

Believing and Belonging:

The Everyday Lives of Muslim Youth in Canada

Nabila Fatima Munawar

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Sociology of the London School of Economics

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

London, United Kingdom

May 2017

DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis I have presented for the examination of the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others.

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Quotation from it is permitted provided that full acknowledgement is made. In accordance with the Regulations, I have deposited an electronic copy of it in LSE Theses Online held by the British Library of Political and Economic Science and have granted permission for my thesis to be made available for public reference.

Otherwise, this thesis may not be reproduced without my prior written consent.

I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

I declare that my thesis consists of 99,997 words.

Statement of use of third parties for editorial help:

I can confirm that my thesis was copy-edited for formatting, language, spelling and grammar by Abdul-Rehman Malik, Tim Monteath, Daniel McArthur, Jason Yan, Katarina Hecht, Antonia Dawes and Malcolm James.

ABSTRACT

The ongoing debate around radicalisation, citizenship, refugees, and religious accommodation have posed serious questions about the nature of belonging and the loyalty of Muslim youth within Canada. Adding to that, foiled terrorist incidents by young men with Muslim backgrounds in Canada have shone the spotlight squarely on young Muslims. As such, the importance of examining the way that issues/debates around immigration, security, religion, race and belonging are impacting on the lives of Muslim youth has grown.

Mainstream Canadian public opinion has grown increasingly suspicious, hostile and fearful of young Muslims. Perceptions of young Muslims operate in a highly racialised context as Islamophobia grows not only in mainstream Canadian society but also within the Muslim community itself. Inclusions and exclusions have begun to develop around questions of ethnicity and race, refugees, migrants and ‘homegrown’ Canadian Muslims, and the fear of the ‘other’.

Within this climate, young Muslims continue to live their everyday lives. This thesis explores the lives of Muslim youth and the way they articulate and perform their ideas around belonging and ‘believing’, as Muslims, as they permeate the minutiae of everyday life in Canada. From the mall to the mosque, from the club to the football pitch – these everyday occurrences problematise common-sense understandings of Muslim youth in Canada.

In 2011-2013, I conducted 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork in youth clubs, malls, mosques, cafes and the spaces young Muslims frequent in Toronto, Hamilton, Halton, and other areas in Southern Ontario. My participants were youth who identified as Muslim, who were both male and female, and who came from diverse backgrounds, histories, diasporic communities, ethnicities, class positioning, and levels of ‘religiosity’. Through this, I tell a story of the nature of everyday life for Muslim youth, and the ways in which they negotiate

their identities and sense of belonging in Canada. I argue that this intersectional approach is necessary in order to understand how race, class, faith, gender and age intersect and overlap on an everyday level to illustrate what being young and Muslim looks and feels like in Canada. Religion is often seen as a defining feature of Muslim youths' lives; however, in this thesis I illustrate that young Muslims' lives can be complex, messy and fluid where different parts of their identities become important according to the context in which they find themselves at different moments. Therefore, central to this work are ideas of belonging, home and faithfulness. In addition, this thesis considers the role of spirituality in Muslim youths' lives and how it can imbue the way they see themselves, the worlds in which they live, and their ideas of home.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my doctoral supervisor, Dr Suki Ali, for her continued support, guidance and dedication during this entire process. I would not have been able to do this work without the level of respect and consideration she showed towards the sensitive nature of my research. I would also like to thank Dr Claire Alexander who was also my supervisor for this research. Both of their work inspired my own, and no doubt will continue to inspire me moving forward. I am also grateful to the Department of Sociology at the London School of Economics for partially funding my studies and providing me with the opportunity to learn and work within a space of high academic standards and at the same time around people such whose work is both politically and intellectually inspiring. This also introduced me to a network of academics, such as REPS and Professor Paul Gilroy, whose work and support in particular was extremely influential in my research and vision. Thank you.

This thesis would have not been possible without the young people who took part in this study. This group of amazing individuals welcomed me into their lives and hearts, often sharing things with me that many of them found difficult and painful. I have been thinking about you all as I write this thesis and how generous you were not only with your time but with your friendship, care and affection. You have taught me enormous lessons about what it is to lead a life full of purpose and hope. This is for you.

I am also indebted to to my all friends and for their continued encouragement and motivation through the years. I would especially like to thank my sociology fam: Naaz Rashid, Pantea Javidan, Sanjiv Lingayah, Liene Ozoline, Helen Kim, Linda Lund Pedersen, Jesse Potter, Victoria Redcliff and Rian Mulcahy. I also want to thank Kristina Kolbe, Tim Monteath, Selena

Gray and Daniel McArthur who have been so supportive, encouraging and very patient with the abysmal state of my workspace. Many thanks go to Ravteg Dhesi and Jude Saverus for being there and making me laugh all the way through. Thank you also to Michael Waters for your wit, support and friendship.

I am extremely grateful to Dr Antonia Dawes and Dr Malcolm James for their belief in me, their love, unwavering support, and for their friendship, which I simply could not do without. Apologies for the late night freak outs which were always entertained and then rightfully put to rest. On that note, thank you also to Fareena Alam, Shireen Ahmed, Shida Salehi, Silvia Asirelli, Marie and Luke Watson for being there for me.

As always, special thanks to the Malik Family. Thank you Ausma for your optimism and straight talking and to Aiysha for always looking out for me and never contemplating defeat and keeping me laughing. Thank you to Abdul-Rehman for being my brother and friend and support through everything – and for all the coffees, encouragement, lunches and taxis which I will never pay you back for. Without you, I couldn't have done this. And without those coffees, I wouldn't have had the energy.

Thank you Andrew. I can't express how grateful I am for your support and care. You made this place a home. Thank you for your joie de vivre, for making me laugh whatever the circumstances and reminding me that life is more than what we do. Thanks for putting up with it all and believing wholeheartedly that I could accomplish anything. You continue to inspire me.

To my big, beautiful and wonderful family. I'll start with my grandparents who taught me that whatever I do - to try to do good in this world and to my aunts, uncles and cousins for their consistent support. I especially would like to thank Lateef Mamu and fam for being my home away from home, to my late Siraj Mamu and his family – to my loves, Fatima, Maryam, Zaynab

and Kusloom for being my everything for as long as I can remember. Prayers and gratitude to Khalajaan and my late uncle, Syed Salman who helped raise me and taught me so much about kindness, love and justice.

To my siblings, Saberina and Ahmad who supported me in thousands of ways. I truly don't deserve you – I could not have any of this without you. Our experiences growing up are written through these pages, through the stories of these Muslim youth that are in many ways our story too. I could never express how grateful I am for everything you've done for me. Much love to my nieces and nephews – Zaynab, Fatima, Khadija, Omar, Ibraheem, Mustafa and Zahra. You are the light of my eyes. Also grateful for the wonderful humans that are my sister-in-law, Asima and my brother-in-law, Farooq Bhai for their advice, love and for putting up with me.

Last, and most importantly, I owe every good thing in my life to my parents. Thank you Mummy and Daddy for always supporting me even if it was difficult for you. For teaching me that dreams are important and worth striving for. For moving to Canada and building a life for all of us and for never leaving us wanting for anything, least of all love, which above all - was abundant and enduring. Thank you for all your sacrifices and for teaching me that no matter what you do in life, you should try to make the world better and that we should also all try to be better people. My world is always better and meaningful because of you. Thank you for your strength, spiritual guidance, beauty and love. This thesis, my dearest parents - is dedicated to you.

