pieces were termed as "maintaining or reinforcing stereotypes against Muslims."

The power of discourse and how it impacts public psyche and vocabulary was also mentioned by several participants:" The terms 'terrorism' and 'Islamic terrorism' are being used interchangeably. They have mixed the two words Islam and terror so much that even if you take the name of one the other now comes to mind." Another participant expressed similar sentiments regarding generalizations in media and academia, citing Irshad Manji's much cited book The *Trouble with Islam*: "We do, as

Muslims, have problems but those problems are not the problems of Islam, they are the problems of Muslims, is different from the problem of Islam."

Participants felt that Canadian media were not independent in general and under the control of powerful pressure groups. It was argued by some participants that boundaries between the US and Canadian media were only "artificial" in the present globalized situation. Media such as the Canadian Broadcast Corporation offered "nuggets of hope" for some in what they saw as an otherwise globalized hold of US interests over Canadian print and electronic media. Others pointed out however that CBC, as a crown corporation, was also limited in what it could present. During the early days of the Iraq war, CBC aired pictures of American prisoners of war, but took them off air within hours after American protests.

In print media, the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* were given better reviews as compared to other newspapers. Group participants expressed strong views on the stereotypes presented in mainstream electronic and print media. The women spoke about how the TV news channels generalized the actions of a group to an entire religion. As one woman pointed out "they blame our religion, not those people." This sentiment was echoed in the second group that this was not a new phenomenon post 9/11 but an image of Muslims crystallized over decades. I was struck by the intensity of this participant's comments who is an architect:

"Muslims only make news when they do something bad. We are newsmakers when we are killers. We are not the creators of beautiful work. We are not painters. We are not writers. This is the kind of impression that is reinforced over and over. And at a certain point, you accept that and don't seek out other sources. "

Criticism was also leveled at stakeholders in the media to present a one sided picture of conflict to the public. One participant reflected on the minimal understanding among American public about the impact of US imperialism around the world, and general indifference towards the oppression:

The average American does not know why this happened. They are not even asking why. They are just asking what they should do. The average American is oblivious to why they were attacked. They just think the attackers were crazy. They don't know the history behind America's exploitation abroad.

Muslim media in Vancouver also came under fire from participants. Local newspapers such as *Al-Ameen* and *The Miracle* were criticized for suffering from anti-Semitic biases, being narrow minded, and failing to provide a vision to its readers. Two participants contacted these newspapers to corroborate published stories for their sources, but received no response. They termed this as their effort to influence the discourse positively in Muslim print media.

Several participants felt that North American media post 9/11 treated all Muslims as "belonging to one fundamental group" with no differences, and this opinion was

being expressed more openly than ever before. "If you want to write or to speak against Moslems or Islam, everything is open for you," remarked one male participant.

It was suggested that internet was emerging as a good resource for balanced or alternative media, but this was a resource still unavailable to most people who relied on CNN for their news and opinions.

Perceptions of Canadian government's policies post 9/11

In March 2005, the federal Liberal government announced Canada's first "Action Plan against Racism" calling for new initiatives worth 56 million dollars across four federal ministries: Heritage, Labour, Justice and Immigration (Csillag, 2005). Strategies announced included data collection on hate crimes, racism-free workplace, tracking racism in the justice system, and anti racism education among others. What were the views of participants regarding the sincerity of the government's actions and policies towards racism in general and towards Muslims post 9/11 in particular? In June 2005, a survey released by the Canadian Council on American – Islamic relations found that Arab Muslims were regularly subjected to illegal or improper treatment, and visited at work by security agents from Canadian Security and Intelligence Services (Austin, 2005). How was this differential treatment viewed by the focus group participants?

This issue garnered a mixed response from different groups. Older males were critical of the Canadian government and felt that it basically followed the US lead more covertly; younger males were even more scared of state enforcement authorities, women felt relatively less affected by and more satisfied with Canadian government's policies. People associated with Muslim associations and schools were the most cautious about saying anything at all against the Canadian government. "Our rights to form Muslim associations and run Muslim schools have been granted by the majority groups in Canada, and we could do nothing if these rights were taken away in the name of security. I, for one, do not wish to be deported," remarked one person associated with a local Muslim organization, as she called to retract an earlier commitment to attend a focus group. One male participant was very concerned at the attack on his rights and liberties in light of post 9/11 legislation in Canada. He felt that such legislation took "the process away from public scrutiny and judicial scrutiny to some other realm of discretion which was dictatorial and fascist." Another was concerned at the erosion of Canadian values where civil and political liberties were ensured for all, and was more sympathetic of the mixed views that went into shaping Canadian policy in this regard. He felt that lack of balanced information was a big factor in this regard, "I would also be afraid of something I did not know enough about, but had to deal with."