If I have shed any light, brought out any truths or insights about the lives of Muslim youth, about the everyday struggles and joys these young people experienced – in the words of brother Malcolm - “all of the credit is due to God. Only the mistakes have been mine”. -
Malcolm X

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	2
ABSTRACT	3
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	5
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	13
Researching Muslim Youth in everyday life	13
Canadian Context.....	17
September 11th and The Toronto 18	20
Statistical Data About Muslims in Canada	24
Brief Demographics of Muslims in Canada	25
Breakdown of Canadian Muslims by Minority Group	25
Practice of Islam	26
Age of Canadian Muslims	26
Key Literature	27
Islam and Muslims in Canada	27
Muslim Youth	29
Canadian Multiculturalism	39
Multiculturalism and Faith	40
Conceptual Themes.....	44
“Muslimness”	46
Muslimness as a Praxis.....	48
Political Muslimness.....	49
Social/Cultural Muslimness.....	51
Spirituality and Muslimness	54
Identity.....	55

Identity, Religion and New Ethnicities	57
Belonging	60
Social Location.....	60
National Belongings.....	62
Diasporic Belongings	63
Intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, class and age	65
CHAPTER OUTLINES	69
Chapter 2: Setting the Scene.....	69
Chapter 3: All Routes Lead to Home	70
Chapter 4: Hanging out	70
Chapter 5: More than a Feeling	70
Chapter 6: Alchemies	71
CHAPTER TWO: SETTING THE SCENE	72
Methodological Approach and Immersing into the Field	72
Immersing Myself in the Field	75
Methodological Approach	77
Participant-observation (PO).....	79
In-depth Interviews.....	80
Social networks and texting	83
Defining the Sites.....	87
Gatekeepers, Friendlies and ‘Un-friendlies’	88
Geographical Location.....	89
Field Sites	90
New Generation Youth Centre (NGen)	90
Halton Muslim Youth Club (HY).....	93

The Muslim Interscholastic Tournament, Toronto Chapter (MIST)	95
Shopping Malls	98
Multi-sites.....	102
Rumours and Religiosity.....	103
Ethics.....	107
Anonymity and Confidentiality	110
CHAPTER THREE: ALL ROUTES LEAD TO HOME	112
Utopian narratives, diasporic journeys and new belongings	112
Arrivals	120
Participants.....	122
On Canada	140
The Environics Survey.....	140
Canadian Multiculturalism	143
The Myth of Diffidence – Canada’s Soft Nationalism	144
The Politics of National Belonging.....	146
Making Canada Home	149
Abdi	150
Cold Shoulder	152
“I. Am. Canadian.”	154
Canada Day, 2012.....	155
Who is Canadian?	157
Senior Prom.....	159
Concluding Thoughts.....	163
CHAPTER FOUR: HANGING OUT	168
Finding Belonging in Local Spaces	168

Local Spaces, Diverse Histories	172
No Money, no Problem?	180
Buffers	184
The Mall	189
Hanging Out at Mapleview Mall.....	190
Insta-fame	199
“That’s Ghetto”	207
Rose-coloured watches	212
Hanging out in the Food Court, Jackson’s Square.....	219
Getting Around	230
Public Transport	232
Cars.....	237
The Convenience of Cars.....	238
Concluding Thoughts.....	246
CHAPTER FIVE: “MORE THAN A FEELING”	249
The Role of Spirituality in Everyday Life	249
Positioning Spiritualities.....	255
Spiritual Identities	258
Cultural Identity and Spirituality	263
Moments of Connection	266
Matters of the Heart	268
Connection to the Divine.....	273
Duty to Parents.....	284
Community.....	289
September 11, 2011.....	293

Mustafa	296
Schisms	297
Fate, and Finding Home	299
Fate.....	299
Home	302
Concluding Thoughts.....	308
CONCLUSION: ALCHEMIES	310
On the Future of Muslim Youth in Canada	312
This Research.....	314
Contributions to the field	319
Closing Thoughts: Future Considerations	325
REFERENCES	329
APPENDIX I.....	352
List of Figures.....	352
APPENDIX II.....	353
Participant Biographies	353

The following images have been redacted as the copyright is owned by another organisation.

Photos, page 190

Photos page 219

Map page 230

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Researching Muslim Youth in everyday life

On October 20, 2015, Justin Trudeau gave his victory speech after a decisive win over Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper, ending the latter's ten-year period in office. Trudeau's speech echoed the one his father, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, had given 44 years before, when he declared that Canada would adopt an official multicultural policy, recognising and respecting the diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, language, religion and customs in Canadian society. Justin Trudeau echoed the same commitment to diversity and equity and pronounced that a 'new age' would begin where differences in race, gender ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion would not only be celebrated but protected. "We all come from somewhere else," he said. "We all believe different things but one thing we share is that we belong to this country, and this country belongs to us." The crowd went wild. He went on to talk about the recent hate attacks against Muslims that had happened and that were on the rise. Racist, Islamophobic incidents had increased in Canada within the previous year as fear of Isis, the *niqab* and the Muslim Other began to escalate once again. "That is not *my* Canada," stated Trudeau.

Canada has benefitted from an international reputation of being a model for multiculturalism (Adams, 2007) as many immigrants continue to choose Canada as their new home because they see it as a country that provides opportunity for all (ibid.). Although the story of Canada as a place where difference is celebrated and where all Canadians are equal is a compelling one,

this is not necessarily the way multiculturalism is lived on an everyday level in the hearts and minds of its inhabitants. This narrative has shifted notably in the last decade, especially as the sentiments celebrating difference have, on a policy and public discourse level, moved towards issues of management of difference and securitisation post September 11th, the current war on terror and most recently as we encounter the world's largest refugee crisis since the second world war (Guardian, August 10, 2015), which had already begun to take hold during the beginning of my fieldwork.

This has particularly impacted the way Muslim youth are seen and positioned in Canadian multiculturalism. While issues about the experiences of refugees are discussed in this research, issues concerned with radicalisation or violent extremism among Muslim youth in Canada are not. Contextually, the issue of radicalisation and extremism is touched upon where relevant here but this research is not about radicalisation and terrorism, mostly due in part that it was not a key issue that emerged from the data and fieldwork process.

Instead, this research is informed by an exploration of how intersections of race, class, gender, age and religion are encountered within the banal and mundaneness of everyday, ordinary life. Through ethnographic research and in-depth interviews, I followed a group of young Canadian Muslims between the ages of 15 and 24 from July 2011 to August 2013 as they led their daily lives, going to school and the mall and spending time with their families and friends living in the cities and suburbs of Southern Ontario and Toronto – the country's most ethnically diverse and densely populated region. This thesis explores their experiences and daily interactions, from the seemingly banal and mundane to the more extraordinary, as they go about their daily routine moving through the variety of times and physical spaces they inhabit. This group of young men and women consists of immigrants, refugees and those who were born and raised

in Canada, and ranges in terms of ethnicities, races, and levels of religious practice and beliefs. What became fundamental to the story that emerged from their accounts and the time we spent together was an understanding of how these young people negotiated multiple identities and performed notions of belonging within these different spaces of their daily lives. More importantly, it became clear that rather than being politicised by global events or alienated from Canadian society as the discourses I have highlighted above claim, they created new spaces of cultural production, articulations, and performances of Muslimness within the everyday spaces they inhabited.

In order to do this, it became necessary to focus on the everyday. I was interested in everydayness in the way that Back (1999, 2007) talks about young people negotiating belonging as they intersect through their various identifications and social locations through their movements through the areas they live in. I am also exploring the way young Muslims struggle to find belonging, whether it be space within the nation's imaginary, the local spaces they move through in their daily life or the spaces they hold dear, or the attachments to 'home' they *feel* within their hearts and minds. These daily expressions of Muslimness and the way they negotiate them can help us understand how intersections of race, age, gender, class and faith play into their ideas of belonging and their ability and will to belong and make do in situations of unequal power dynamics, where they are marginalised and where Muslim youth are treated with suspect. Throughout my fieldwork I observed young Muslims negotiating the world in novel and unique ways by using various forms of resistance and acceptance, and by negotiating their multiple identities within situations and encounters they experience in daily life. The ways participants sometimes also resisted belonging and conforming can be seen as resistances or 'tricks' and 'tactical raids' on the system (de Certeau, 1984). Although structures and hierarchies of power still exist and remain unchallenged, young Muslims have also attempted

in many ways to transrupt this order (Hesse, 2000). As a marginalised, racialised and subordinate group, these young people have tried to ‘make do’ with what they had (de Certeau, 1984; Fiske, 1990).