Jean Chrétien's Liberal government was commended for not taking part in the war against Iraq, and the shift from US policy during those days. But there was also the recognition that the Canadian government was bound in several ways to US policies, and could not avoid taking direction on issues of security etc. As one female participant acknowledged, Canada was a major trade partner, and with such a huge border with an imperialist power, some transfer of power was inevitable.

There was a slight difference of opinion on gender lines when it came to views on security legislation post 9/11. Male participants were very critical of the Anti-Terrorism Act as being designed specifically with Muslims in mind, while female participants felt that they were not aware of the details of this act, and that it probably still affected them. The case of Maher Arar and Operation Thread where several Pakistanis were detained in Toronto were also criticized severely by participants in all four focus groups. Objections to the act included that it was creating a climate of fear, innocent people would suffer, went against Canadian values of social justice that had been hard-fought for, was against civil liberties with certain potential for abuse, and that it was legislation contrived hastily after 9/11 under U.S pressure. It was felt that the Liberal government in Canada was behaving in an ambivalent manner vis-à-vis the US government as "initially they pretend that they don't want to follow them, but somehow with the passage of time, when the things, cool down, they follow the same stuff." As one participant stated "the laws are being amended according to American

wishes and with the passage of time – slowly and gradually." Another spoke at length about the climate of fear that such laws created:

> "There is always a tension between the state and the citizens…such laws create a climate of fear. And I think the government sometimes has an interest potentially in a climate of fear, because they can control better. "

Women participants were generally more positive about Canadian government policies post 9/11 as compared to the men. A factor to consider here, however, is the male participants narrated more instances of racist experiences, fitting more into the racialized stereotype of the "Muslim terrorist." Initial reactions to this question were positive with participants expressing their happiness at Canada's decision to not join the war in Iraq. One participant felt that the Anti-Terrorism act was not "an anti-Muslim Act" and that some Chinese people had also been detained under the act. "Maybe it is not anti Muslim," remarked another female participant, "but you know the Muslims are already in hot water. So the main targets are usually Muslims." Participants acknowledged that the Canadian government did not appear to be a "uniform voice against Muslims." Interestingly, the women seemed to understand Canadian policy concerns vis-à-vis US better, pointing out that a bulk of Canadian trade was with the US, and their security concerns were tied too to an extent.

Another participant commented insightfully on Canadian values and threat posed by these laws:

> Notion of Canadian values is something, Canadian people have fought for, everyday citizens have fought for the enshrinement of those values. Those values are not just given by the government. So people who have been discriminated against historically have fought for the creation of a set of laws and rights that protect and, you know, we try to extend that to as many people as possible. And I think there is always a tension between the state and citizens. You know, what the state wants to create law and order, and make sure that people function as good economic units.

In review, the experiences and perceptions narrated by the participants of the four groups were along similar lines with some differences. Single males felt more targeted as compared to women and middle aged men with regards to security and enforcement officials. Persons associated with Muslim schools and associations were the most hesitant to talk on this issue. Women generally felt more positive about their situation, assessing the hurdles they have faced post 9/11 as practical fallout of a difficult situation. Keeping these experiences in mind, Chapter 4 will move on to the impact that these experiences of racialization and racial profiling have had on the psyche of group participants.

Chapter Four

Impact on a Racialized Community

Insensitive bureaucratic and institutional responses intensify the impact of social suffering in ways that normalizes it. By deploying powerful discourses and practices, institutions make themselves immune from criticism and scrutiny. But there is another side of the story, revealing that suffering cannot be subject to total appropriation, management and control. (Dossa, 2004: 3)

Chapter three sought to document racism experienced by participants in their everyday life, workplace and school, as well as their perceptions regarding Canadian media, and government legislation and policies. Here, I go deeper into a more personal and subjective level: how have these experiences of personal, cultural, and structural racism impacted these participants and caused social suffering in their lives. Mullaly (2002) describes oppression as a "three-headed monster" (individual, cultural, structural) whose impact is felt by the individuals belonging to the subordinated or targeted group in "an inhumane, unjust and discriminatory manner" (p. 56). How much of this continues to stay with them in their everyday interaction, and what shape does it take? The themes presented have emerged out of the transcripts and have added a whole new dimension to this

study, which I had not planned. Their narratives present a glimpse of the far reaching consequences of racism post 9/11 in the lives of the focus group participants.

Speaking from personal experience, I was overwhelmed by what was happening around me post 9/11. For a while, I found it difficult to process viewpoints conflicting with mine on this issue. When my child came from school one day and told me, innocently, that he did not want to go and visit family in Pakistan because he would become a terrorist and then might not be allowed back into Canada, my heart sank into a bottomless pit. I reduced my interaction with non Muslim friends, and increased socialization within Muslim circles where I did not feel targeted. Dealing with my own anger, fear and frustration over the past four years has not been easy, be it on the hundreds of thousands dying in Iraq, US backed operations in Pakistan, or the social exclusion faced by Muslim friends in Vancouver. I was therefore anxious to know how these experiences had impacted the focus group participants. Participant responses have been categorized under themes of guilt and responsibility, narratives of fear and silencing, insecurity in wake of security legislation, powerlessness to shake a sense of othering, inability to grieve a personal loss, and self critique and strategies for action.

"My heart sank. My whole spirit sank..." Narratives of Fear

Irene Shen (2003) addresses the issue of how fear "stymies the depth at which discussions about race and ethnicity can happen" (p.61). Oppression works through creating and sustaining fear in the oppressed groups: fear to claim their innocence and equal rights, and to verbalize their experience of racism. Fear is a human – physical and emotional- response to danger but when fear is experienced systematically and over a period of time, the consequences are far reaching.

When facing institutional and systemic racism, fear of the power differential is extremely hard to overcome, but not impossible one small step at a time. Through my work over the past sixteen months as a constituency assistant to a Member of Parliament in Burnaby, BC I have witnessed firsthand the heightened sense of fear felt by the city's Muslim residents. Many faced prolonged delays in processing of their citizenship applications but were too afraid to make an enquiry; others faced 'repeated' fingerprinting and CSIS "background checks" leaving them with uncertain immigration status for years; many reported racial profiling in their dealings with public offices and enforcement officials. It has been argued from the other side that the balance to hold between safety for all groups and optimal liberty for the group under suspicion, in this case Muslims, is a fine one to hold at all time leading to breaches in some instances which should not be termed as structural racism. I still

believe, however, that when policies impact one group more than others, a critical examination into the potential for underlying racism is vital.

It was difficult for me culturally to probe male participant's fears around racism, as ours is mostly a culture of gender segregation. However, a couple of participants were more extrovert and helped other male participants to verbalize their own fear. These words echo one male participant's deep sense of fear: "My heart sank. My whole spirit sank. You have this sinking feeling that oh no, please god don't let this be Muslims." A female participant was still in hospital after the birth of her son two days before 9/11 and describes how fear mixed with post partum depression for her in those early weeks after a nurse's suggestion:

> A nurse came and said why don't you turn on the TV? I said, 'oh I am already very busy.' And she said, 'oh you should, there is big news there concerning you. Ten o clock in the morning when I turned it on, and I was really scared. Because at the time they were showing everything. I was really scared. I don't know, perhaps because of the post partum also, after the birth of the kids, the first two weeks I was really scared and I wouldn't turn on the TV at home or call anyone...

Some students and parents at a local Muslim school reported being afraid to wear their headscarves, a part of the school uniform, on their way to and back from school, and would take off their *hijab* when they left the school premises. A participant, who was previously a student at a local Muslim school recalls going on school field trips after 9/11 with the girls wearing their head scarves, and several

people staring and frowning at them. The students found a way to overcome their fear and discomfort: they stared and frowned right back!

This fear was also evident in unease while traveling post 9/11, which one male participant described as one of the tensest experiences of his life. He describes how carefully he dressed as he tried to fit into an acceptable "businessman" image for airport enforcement authorities' benefit: "I dressed up. I put on my glasses so I could look professional. I mean it was funny. The whole way I approached it was that I tried to present a certain persona. Nothing to do with me. But just something that will get me through the border."

Fears also contributed to a loss of balance and control for several participants. Women spoke about a sense of unease and uncertainty, and a lurking fear which they could not ascribe to anything. One person felt himself to be in a general state of apprehension post 9/11 explaining it as follows:

> It just felt like that balance that we had found had gone. And it wasn't something that you had control over. Something that you didn't know when it was going to end and when it was going to be gone. And what form it was going to take on and I think there was a sense of a complete loss of control. The relative oasis that we live in, of peace and pluralism, was being threatened.