In their daily lives, young Muslims have found ways to do what they want and to have what they desire *as much as they could* even if they did not have the power or means. This is key to understanding how they find belonging and is broadening our understanding of the role their personal histories, pasts, presents and hopes for the future play in terms of their belonging and, crucially, the role their Muslimness plays in this. These experiences are not one-dimensional and are influenced by the impact that multi-racial immigration and faith has on identity, and the ways in which particular forms of religion are associated with geography and history, and personal narrative shapes notions of self and belonging. For example, a young, middle-class woman of Arab descent does not necessarily experience islamophobia in the same way as her male, Canadian-born, Somali working class peer, nor does she respond to it in the same way.

Young Muslims often face the same issues but negotiate them in particular ways according to their race, gender, class and religion and as well as their particular context, time and spaces. My participants were constantly making and remaking and reforming and shifting their identities, their attitudes and their actions in order to be able to survive and make sense of the world they live in. As Paul Willis has stated, “this is a cultural production, a making sense of themselves as actors in their own cultural worlds” (Willis, xiv, 2000). As they go through their everyday, ordinary lives, they make meaning and find belonging in different ways and spaces, often fleetingly and temporal. It is these spaces in between that research often overlooks – the times between school and home, prayers and clubs, morning and night – it is these spaces where

new culture is continually being produced, processed, reassessed and formed in order for young Muslims to ‘find their place’ in the worlds they live in.

Thus, the main questions this research asks are:

- How are young "Muslim" identities shaped in and around 'everyday' social settings?
- How are these identities cut through with class, culture, race, religion, gender and age?
- How do young Muslims negotiate, perform and *feel* belonging in their daily lives?
- What does being Muslim mean to youth and how do notions of spirituality play into their ideas of *Muslimness* in everyday life?

Over the course of this chapter, I will discuss how I have framed the difficult and transformative context within which young people lead their lives and the key conceptual approaches I have used in my analysis. I will start by discussing the four key literatures I have used, which are a collection of work on what I have termed “*Muslimness*”, work on identity, belonging and intersections of race, religion, class, age and gender. Following that, I will examine in more depth the wider national context within which the young people I worked with were living their lives. I will look at the historical Canadian context, the demographic of Muslims in Canada and what has been written about them.

Canadian Context

Going back to Trudeau’s inaugural speech, with which I started this chapter, it is important to note that immediately after he stressed his commitment to multiculturalism, he went on to address Muslims in Canada specifically. A sign of the times, he used his first speech to address the issues that dominated the election and national discourse during that time and the years preceding it. Muslim ‘issues’ – ranging from the *niqab*, the controversial Quebec Charter of values, the stripping of citizenship for terrorism suspects to the sunshine clause that gave security intelligence carte blanche with regards to surveillance – has dominated public discourse (Saunders, 2015) in recent years. Almost as if to assure Muslim Canadians that they

are entering a time where they might feel safe again, he used the last moments of his speech to talk about a young Muslim hijab-wearing mother he met on his campaign trail. He said that this woman made her way through a crowd of thousands and handed him her baby daughter. “She said she’s voting for us because she wants to make sure that her little girl has the right to make her own choices in life and that her government will protect those rights,” he told the crowd (Globe and Mail, October 20, 2015). This vision of Canada he presented was one full of hope and optimism. It was one where he truly believed that “our differences make us stronger” and that no matter what race, religion or background people are, “a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian” (ibid.).

But much like Obama’s election in 2008 brought with it talk of a post-racial society where race and ethnicity were ‘no longer a problem’, Trudeau’s election brought with it the supposed end to Islamophobia – an olive branch to Canadian Muslims and an assurance that their rights would be protected and honoured for he believed that difference made us better, stronger and equal. But like Obama’s discourse, Trudeau’s speech was incongruent with the realities of everyday life for Muslim Canadians.

Trudeau’s vision of Canada as an inclusive place, one that celebrates difference and diversity, a country that is a place of opportunity for immigrants and people from varying ethnicities and backgrounds is not a new one; it is the one that was also promoted by his predecessors. As a nation that was said to be “built by immigrants” (Canadian Immigrant, May 2016), this image of a Canadian mosaic characterised by difference as well as unity is one that is deliberately different to the American melting pot model of assimilation and ‘melting into one’. This image, very much a core tenant of the Canadian narrative, strengthened and built on by official Multicultural Policy (1979), is one that is very much the ‘face’ of Canada abroad and is

publicised as such. Although Justin Trudeau was not in power during the time this research was conducted, this image of Canada was very much a part of the country's national narrative at the time of this research and has been for the last 30 years. It is an image of Canada that one of my participants in this research, called Abdi, said in reality is "a hundred percent a fairy tale" (Abdi, September, 2012).

Abdi remembered being shown a video celebrating Canadian diversity, made by the Canadian government in the United Nations (UNHCR) office in Egypt. He and his family were refugees from Somalia and had been in Egypt for two years, awaiting refugee settlement immigration. He and his family were given the option to emigrate to either Sweden or Canada – to learn more about their potential new home, they were shown a video on each country.

Abdi (August 2013): *First there was snow and then that turned into the Falls (Niagara). The thought of Canada winter was pretty scary for sure but it looked good. There was all this nature stuff and it was ok. I mean it looked good. Then they started showing all these people you know? Just faces and then they were talking. There was all kinds of people – Chinese, Indian, black, everything – white too. There was this guy he was a CEO of a big company. I don't know the name. He sounded like from Africa for sure. Not Somali but something in Africa. Me and my brother just couldn't believe it! We high-fived in the middle of the video and were like 'whaat'. This black guy is [a] CEO! Then all these people were talking about their jobs when they moved to Canada – they all have nice house and all the different peoples, you know, all the different colours of peoples they were all together'. Dad was like "yeah – we gonna move to this place". I was so excited my brother and me we kept looking at the video all the time they gave us. "We were so pumped. I was like yah Canada – it's gonna be tight."*

I asked Abdi what he thought about that video after living in Canada for four years. He said he didn't mind the cold weather or even having to work so hard. But as for the rest of it, he felt cheated and like they had been lied to. He said he was treated more like a human in Somalia. In Somalia, he said, he had no opportunities because there was no work and because the country was poor and in the hands of criminals. But to him, in Canada, he had no opportunities because of the way he looked, where he came from – that people didn't see a human, they saw a “criminal, a thief – a terrorist” (Abdi, August, 2013). Furthermore, Abdi said, “No matter what good things I do, these people (Canadians), they won't let me belong” (Ibid.).

September 11th and The Toronto 18

Following the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York in September 2001, public scrutiny of Muslims in North America increased. After these events, the environment for Canadian Muslims became more hostile (Saunders, 2015). Canada was under pressure to prove that the terrorists did not come from there, as early reports had suggested. On Sept. 14, The Washington Post reported that an unnamed U.S. official had said two suspects “crossed the border from Canada, with no known difficulty, at a small border entry in Coburn Gore, Maine”, and that others may have come through other Maine ports (Washington Post, September 14, 2001). On Sept. 16, that report was repeated by the New York Post, which also declared that “terrorists bent on wreaking havoc in the United States” had found Canada “the path of least resistance”. Some even went so far as to say that Canada was “a haven for terrorists” (Christian Science Monitor, September, 2001).