Fear of expressing political opinions was brought up by several participants, particularly males and persons associated with Muslim associations and schools. Fear can lead to silence, and I got a taste of this time and time again, when people

would contact me as participants, ask some questions, and then pull back. Why was I conducting this research? How could I ensure confidentiality given the fact that government authorities had sweeping powers to investigate anyone and anything in the name of a terrorist threat? One even asked me if I had something to do with CSIS or was conducting this research on the government's behalf. I would hastily assure them that participation was completely voluntary, and that only limited confidentiality was ensured in a focus group setting, but that I would never use any names or identification in my analysis. Twice, I had arranged focus groups, and half the participants did not turn up and later apologized that they decided that they were not comfortable talking about such a sensitive topic. One prospective participant did not wish to be deported from Canada for saying negative things about his adopted country and its ruling majority. When one internalizes oppression, it leads to silencing and further oppression, a theory detailed by several feminist and anti oppression writers (Mullaly, 2002; Young, 1988; Dossa, 2004). This, therefore, could be a limitation of this study that instances of racism were underreported due to fear of reprisal and loss of opportunity.

The participants' accounts corroborated my experiences, as there was general consensus in all groups that fear and insecurity continue to impact their everyday lives. Participants' feelings of fear ranged from a sense of vulnerability to an overwhelming feeling terror of being targeted as a terrorist other. Taking a socio-

historical perspective of racism in BC, this fear is also rooted in BC's blatantly racist immigration history against the Chinese, Sikh and Japanese populations during earlier phases of their settlement in BC, not to forget the treatment meted out to the Aboriginal populations in BC (Fleras and Elliott, 1999). Muslims are new migrants in BC with most of the population still being first generation immigrants, coming in the eighties and nineties (Abu Laban, 2002). Their vulnerability in a new place combines with historical examples of structural as well as systemic racism, and social hostility towards them post 9/11 to rationalize and sustain their fears. Linked to the fears, therefore, are their insecurities stemming from possible racial profiling in enforcement agencies, and their limited knowledge of how the new security legislation post 9/11 could impact them.

A heightened sense of insecurity

Helly (2004) cites how changes in Canadian legislation have added to the sense of insecurity of Canada's Muslims through CSIS and RCMP attempts to trace and seek information from people active within the Muslim community or from people having precarious immigration status such as foreign students and refugee applicants. CAIR-CAN (2004) reports have corroborated this assertion through its own surveys. These findings are interestingly in stark contrast to a detailed research undertaken by Research and Statistics Division of Justice Canada (Goldfarb, 2004)

regarding Canadians' perceptions on the Anti Terrorism Act. Mixed race participants in 22 focus groups across Canada felt that the Act was "nice to have" and that the risks in adopting the Anti-terrorism Act with additional powers to enforcement authorities were acceptable for the "greater good of society" (p. 38). On the other hand, heightened feelings of insecurity were reported by participants with reference to Canadian government's policy measures post 9/11. This contrast in itself is an indicator of the partial way in which Canadian legislation post 9/11 is being perceived by and impacting its Muslim population.

Several participants expressed a deep sense of insecurity following the deportation to Syria of Maher Arar in 2002 and the use of security certificates against five permanent residents and refugees of Muslim background. The prospective loss of legal rights was a cause of great worry, in particular for single males and persons involved with Muslim associations. As one participant commented, "When you are arrested, you are taken away to some place; you can't find any lawyer to defend yourself. These laws should be not that strict that you are taken away to another country. Like, if I am taken to my home country without any reason..." Another participant spoke about the insecurity that law enforcement authorities continuously evoked in him as a single male, after he had been questioned a few times. His quote describes in a vivid manner how this sense of

insecurity is tied to a fear of instantly losing one's freedom, and that in the current

state this may mean losing all rights including seeing their family:

> It is very shocking because you feel very nervous. You feel like if he charges you
> with something, he is going to deport you, and you are gone forever. He can
> detain you without putting any charges, and he is not answerable to any one.
> And he might not even tell your family. He might even be extra eager to make
> some connections and put some dots together, and put you in.

Several people reported feeling insecure about their religious affiliation vis-à-vis

enforcement officials, and this participant's words provide an example of how a sense

of insecurity has permeated almost every aspect of his life post 9/11:

> We always say that our life is not the same anymore. Osama has made life very
> difficult for all of us. It is just not the same. Totally. We feel a lot more insecure. I
> mean this is insecurity that you are scared at your workplace if enquired about
> your religion. We are made to feel that our religion should not be a part of you. It
> should not show on your resume. You can't show any involvement with Islam.
> Even though you are the most pious Muslim and practicing one too, but I still
> cannot show a positive link. That is of course a big insecurity.

Some male participants disclosed that while undertaking job searches, they were

more insecure about their religious affiliation than about their own credentials and

strengths of their resumes. Two young males reported the changes they made to

their resumes and job applications to dissociate from their Muslim culture and identity.

One male, applying for accounting jobs in Vancouver, was advised to delete a quote

from a famous Muslim poet from his resume, for fear it could be misconstrued. Another applicant deleted his affiliation and experience with a Muslim student association and a Pakistani student association from his resume due to similar fears, "It is about tact. Why throw something in other's faces which will come back to hurt you?" remarked the person in question. This, once again, points towards the insecurity that affiliations with Islam brings for these people.

Many were quick to point out the sense of insecurity as not being confined to the Muslims, and acknowledged the fears of white Canadians as equally genuine in the post 9/11 milieu. "We would be afraid too of something we did not know much about, and which was being portrayed by the media and through state legislation as a religion of terrorists and fanatics," commented one person associated with a Muslim association. "Our rights to religious associations and schools have been given to us by the majority population in Canada; we have been given this privilege and we should be grateful," remarked a participant associated with a Muslim school.

Identity formation as the Other

Mullaly (2002) asserts that racism (as a form of oppression) imposes a group identity on the subordinate group marking them as the Other, from which they have no escape. Young (1988) asserts that "women and men of colour must prove their respectability in daily interchange" and are powerless to shake the marginalization

of the Other imposed upon them (p. 284). This identity is reinforced through the media, education system, literature and politics, making the targeted group feel invisible, marked, demeaned or not taken seriously, and inhibiting the development of healthy identities and associations (Mullaly, 2002).

Enns (2004) writes about how British Columbia's Muslim population has felt "othered" by the reinforced stereotypes in local discourse post 9/11. *Vancouver Sun* headlines such as "Militant Islamic extremists live among us," "Europe faces web of Islamic terrorists," Muslims urged to join *jehad*," further strengthened the image of Muslims as exotic others who were far away – not Canadian Muslims, and "certainly not our friend, neighbour, and coworker" (Enns, 2004:13). Several participants corroborated this assertion of feeling like outsiders despite being Canadian citizens and permanent residents. One male spoke about feeling segregated from mainstream society since 9/11: "You feel segregated from other society. If you are a Chinese, Buddhist, Jew, Christian, you can feel that they are on one side and you and the Muslims are on the other side."

Male participants became emotional talking about the reactions to this identity continuously being forced on them. Stereotypes, it was asserted, had the impact of perpetuating the myth, and people internalized these images and the oppression associated with them. Two male participants spoke about how powerless they felt in

shaking this extraneous identity of Muslims as the "terrorist other" formed for them by sources too powerful for them:

> You start to feel more powerless in terms of shaking that identity. The truth is that in response to 9/11, you have had multiple atrocities carried out by United States and the so called coalition against Iraq, against Afghanistan. And certainly Israel has used this as an excuse to construct its wall, but still we are the terrorists.

Negative media portrayal of Muslims also added to their powerlessness, and they felt that they could not face up to the power of discourse. One older male's comments were particularly insightful in this regard as he sought to offer possible explanations for the mindset of Muslims associated with pro-violence organizations: "You know when you push it, so much, out of anger or sheer absorption; you say yes I am a killer. And then all of a sudden, it perpetuates that myth. That myth becomes a reality."

One male participant spoke about the feeling that "one had to self identify as the Other (read Muslim) post 9/11. Something that felt like an additional burden to carry." These comments are a reflection of how one can take on an identity that is artificially created or imposed on you. If you are identified as a group with terrorism, you can intensely take on that identity, or be silenced by its weight.

One female participant spoke about the impact of 9/11 on her social interaction and the heightened sense of responsibility she felt as a Muslim woman for her actions and social interaction post 9/11:

> Now when I meet my friends who are not Muslim, I am more aware of what I do, what I say. Now I have to keep in my mind that I am Muslim. Not just a woman....we are more conscious of who we are. I don't feel any thing at my son's school. People are very nice and my friends understand. But inside my heart, I am always careful that whatever I do I am presenting the Muslim woman. So I better be careful.

A vital impact of racism, therefore, is the feeling of exclusion or 'being the Other' experienced by targeted groups. Said (2001: 2) succinctly rejects exclusionary socio-political systems in the world post 9/11: "Demonisation of the Other is not a sufficient basis for any kind of decent politics, certainly not now when the roots of terror in injustice can be addressed, and the terrorists isolated, deterred or put out of business."

"A sense of being outed": Feeling guilty and responsible

Systemic and institutional racism defines and labels a social group, assigning negative attributes to it as a whole, directing policy measures and hostile attitudes against them, leading group members to internalize oppression and feel guilty and responsible for their own situation. As Fanon (1967) asserts, "All those white men in

a group, guns in their hands, cannot be wrong. I am guilty. I do not know of what, but I know that I am no good" (in Mullaly, 2002:62).