As a result, in the week following the attacks, Canada invested \$280 million in immediate measures -- such as enhanced policing, security and intelligence (Government of Canada, September, 2001). Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' was once again being internalised and discussion of 'us' and 'them' gained prominence in media and public discourse. The main target of such talk was no doubt the Muslim community. Acts of hate and racism towards Muslims (or those who were perceived to be Muslims) and Muslim establishments were rampant within Canada during this time. In addition, Canadian Muslims and prominent leaders were accused of not denouncing the terrorist acts enough (Saunders, 2015), as if they needed to defend themselves in order to prove their citizenship. This climate of distrust and racism remained as the war on terror erupted and intensified.

The uneasy climate for Muslims in Canada worsened five years after the September 11th attacks. On June 2, 2006, Canadian police and security operatives raided homes in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and arrested 10 men and five youths. Two other suspects were already incarcerated in Kingston. All were charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act and six faced charges for possessing explosives. Two months later, another suspect was arrested under the same charges. In total – 18 arrests of Canadian-born men and youths were made as they were accused of plotting to storm Parliament Hill and detonate truck bombs in downtown Toronto (CBC, June 2006).

The backlash was immediate. Community leaders and national security experts elevated the already-present fears towards Muslims since 9/11 (ibid). This time, Muslim youth were singled out as the media warned that religious extremism amongst Muslim youth remained a growing concern and must be addressed (Teontino, 2010, p7). The *Toronto Star*, one of the city's leading newspapers, in a special report on the Toronto 18 stated:

“[Muslim] youth are being radicalised in their own homes by tapping into an online jihadi cyberworld and behind closed doors of private prayer rooms where firebrand religious ideologues go unchallenged. And, they are traveling overseas, to countries such as Somalia and Pakistan, to take up arms and fight jihad” (ibid.).

These claims, of course, are specific to certain members of the Toronto 18 being tried, but nonetheless represent the accusations that all Muslim youth in Canada were subject to, and thus expected to defend. ‘Experts’ on Muslim youth began to pop up, seemingly overnight, and some lesser-known community leaders added to the hysteria and further warned:

“If we don’t address the issue of radicalism, sooner or later there will be a far more sophisticated Toronto 18 that we will not detect and there will be an act of terror committed in our cities... are we safe? I don’t think so” (ibid).

During this time, public policy began to shift from the historic message of Canadian multiculturalism to one of managing multiculturalism, terrorism and security.

Muslims in Canada seemingly appear to be at a crossroads in terms of establishing their identity as Canadian Muslims, and Muslim youth even more so. Much in the way that British identity politics was stimulated by the Satanic Verses Affair (Modood, 2010, p2), the September 11th attacks and the case of the Toronto 18 served a similar purpose for Muslims in Canada. As Modood reflects on the Rushdie Affair, “It was a crisis that led many to think of themselves for the first time as Muslims in a public way” (Modood, 2, 2010). While the Rushdie Affair did impact Muslims in Canada, as did the Gulf wars and Bosnian genocide, 9/11 had a significant and undeniable impact on the way Muslims in Canada saw themselves, and the way they were seen. Furthermore, closer to home, the 2006 arrests and ongoing trials of 18 Canadian-born, Muslim youth charged with ‘conspiracy to commit acts of terror’ on ‘Canadian soil’ has shone the spotlight on not only Canadian Muslims but Canadian Muslim youth specifically.

Just as the Rushdie Affair brought Muslim identities to the forefront in Britain (Modood, 2, 2010), The Toronto 18 case forced many Muslim youths in Canada to articulate and justify themselves publically as both Muslims and Canadians, as individuals and as part of a community. Through the Toronto 18 case, the term ‘Muslim youth’ has increasingly become a loaded term in the Canadian context both in policy spheres as well as in the media. The term Muslim youth is often tagged onto labels of terrorism and radicalism. Fears regarding this group have increased. These factors have contributed to the discourse of what it means to be a Muslim youth in Canada and how Muslim youth negotiate their identities and live their everyday lives.

Since then, with the focus broadening towards immigration, ‘Canadian values’ (Quebec Charter of Values, 2013) and citizenship revocation (Toronto Star, May 2015), the discourse has been overwhelmed by the impulses of securitisation, debates of social cohesion, social inclusion, reasonable accommodation, managing diversity, security/securitisation, and radicalism. As such, much of the current literature on Muslim youth has reflected the change in policy direction. What is lost in this is an understanding of what young Muslims in Canada actually experience and encounter every day, how they live in the cities and spaces they move through, and what their challenges, thoughts and concerns are about the worlds they live in.

Growing up and negotiating their identities in this environment, Canadian Muslim youth not only face the growing pains all young people face but also face the pressures and challenges encountered by wider Muslim communities. Many Muslim youths spoke out after the events of 9/11, asserting and defending their Muslim identity (Zine, 2006) and as Maira (2004) states, since 2001 there has been a growing identification with the label of ‘Muslim’ over any other single ethnic or political social indicator. While falling in line with the notion that identities

cannot be fixed, (Hall, 1996), this perceived increase in specific types of religious self-identification sheds light on the importance of context, place and self-perception in the lives of Muslim youth.

As stated earlier, the 2006 case of the Toronto 18 added to the already hostile environment for Muslim Canadians. Since this news story broke, the words ‘Muslim youth’ have become semantically loaded in both policy and mass media. The term Muslim youth is often used with labels of terrorism and radicalism (Bhabha, 2003). Fear and mistrust regarding this group have increased (Fateh, 2008). Local mosques and imams have even produced a 12-step detox programme aimed at treating young Muslims who are sympathetic to extremist ideologies (Saunders, 2012). Presently, the spotlight on Canadian Muslim youth continues to increase. Muslim communities have attempted to respond to pressures from government and public opinion in a climate and at a time where Muslims are seen as threatening and religious difference is seen as incompatible with the west.

These factors have contributed to the re-articulation of what it means to be a Muslim youth in Canada, bringing with it new aspects of identity negotiation, histories and resistance to an ongoing story of believing, becoming and belonging.

Statistical Data About Muslims in Canada

An understanding of the unique history of Canadian and Muslim immigration and the history of Muslims in North America is essential to grasp the intricacies of the diverse Muslim population in Canada and the nature of Muslim identity. Much work has been done on Muslim youth and Muslim communities in the United States, Europe and Australia (See Sirin, 2007; Maira, 2008; Koefoed and Simonsen, 2011, 2012; Lewis, 2008; Hopkins, 2006, 2007; Dwyer

et al, 2008; Dunn, 2004; Noble and Poynting, 2010). However, these separate histories cannot be easily transposed onto Muslim communities in Canada. This section highlights the unique context and position of Muslims in Canada.

Brief Demographics of Muslims in Canada

In Canada today, there are over 200 mosques, and almost 580,000 Muslims (Statistics Canada, 2006). The 2001 census results – the last long-form census available – show that Islam is the fastest growing religion in Canada, increasing by 128.9% over ten years, highlighted by a significant increase of 410% in New Brunswick (Statistics Canada, 2006). The total Muslim population is 579,640, which accounts for about 2% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2006). If the different Christian denominations are treated as followers of a single faith (as opposed to each denomination representing a different faith), Islam is the second most common religion in Canada after Christianity. Over 70% of all Muslims are residents of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, and almost 89% of all Muslims live in urban areas that have a population of at least 500,000 (Statistics Canada, 2006). By comparison, 50% of all Canadians live in urban areas that have a population of 500,000 or more, and approximately 34% of all Canadians reside in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver (Statistics Canada, 2006). These numbers indicate that, by and large, and in comparison to the general Canadian population, Canadian Muslims are urban dwellers.