Focus group participants spoke on more than one occasion about the "guilt of facing the world", a sense of "collective guilt", and a sense of "being outed in some sense". It was a sense of their private lives gone "irreversibly public." "You were being held guilty with no chance to prove your innocence," remarked one participant. A few indulged in extreme self persecution by shutting themselves from electronic and print media. At least one woman and two men talked about not turning on the TV for weeks. Others chose to keep a very low profile and not be seen in public in those early days." I felt like I didn't want to talk to anyone. Not to go out and confront people as a Muslim." Persons associated with a local Muslim school felt particularly targeted and "guilty by association with the school" in those days. As one student remarked, "we were being made to feel guilty about openly practicing our religion in a very indirect, indescribable manner. Not by anyone, but by the subtle hostility in the environment."

Two participants reported being made to feel guilty, even when they were not feeling so themselves, and felt helpless to fight it. "Any thing that now happens any where in the world, the first thing that comes to my mind is that they are going to blame Muslims for that. So we are guilty and threatened," felt one woman. A single male participant spoke passionately about how he was made to feel guilty about

loving his religion: "I can't say any thing about Islam or being a Muslim or being proud of it. You are stepping on your own toes. If you want to say I am a Muslim, you have to denounce first who those people were, you are not a part of that, and then you are Muslim…" This guilt was sometimes communicated in subtle ways to participants: "Somehow there was a feeling that you had to give some explanation to the people. Like other communities are suspicious about you. Although they didn't give any direct indication about it. But you can feel what they have on their mind." One female participant recalled this conversation with a Caucasian friend:

> She asked me, "Do you feel guilty about this whole incident?" And I was like, "why should I feel guilty because of a handful of people, they don't even represent me. They don't even have information." People think that we are guilty as a Muslim but I don't think so.

For some people, this guilt will manifest itself permanently in some ways. This quote reflects the strong sense of guilt as well as loss that this participant would be living with for the rest of his life for changing his first name Mohammad:

> It's a guilt inside me. I never wanted to change that name, in fact I loved it. But somehow I wanted to go for an interview at least. So I changed my name….I still feel, I did the wrong thing. I never wanted to eliminate that name. And you know, when you lose your identity, you lose the names first. Then your language and all those things. I felt that I had lost this identity of mine. Like, of myself a little bit.

This participant's guilt is compounded by the fact that he is being silenced, and somehow forced to "erase" his name, an important marker of his cultural identity. He also carries the fear of losing more than a name in the long run – his identity.

"An utter feeling of sickness" and inability to grieve a loss

Descriptions of grief and loss came up on more than one occasion with some participants mourning the fact that they were not allowed to grieve a personal loss. People spoke of "an extraordinary sense of loss", loss of control, peace and balance. "I felt ill the day it happened. I mean my body felt sick," remarked one person. A male participant spoke of "an utter feeling of sickness – kind of soul destroying" in the days following 9/11 which he could not share with anyone. "It was almost as if there had been a family death but you, as the family outcast, could not show your grief," reflected a female participant. Another male participant's words reflect a deep sense of loss at losing New York which he remembered from his childhood as a 'Muslim city':

> My wife and I, we went for our honeymoon to New York City. So I actually see it as a Muslim city, for a lot of my formative experiences in terms of my identity as a Muslim happened in New York city. Visiting various mosques and communities of people. So it really was and still is an extraordinary loss for me. This loss was felt with such intensity on the day it happened and the first few days thereafter…

Self critique and Strategies for Action

Participants, on more than one occasion, came up with proactive suggestions for the Muslim Diaspora to work on their issues. The women spoke about "portraying your self in the best possible way" on more than one occasion, whereas the men spoke about taking responsibility for one's actions and increased interaction and dialogue with other communities to fight and break stereotypes. One female participant touched on the immigrant mentality of setting high expectations from their children to excel in certain professions only

> We as Muslims should go and look for jobs in media (laughs). We are raising our kids thinking they will be doctor or engineer and that is it. They don't want to go and look for other jobs in arts, politics, journalism, RCMP etc. They are really lacking Muslim people in those fields. Why do we always want our kids to be doctors and engineers?

On a similar note, male participants lamented the lack of vision in local Muslim leadership as having an inward looking outlook," The lack of participation in political process, public space, is a huge problem. There needs to be a proactive participation. And I think also, the Muslim organizations need to give power to young people who have grown up in Canada. "

Both male and female participants seemed acutely aware of the value of self reflection and self criticism for Vancouver's Muslim diaspora. Their solutions were seeking dialogue, and increased awareness of their shortcomings and weaknesses

as active political actors in the community. They seemed able to separate their fears and concerns from their weaknesses and prejudices. Such critical self-reflection is the first step to better understanding of and coping with differences. As one participant aptly reflected: "my family has become much more vigilant in terms of how we look at the Muslim community and some of the things that they say and do. We need to take hold of our faith and project the image that we feel represents us as opposed to allowing other people to hijack the religion.

Several participants were critical that Muslims in BC were a "closed community" with very little social interaction with other cultures outside of their workplaces. One male member attributed it to the new immigrant status and unfamiliarity with the dominant culture: "We people normally are studying or working and do not socialize. I think if you are in touch with other people more often, than you can convey your feelings, your viewpoint. I think we should definitely have more interaction." Another female participant attributed her community's limited intercultural interaction to a clash of values and a fear of losing a part of their religion, which leads to concerted efforts to maintain a traditional social setup within their homes:

> We as a Muslim are scared to interact also. Other communities have different values, they drink and all those things, in Islam you have to wear scarf and not socialize across genders. They have got different way of interacting. Somehow we are scared that by interacting, we are going to lose our values. This is not going to happen. We can retain our values even with interaction. Of course you

can have some distance, and limitations, but still you cannot solve the issues without interacting.

The preceding discussion clearly shows the serious implications of racism for racialized groups, going beyond just bad employment or social interaction experiences, but extended social suffering in the form of fears, insecurities, guilt, Othering, loss of identity, and internalized oppression. As Mullaly (2002: 162) quotes Wineman aptly:

Racism attacks the core of people's sense of their own value, and it ultimately attacks their right to exist... when you are taught that you are inherently inferior, you are taught in the same breath that you are inherently powerless.

Concluding Thoughts

The thread that links this narrative starting from my own theoretical understanding of racism, to the experiences and perceptions of focus group participants, is the assertion that racism continues to be an underground but strong guiding force in today's Canadian political and social structures (Mullaly, 2002), be it government policies, media stereotypes, or individual practices in personal, professional and business realms. As Winant (2004) aptly put it: "racial globalism, racial difference, and racial justice are among our most fundamental political challenges today (p. 205)." In the post 9/11 milieu, Canadian Muslims are a racialized community, portrayed with racial stereotypes in the media, targeted by legislation, and suffering from everyday and systemic racism. The participants of this study present a vivid and sensitive vignette in this regard.

It is clear that the focus group participants experienced racism in its various forms post 9/11, and continue to grapple with its grave impacts on their lives. They have faced racial profiling by enforcement authorities, racialization as a community associated with terrorism, racial jokes, harassment and discrimination at their workplace, difficult travel experiences, insecurity about their status despite being

citizens and permanent residents of Canada, as well as a sense of social exclusion and invisible social walls.

The experiences and perceptions narrated by the participants of the four groups were along similar lines with some differences by gender and location. Single males felt more targeted as compared to women and older men with regards to security and enforcement officials. Persons associated with Muslim schools and associations came across as being the most insecure, and very hesitant to talk on this issue. Women generally felt more positive about their situation, assessing the hurdles they have faced post 9/11 as practical fallout of a difficult situation.

On a positive note, racism was not the only reality that participants experienced. Many acknowledged that in a hostile world post-9/11, they were a lot better off as Muslims in Canada as compared to anywhere else in the Western world. Where 9/11 opened the doors for racism, it also paved the way for solidarity (across racial lines) and in some cases for a desire to learn about Muslim's spirituality. This being said, the extent and nature of this racialization must be brought forth into the conscious political realm. The purpose is also not to belittle the enormous gains in terms of minority rights in Canada in the past few decades. Whereas, Canadian immigration policy was blatantly racist till even the 1960's, now nearly two thirds of new immigrants coming every year to Canada are visible minority immigrants. Within BC, Chinese and Sikh communities have come a long way from the times of *Koma*

Gata Maru and the Chinese Head Tax (Fleras and Elliott, 1999). It is vital to continue to raise critical consciousness regarding racism experienced by Canadian Muslims, and its impacts in terms of social suffering, as acknowledging a problem exists is the important first step towards addressing it.

Also, as identified by the participants, the efforts of Muslims to interact and integrate in Canadian society can also go a long way to reduce racism. The Muslims of BC, as recent immigrants, are still unsure of their rights, hesitant to mingle with a vastly different dominant culture, and caught in an unprecedented post 9/11 situation. More critical self reflection, consciousness raising, and political participation wherever possible, will go a long way in breaking stereotypes and fighting systemic and structural racism.