Breakdown of Canadian Muslims by Minority Group

Immigrants make up 72% of the Muslim population; 66% have immigrated in the last ten years (Statistics Canada, 2006). It is therefore unsurprising that 86% of all Muslims belong to a minority group (Statistics Canada, 2006). The breakdown of the Muslim population by

minority group is as follows: 37% are South Asian, 21% are Arab, 21% are West Asian, and 9% are black (Statistics Canada, 2006). The diverse backgrounds making up the Canadian Muslim population, along with their minority status, have had a significant impact in the shaping of Canadian Muslims' attitudes. The Canadian Muslim community, while being recognised as a minority group, is made up of varying minority ethnic groups.

Practice of Islam

In 2003, the Ethnic Diversity Survey was conducted by Statistics Canada in conjunction with the department of Canadian Heritage. One aspect of the survey measured the role of religion in the lives of Canadians. The survey results show that 76% percent of Muslims graded their religion as being important to them (Ethnic Diversity Survey, 2003). In addition, the results show that 32% of Muslims attend a congregational religious activity at least once a week (Ethnic Diversity Survey, 2003). That leaves a large percentage of Canadian Muslims who do not but still identify themselves as Muslims. Statistics on this large number of Muslims and how they exhibit their religiosity (if they do at all) are virtually non-existent. Furthermore, the survey showed that 65% of Muslims reported performing individual religious activity at least once a week (Ethnic Diversity Survey, 2003).

Age of Canadian Muslims

The median age of Canadian Muslims is 28 years old, which is the youngest median age of all religious groups (Statistics Canada, 2006). In comparison, the median age of all Canadians is 37 years of age (Statistics Canada, 2006). This indicates that Muslims are relatively younger than the rest of the Canadian population. One factor that correlates with this occurrence is that

half the immigrants – who make up much of the Muslim population – who have immigrated in the past ten years are between the ages of 25 and 44 (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Considering the age of participants in this research, this is a significant statistic. With a relatively young median age, a large number of these Muslim Canadians are youths, and thus, the way they form their identity and express it can have a significant impact on the future of Muslims in Canada, their identity and the role of religious identities within Canadian multiculturalism.

Key Literature

Islam and Muslims in Canada

Post September 11th, there has been increased focus placed on the securitisation and profiling of Muslim communities in Canada (Roach, 2003). The ways in which Muslim communities have been essentialised and treated as a homogenous entity by policy makers and governments has been problematised (Abu Laban, 2002; Bannerji, 2000; Rasack; 2008). The Muslim community in Canada has nearly doubled in the last 20 years (Statistics Canada, 2006) yet little is known of the nature of Muslim existence in Canada beyond the parameters of securitisation (Roach, 2003), immigration (Biles, 2008) and religious accommodation (Bouchard and Taylor, 2008). However, there are a few bodies of literature that assist in painting a picture of how Islam is lived in Canada.

Moghissi's study on the Muslim Diaspora in Canada is one of the few comprehensive studies on the topic. Their discussions on how Muslim youth negotiate their identities with their parents, with their peer groups, with the idea of nationhood and belonging, and with their

relationship with their parent's country of origin articulate the many different facets that contribute to Muslim youth's identity formation (Moghissi, 2009).

The research showed that Muslim communities identify more strongly with being Muslim than other diaspora communities identify with their respective religions. Outwardly and seemingly religious practices such as prayer and wearing the hijab as well as more secular and politically based actions such as strategic voting during the 2006 and 2015 elections in Canada (Saunders, 2015) all point to the fact that whether 'practising' or 'secular', religious identities matter to Canada's Muslims. These observations contribute to the anti-essentialist nature of this research and illustrate the diversity of religious expression among Muslim Canadians.

In addition, the section on Muslim youth is particularly relevant to this study. Moghissi's (2009) research, while ground-breaking and important, focused on four diasporic communities in Canada: Afghani, Iranian, Pakistani and Palestinian. However, while the discussions raised were useful, this study was limited. There is a need to broaden our understanding of Muslim youth, taking into consideration the multitudes of ethnicities, both diasporic and otherwise, in question and the way they intersect. In order to look at ideas of belonging, this research builds on Moghissi's (2009) work and looks at the fluid and shifting nature of young Muslim multiple and layered identities, the social processes that inform them and the context in which identities are formed and produced. It highlights the everyday interactions between young people from different, layered and nuanced diasporic backgrounds to explore how this complicates ideas of belonging and identity.

Other Canadian studies speak to the demographics of Muslims in Canada and the challenges they face (Andrew, 2004) as well as the intersections of identity and discrimination, the societal

pressures faced by Muslim Canadians (Yousif, 1994) and the effect that policies and legislation post-2001 have had in solidifying ‘terrorist’ stereotypes of youth (Bakht, 2008; Bhabha, 2003; Rasack, 2002). This literature highlights the varying experiences of Muslim communities while at the same time illustrating the community’s diversity, thus challenging essentialised notions of Muslimness. However, it does not shed light on how these intersections play out and are manifest in everyday life.

Muslim Youth

Muslim Youth in Canada and the US

Scholarly work on the everyday life of Canadian Muslim youth is sparse. However, Zine’s work on the schooling experiences of Muslim youth who are committed to maintaining an Islamic lifestyle in Canadian public schools does provide valuable insights on the intersections of religion, education and youth and how they play out in ordinary, everyday encounters. Her study captures the tension of preserving one’s identity with the pressures of conforming to schools’ dominant, primarily secular, white culture. Muslim youth in this study negotiate religious identities with other factors such as peer pressure, gender mixing, drinking alcohol and discrimination (Zine, 2001). The day-to-day lives of these youth were exacerbated by pressures seen as contradictory to Islamic custom. To manage their identities a number of responses were exhibited; namely isolation, integration and assimilation (Zine, 2001). Interestingly, some respondents exhibited all three responses, which was also something I observed with my participants. Zine’s discussion of identity maintenance and construction, ambivalence, role performance and methods of interaction (Barth, 1969) and isolation (Shaffir, 1979) are useful in understanding the ways in which these identities change and evolve while at the same time maintaining a sense religious consciousness (Zine, 2001). Her findings that

the challenges of resisting social pressures not only helped these youth maintain their Islamic identities but also solidified them is one that is useful in the discussion of religious identities of Muslim youths and how they intersect with other forms of identity (Zine, 2001).

Similar findings were found in a study on Somali Muslims in Toronto and London (Berns-McGown, 2013). For these communities, religion functioned as an ‘anchor’, providing a pillar of stability during the difficult experience of integrating into a new country (Berns-McGown, 2013), this trend of ‘anchoring’ or the increased centrality of religion as an identity marker is also echoed in American research (Peek, 2005). Peek investigated the impact of 9/11 in the negotiation of Muslim University students’ religious identities in America. Her study showed that the Islamic dimension of these youth’s identities became increasingly important after September 11th, 2001. One of the reasons given for this shift was that many non-Muslims treated them differently and being Muslim became a central part of their identity or at least one that was more publically acknowledged (Peek, 2005). Taylor has also discussed this in the ‘Politics of Recognition’, his discussion of the dialogical nature of identity formation. He argues, as others have, that when looking at the way a group or an individual sees themselves it is important to recognize the role played by others’ perceptions of the group or individual (Brah, 2005; Lawler, 2015; Taylor, 1997).