The implications of this research for social work practice in Canada can be vital and far reaching. Many social workers continue to be afraid to connect the dots between the personal and the political, at times overwhelmed by their workload and at others feeling that connection to be outside the purview of their work. It is my sincere hope through this work to strongly present the importance of this connection between the personal and the structural, taking the case in point of Muslims as a racialized community post 9/11. It is vital for social work practitioners at both the micro and macro levels to be aware of political issues impacting racialized communities, and to research these issues in an interactive and empowering

manner, reflecting their ideological commitment to social change. Hopefully, this work is an effort in that direction, and can encourage others to undertake similar efforts at positive change. I am, therefore, reaching out to my fellow social workers to consider research as a very powerful tool for social transformation. It is my hope that this study will encourage them to recognize the covert and subtle ways in which policies, institutions and individuals practice racism. I also invite them to review their own interaction with clients and/or Muslims in light of the participants' experiences.

Increased knowledge and critique of existing Canadian policies impacting new immigrants and refugees of visible minority back ground is another contribution of this research, which can serve to add to the knowledge base of settlement as well as political social workers, while further highlighting the link between public policy and social work practice. It will also add to the cultural competence of social workers adding to their knowledge of the Muslim community, and its dilemmas post 9/11.

Though on a limited scale and with very little claim to generalizability, this study adds depth to the few existing analyses on the subject. It has no strings of government or Muslim associations funding attached, and has no official guidelines or mandates within which to work. It therefore provides a valuable and independent resource to social workers, political offices, social services as well as settlement

service organizations in BC, and community based organizations serving the Muslim community in the GVRD, and would deepen their understanding of the issues, both perceived and practical, that this community is facing post 9/11.

Further, this study can prove to be a valuable addition to Canadian anti-racism literature and in highlighting racism as an ongoing issue of concern for social work practice in our world post 9/11. The recent attacks in London in July 2005 and the ensuing backlash against British Muslims are a stark reminder of the importance and relevance of such studies for social workers working at different levels of practice. Further, for social worker students wishing to understand the impact of racism on a racialized community, this study provides a simple, personal, and powerful example.

Racism, like all oppressions, connects the personal to the political in our lives in an essentially negative and destructive manner. It is internalized in every day interaction, conveyed in stereotypes, and inscribed in legal measures to sustain the power of the dominant group. In its extreme form it unleashes horrendous violence. Edward Said (2001: 1) wrote poignantly in an article written days after 9/11, and I am honoured to quote him in conclusion:

> 'Islam' and 'the West' are simply inadequate as banners to follow blindly. Some will run behind them, but for future generations to condemn themselves to prolonged war and suffering without so much as a critical pause, without looking

at interdependent histories of injustice and oppression, without trying for common emancipation and mutual enlightenment seems far more willful than necessary. It takes patience and education, but is more worth the investment than still greater levels of large-scale violence and suffering.

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A p p e n d i x 1 : P o s t e r / A d v e r t i s e m e n t

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Study on Perceptions and experiences of Vancouver's Muslims post September 11, 2001.

The Muslim Community has become highly visible after the attacks of September 11, 2001 and faces the challenges of racism, security and inclusion. Is Canada an exception to this hostility or the situation is no different here than in the rest of the Western world?

You are invited to be part of Focus Group discussions to explore your experiences and perceptions regarding racism, security, and inclusion in Canadian society post September 11, 2001, to be held in the coming weeks. This research is being conducted by a Masters of Social Work student at the UBC School of Social Work and Family Studies.

You must be an **adult Muslim and a resident of the Greater Vancouver Regional District for atleast the past year**. Participation would require **only two hours of your time on one given day** in February or March 2004. Date for the

Appendix 2: Letter of Contact

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Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-2255   Fax: (604) 822-8656
www.swfs.ubc.ca

Study on Perceptions and Experiences of Vancouver's Muslims on racism post September 11, 2001

Dear Participant,

We are writing to invite you to be part of a study on the perceptions and experiences of the Muslim Community of GVRD post September 11, 2001, conducted by a Masters of Social Work Student, Ayesha Haider at the UBC School of Social Work and Family Studies as part of her degree requirements. This study is not funded by any source.

The study comprises of interviews and focus group discussions with Muslims of Greater Vancouver Regional District focusing on their experiences, both short term and long term, after September 11, 2001, and how their lives have been impacted. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and your decision to participate or not will have no bearing what so ever on any professional links you might have with the researcher.

If you agree to be interviewed, we would require up to one hour of your time, the discussion would be audio taped and notes taken.

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 your [employment, class standing, access to further services from the community centre, day care, etc.].

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.

_____

Participant signature   **Date**

_____

Printed Name of the Subject