This notion of religious identities of Muslim youth becoming more prominent or appearing to be more prominent after 9/11 is one that is often focused on in American studies on Muslim youth (Ali, 2011; Muendini, 2009; Sirin and Fine, 2007; Britto and Amer, 2007). These literatures, while useful in understanding how young people negotiate religious identities no longer seem as relevant to my research on Canadian Muslim youth, most of whom were under five years old when the event took place. While it can broadly be argued that the identities have

been increasingly referred to by religious affiliation rather than ethnicity in popular discourse post 9/11 (Noble, Poynting 2010), my participants did not implicitly or explicitly refer to September 11th or the “War on Terror” as events that significantly affected the way the way they saw themselves as Muslim, nor did any other events that took place during my fieldwork. For example, the controversy around the 2012 anti-Islamic film “The Innocence of Muslims” by Nakoula Basseley Nakoula (then known as Sam Bacile) which was seen as denigrating to the Prophet Muhammad and sparked protests in Egypt and across the Middle East took place during my fieldwork. As I will talk about in more detail in a chapter five, a group of my participants watched the film on YouTube in front of me at the youth club. While this was upsetting and a topic of conversation at the youth club for a few weeks, and whenever it ‘came up’, the film and the discussion around it was not something that had a lasting effect on the youth I spoke to about it, but rather was given more attention during the time of the event itself. As Rosa put it “it was like a bubble that got bigger and bigger for a few days and then one day it just burst and went away. And then I never thought about it again (Rosa, February 2013)”. In my research, I argue events like these do not play a significant role in Muslim youth’s identity constructions or how they live their everyday lives. These events and the discourses around them can, however, contribute to the contexts, environments and national imaginaries in which they live in; and how they are perceived by others.

With the majority of work done in US, Canada and the UK concentrating on post-9/11, 7/7 narratives what has also been lost are the stories that come after and outside of these events. As the realities and aftermath of post 9/11 can be seen as a contributing factor to these exclusionary environments and to the overall rise of racial and religious intolerance (Nayak, p297, 2016), there has been an disproportionate focus on issues surrounding 9/11, 7/7, radicalisation and Muslim youth. One of my participants called Sara, stated “asking about 9/11

is like asking me about a guy walking on the moon. Like it's just something that happened right? Just like something way back in history (Sara, November, 2012)". Furthermore, as this thesis does not focus on this larger political discourse as a point of reference, it seeks to gain a greater understanding of the nature of the challenges and daily micro-aggressions young Muslims face and how these inform their religious identities. This is important as these daily and routine negotiations play a significant role in the identity constructions of Muslim youth. While significant events do play a role in young people's lives, its role is often temporary and feeds into the larger ongoing social processes of finding belonging and identity negotiation. As these stories of Muslim, minority, Canadian-born, immigrant and refugee youth, their spiritualities and the way they see themselves in their worlds are under researched, a gap in literature that this thesis aims to address.

Other work on Muslim Youth

As this ethnographic research focuses on everyday life, the geographic and spatial particularities where Muslim youth spend their time become very important in shaping their sense of belonging, their identities and feelings of freedom and constraint. These are the spaces in which Muslim and minority ethnic youth encounter everyday racism and Islamophobia, and experience not only the positives of Canadian multiculturalism, but also its many fissures and cracks. Other scholarly work around geographies of space, specifically in the UK and Australia, provide valuable insights about the challenges and environments young Muslims face around the world, and the ways in which they are spatially regulated. I have used this work to think about the ways in which my participants made many of the same negotiations and the messiness of their identities but also to focus on how the Canadian context is different, and thus produce unique challenges and strategies for negotiating their everyday spaces in Canada. Writing from the Australian perspective, Noble and Poynting's (2010) work on the racist vilification of

Muslim and Arab youth (2010) is useful in further understanding the relationships between space, belonging, social exclusion and limitations on freedom of mobility. They explore the ways racial and religious vilification and the policing of movement have been used as a way to spatially regulate national belonging through the exclusion of Muslim and Arab youth in public spaces (Noble and Poynting, 2010). This can also be seen in the spaces that my fieldwork took place in, where Muslim youth were surveilled and often felt unwelcome to the point that they could not move as freely through the city as their non-Muslim, white friends without some level of discomfort.

There has also been important scholarly work done on young Muslim men, which is useful in framing the ways these youth are being represented in discourses about the nation, Muslims and youth. As was indeed the case in Canada during my fieldwork, representations of young Muslim men are increasingly seen as “militant and aggressive, intrinsically fundamentalist, ultimate Others” (Archer, p 81 2001). Hopkin’s study of Muslim youth of mainly Pakistani origin, living in Glasgow and Edinburgh offers a detailed discussion of dominant discourses and representations of young Muslim men in Scotland. His work challenges two main discourses that on one hand emphasise young Muslim men’s patriarchal nature and on the other, their effeminacy (Hopkins, 2004). These discourses about Muslim masculinity were ones that I also encountered particularly with south Asian young men (who were both migrants and born in Canada) and the ways they were treated by others, including other Muslims. These youth were at times also paradoxically seen as “too weak” or “girly” and at others to be dangerous, as toxic males who were controlling and dominating. These conflicting narratives are overwhelmingly problematic and can be used when convenient, and according to the situation. Hopkins work is important in emphasising and providing empirical data that challenges these dominant discourses, which are not only present in Scotland but also Canada

and in other parts the world. Hopkins provides a clear argument of how young Muslims' masculinities are fluid, multi-faceted, multiple and overlapping, influenced by markers of class, locality and social difference and provides valuable insight on the relationship between these discourses and national identity and belonging (Hopkins, 2004).

These geopolitical imaginaries of terrorism and Muslim men being militant also intersect with national anxieties around Muslims, citizenship and belonging (Simonsen and Koefoed, 2006). As argued by Simonsen and Koefoed, these imaginaries are embedded in the happenings and practices of everyday life. However, as discussions around Muslim men and male youth are important, the issues focused on by media such as Islamic terrorism (Ali, 2016), "Asian gangs" (Alexander, 2000) and more recently, the refugee crisis, sexual assault and safety (Noack, 2016) discussion has converged on issues surrounding young Muslim men (Nayak, 2013). This focus has contributed to a gap in research on young Muslim women (ibid), who are also marginalised and discriminated against for being Muslim women in everyday life, situations and places. Archer's work on young British Muslim boys' and girls' opinions on Muslim girls' post-16 choices highlights the discrepancy between how Muslim girls see themselves and what they aspire to and how they are perceived by others, including Muslim boys who perceived Muslim girl's choices as being 'restrictive' and culturally located (Archer, 2002). Although, this was not necessarily the case for the Muslim boys and girls in my research, they did indeed struggle against the stereotype of being 'sheltered', restricted and, at times, oppressed by family and religious practices and controlled by the men in their lives, views often held by people they encountered in their daily lives. Archer's work is important in giving more attention to the issues being faced by young Muslim girls, and the relationship between how others see them, and how they see themselves (Archer, 2002).

In other work around Muslim girls, Anoop Nayak's work on British Bangladeshi Muslim young women who live in mainly white spaces is valuable in understanding how power, racism and the "fantasy of a white nation" produce exclusions as well as new forms of civic belonging and "disrupting the melody of multicultural conviviality" (Nayak, p289, 2017). Nayak's work opens up a space for work on young Muslim women, multicultural harmony, conviviality and the geographies of encounter which have also been under researched (ibid). In particular, his focus on Sutherland, on Muslim girls in majority white spaces, has parallels with the research I have done in the suburban towns outside of Toronto, which are predominantly white. While many of the field sites in this research, such as the youth clubs, were racially and ethnically very diverse, once youth left the confines of the club – they encountered world that was white, where they became invisible and hyper-visible all at once.

Nayak's stories of British Bangladeshi young woman disrupt the seemingly convivial multicultural narratives of belonging we often hear. This was also a feature in most of my field sites which although quite diverse, were geographically situated in mainly white spaces in the suburbs of Toronto and in Canada, in a country lauded as a great example of multicultural harmony. Nayak's description of the intersections of multiculturalism, the nation and race are particularly apt and valuable in understanding the messiness of these spaces of encounter. He states: "the visceral aspects of race as it is summoned to life in live encounters, where it is lived on the body, bleeds into the locality and congeals around imaginary ideas of the nation state (Nayak, p289, 2017)

Young Muslims' notions of community, local, global and imagined, are also themes that emerged in my research. Dwyer has talked about ideas of 'community' in her work on young Muslim British women where she describes the construction of community as dynamic process which can be both empowering and constraining (1999). As Dwyer draws on Hall's "New

Ethnicities” (1996), as does this thesis, she sees young Muslim’s negotiations of these identities as one that is both contested and constructed. This falls in line with the argument of this thesis, where young Muslim women had different views and feelings about ‘the Ummah’ and their local Muslim communities which also changed and shifted in different situations. Dwyer argues that “previous imaginations of community, particularly within the politics multiculturalism, have worked to deny differences within collectives (Dwyer, p53, 1999). Ethnic, local and global community were not predominately Asian and therefore there were multiple layers and iterations of what ethnic, local and global communities looked like and meant to participants. Her discussion on Muslimness and what participants defined as being Muslim echoed many of the same themes my participants did, they did not however focus on ethnic aspects of Muslimness. In particular, Dwyer’s argument of reimagining the way we look at young British Muslim identities, using Hall’s new ethnicities (1992, 1996) argues for the possibility of conceptualising communities which are forged across differences rather than being subsumed by them. This is similar to the way community is seen by my participants, however, does not fall in line easily with constructions of Canadian multiculturalism in practice.

This way of situating social identities and their intersections of gender, class ethnicity age and place was also explored by Dwyer, Shah and Sangrias’ work on representations of young British Pakistani Muslim men (2008). As does this thesis, the authors explored the significance of everyday negotiations, challenges and constraints that shape these youth. The study found that gender identities are defined relative to notions of masculinity in general, notions of Pakistani masculinity and all as to Pakistani femininities (Dwyer et al, p117, 2008). Again, while this work is useful in understanding the different, and multi-layered negotiations and intersections of young Muslim men’s masculinities, it does so within a specific ethnic group, namely

Pakistani young men, whereas this thesis explores a variety of ethnicities, and how they individually and collectively negotiate their identities, taking into account the intersections of race, religion, class, gender and age.

While not specifically literature on Muslim youth, Koefoed and Simonsen's work (2012) on Pakistani citizens of Copenhagen and their experiences as life as an 'internal strangers' in the city and the nation is valuable. In particular, the stigmatization of Muslim minorities felt in Denmark by the participants who are seen as 'strangers' and "stigmatised as 'others who do not belong'" certainly was felt by my own participants in the ways they felt they were seen by wider Canadian society. This notion of feeling like strangers, of not belonging and of discomfort was also explored by Noble, in his research on Arab and Muslim Australians, who after 9/11 felt like foreigners in a country they once felt was their home due to the process of being 'made strange' through the regulation of difference, where their kind of difference was seen as inferior (Noble, p118, 2005). These differences, this idea of strangeness, in turn, became uncomfortable for these Arab and Muslim participants whose presence and strangeness also became uncomfortable with other Australians (Noble, p116, 2005), an example of how strangeness can be just a feeling like discomfort. Along with this, Simonsen and Koefoed's Copenhagen study highlighted the bodily, physical perception of being estranged from the country and the city were also seen in my research where young people felt excluded in public spaces, such as the mall, although they themselves also felt a sense of belonging in these spaces. Both of these feelings and physical embodiments of strangeness and belonging are relevant to my research, as are the ways in which they overlap, shift and play off of one another in everyday situations.

This friction of simultaneously welcome and unwelcome has, as Simonsen and Koefoed argue, has been contributed to by “national constructions of others who are imagined to the threat or burden to the national community (Koefoed and Simonsen, p624, 2012). This “stranger danger” (Ahmed, p32, 2000) is felt on the streets and the everyday spaces where young Muslims in Canada move through, and is something that is present and felt and seen as “regular” (Abdi, January 2013). Despite this potent construction of stranger in national imaginaries, those who experience this estrangement still find ways to negotiate spaces of belonging and identifying with the countries and cities they live in by using different and creative “identity strategies” based in everyday practices (ibid, p624). Koefoed and Simonsen’s study and discussion of the construction of Muslims as ‘strangers’ is relevant to this thesis as it can be argued that this is something that is experienced by Muslims in many different cities, contexts, ages and countries as the events of the last few decades have given rise to these narratives. Thus, their discussion is useful in framing the ways in which the experiences of Muslim youth in this study are also shared by Muslims in other minority contexts.

These bodies of work offer important insight into the ways spaces can be regulated for Muslim youth, be it physically, through the body, as feeling, or being seen as ‘strangers’ and not fitting into in the imaginary of who a ‘real’ Canadian is. However, most of these studies focus on youth from Asian or Arab backgrounds, and while important, do not reflect the ways in which Muslim youth from multiple and intersecting ethnicities, classes, both those born and raised in Canada as well as migrant youth interact with each other and affect identity construction and negotiation. Furthermore, while whiteness is often seen as something from ‘the outside’, whiteness also operates within Muslim communities. There are times and places, where ‘real’ whiteness is absent, where those closer to whiteness through skin colour and class, such as many of the Arab youth in my research, were in many ways saw themselves as white and were

perceived as such within Muslim youths' friendship groups. This 'honourary whiteness' (Majaj, 2000) and its privileges were also contingent on the particular situation. As a nation, Canada, and the areas surrounding Toronto, in particular, are multi-ethnic with populations of those born in Canada, migrants and refugees living within close proximity of each other, this research reflects this uniquely Canadian context. As such the varying ethnicities of youth in this research were not limited to Arab, south Asian and Somali, for example. Rather they included multi-racial, multi-ethnic youth, from all genders, classes and religious affiliations, including non-Muslims. Muslim youth in this research did not go through their everyday lives in a bubble, only spending time and interacting with people similar to them. Rather, they encountered people with a wide range of experiences, backgrounds, ethnicities and perspectives, and thus, this research is situated in the everyday spaces in which these encounters took place.

Canadian Multiculturalism

The narrative of Canada as a nation that is committed to a multicultural policy is one that pervades all discourse about minority communities and Muslims in Canada. What Canadian multiculturalism means is highly contested within the ranks of government, policy and everyday people. Day (2000) and Kernerman (2006) argue that despite state interventions, tensions related to ethno-cultural relations of power are inherent to multicultural Canada. Others, such as Taylor (2008) and Adams (2008), argue that diversity and multiculturalism is key to Canada's ability to accommodate religious minorities and cultures (Bouchard and Taylor, 2008).

In these discussions, issues of religion, power and agency are largely ignored. Much has been lost in the area of how Canada's multicultural policies are 'lived' and how they affect people

of colour, women of colour and religious communities (Bannerji, 2000). One of the arguments against Canada's multicultural policies is that it is too superficial, is largely uncontested and that upon closer inspection, falls short in the areas of political mobility. This view represents Muslims and people of colour as 'other', often contributing to Orientalist views of Muslim men as 'dangerous' and Muslim women as 'helpless' (Rasack, 2008). In essence, Canadian-style multiculturalism has been unable to engage, serve and protect faith-based groups such as Muslim communities (Rasack; 2008; Haque, 2010).

Multiculturalism and Faith

This research is taking place against the backdrop of Canada's longstanding (since 1979) multicultural narrative. Faith has increasingly become an issue in Canada, some of which is discussed in chapter three. In recent years, discussions surrounding multiculturalism have been predominately focused on 'the Muslim question' (Kazemipur, 2014) which is indicative of the perceived need to manage Muslims and their practices. These discussions overlap and also shield the racist discourse which pervade these discussions, as narratives around security and terrorism give rise to perceptions of Muslims as 'other'. In recent years, the conversation and commission around reasonable accommodations, the Quebec Charter of Values and the Bill C-51 anti-terrorism law have all affected Muslims in Canada more than any other community (Bouchard Taylor Commission on Reasonable Accommodation of Minorities, 2008). Justin Trudeau's changes to the internationally praised refugee policy in 2017 in Canada now no longer extends to Muslim men, including young men of the age of my participants who are not coming with their families and are left behind. This is a worrying trend, as the underlying message here is that Muslim communities are suspect and need to be managed. Together, this highlights Canada's Multicultural Project's inability or resistance to fully engage in issues

surrounding faith communities and Muslims. Decidedly different and perhaps more prescriptive, faith communities in liberal democratic societies often delve into issues both practical (such as accommodation) and more philosophical (such as loyalty – are you Canadian first? Muslim first?). As time goes on, the ‘Muslim question’ in particular appears to be getting bigger and bigger, especially in Europe and in North America (Kazemipour, 2014). Discussions on Islamic values and Muslim youth remain confined to the negative spaces of radicalism, accommodation and terrorism. On the positive side, model, professional, middle-class, neo-liberal ‘good Muslims’ (Mamdani, 2004) are displayed as model minorities to be emulated. In both of these discourses, spirituality, and engaging in conversations about the role of Islam in Muslim Canadians’ lives and people’s feelings about it is rare. This creates a narrative that is only focused on a few groups – the privileged and the problematic. This leaves many others left behind, particularly Muslim youth.

Charles Taylor plays an important role in this discussion and the role of religion in everyday life, especially within the Canadian context (2008). Taylor has recognised the importance of religion in everyday life and in terms of the politics of difference within multicultural societies. His work on religion and the politics of difference are widely recognised and admired as forward-thinking and inclusive and indeed has opened up a space from which to discuss religion, faithfulness and spirituality. In his book, *The Secular Age* (2008), Taylor discusses the role of religion in multicultural, liberal societies and argues for a closer look at the role that religion plays in society – a point which I also echo in this research. Coming from a devout Roman Catholic background, he questions many claims that religion in our secular, post-modern societies has come to an end (Taylor, 2008, p4). Instead, he argues that religion does indeed have a place in society and that without religions or belief in God, people miss out on a deeper and more enduring meaning of the world that surrounds them. In this instance, religion

does not hinder multiculturalism or liberal democratic ideals but enhances them and strengthens them. This view in some ways aligns with my own research and the discussion of spirituality and the importance of looking at the meaning people give to religion and belief in God in their lives.

However, Taylor also makes a key distinction between religions and suggests that Islam is not necessarily a religion that fits into the ‘politics of difference’ as easily as Christianity does. He sees problems in the fact that some Muslims have allegiances to their ‘homeland’ and that certain Muslims, such as the ones who have immigrated to Canada who are highly educated, are more inclined to social integration (Bannerji, 2000, p133). The problematic reading of Islam slides into essentialist discourse about Muslims and takes somewhat of a stereotypical view of Islam and Muslims as not only foreign and from ‘somewhere else’ but one that also assumes homogenous beliefs and practices. This view is counteractive to ideas of belonging, even on an everyday level as it positions Muslims as marginal, subordinate and as the ‘other’. It is such essentialist views about Islam that are influential in informing public policy, academia and the Canadian government (Bouchard Taylor Commission, 2008) – these must be challenged, contested, and problematised.

Also missing from Taylor’s discussion are pervading issues of power and agency and cultural diversity. Taylor sees the ‘politics of difference’ as purely cultural and ignores the issue of power as he makes no distinction between different kinds of difference, those which could be called cultural diversities and those structured through power relations and which could be “encoded as gender, race and class” (Bannerji, 2000, p132). Specifically, Muslims, through their positioning in public discourses, who are marginalised and racialised faith groups in Canada, do not have the same privileges and agency that Taylor speaks of. By missing this

crucial element of power and discussion around who holds this power and who is free to grant these 'rights' and 'accommodations', Taylor sidesteps an obvious flaw in his argument. Furthermore, his language of 'we' and 'us' as the dominant society and 'them' and 'they' as the minorities in need of recognition suggests that Taylor and the 'majority' are indeed in the position to grant this need for recognition and underlines Anglo-Europeans as central agents in this granting of rights and non-Europeans as particularised and in need of acceptance from the majority (Bannerji, 2000, p133). This further entrenches the position of people like Muslim youth in Canada as the other, subordinate and 'the wrong kind of different'.

When challenging views such as Taylor's on Islam and Muslims, the work of Tariq Modood and Talal Asad are helpful. Both Modood and Asad have problematised the discussion of faith and multiculturalism and secularism. Both have challenged the late-modern notion that as society 'progresses', religion will eventually 'go away'. The relationship between Islam and secularism is the focus of much debate. The notion that Islam is antithetical to secularism is one that has resurfaced in discourse post-September 11th (Asad, 2003, p5; Taylor, 2008). This is not the case. An example of this is the formation of Pakistan in 1945. Pakistan was formed around the idea of being Muslim as a religious identity but was neither governed nor built on sharia law and was established as a secular, liberal, democratic nation (Devji, 2013). In addition to this, looking at this issue through both Islamic theology, history and anthropology, Asad's work is useful as it challenges views like Taylor's that argue that 'Islam' does not fit into a nation-state model based on secularism. Asad argues that Islam has a longstanding historical tradition of existing within secular societies and that Taylor's claims are ripe with essentialist notions of 'the other' and his image of eastern traditions (Asad, 2003, p4).

Conceptual Themes

Much of the current research on Muslim youth relies on taking existing theories of identity connected to race, ethnicity, gender, youth, class, and applying it with little change to the study of religious conceptions of identity. On the other hand, theorists of Islam and Muslims (identities, practice, accommodation, communities etc.) in all of their manifestations do not adequately address the issues of race, class and ethnicity. The discussion either bends towards race and identity without fully addressing the complicated and multiple, diverse intersections of Muslim identity as it is expressed by individuals *or* leans towards a discussion on Muslim identities as central, located in politics, policy, theology and history without adequately addressing intersections of race, ethnicity etc. My assertion in this thesis is that these understandings of *Islams* and the ways they can be expressed need to be brought together with theories of identity linked to race and the multiplicity of ethnicities as well as class, gender and age. While work has been done on Pakistani youth, religion and race in Toronto (Moghissi, 2009), for example, this work needs to extend to research on youth from multiple ethnicities, classes, genders and religious positions who are living and moving through the world alongside each other.

In this thesis, as I am discussing the everyday lives of Muslim youth in Canada, this is a necessary point in order to explore how these multiple identities and ways of being are lived with other people and youth with their own diverse identities and ways of being. Furthermore, another problem within the existing, prominent literature on Muslim youth specifically is that stereotypes of young Muslims as radicalised, alienated (Gest, 2010), at odds with western values of liberal multiculturalism (ibid.), politically motivated, potential extremists (Fateh, 2008) and as young people who do not want to ‘belong’ (ibid.) are common and take up a lot of room (Saunders, 2014). Islam, as is the case in analysing racial, cultural or minority groups,

is not homogenous, and the current research tends to homogenise the Muslim minority experience by focusing on dominant immigrant groups and their institutions, namely mosques and cultural centres. This is the reason why my research sees the multiplicity of Muslim experiences and plurality of *Islams*, each with their own unique interpretive framework and, consequently, each with their own impact on young Muslim identities. We need to examine the very notion of *Muslimness* as well as the multiple ways in which it is expressed, even within one individual. Moreover, we need to create a space for these discussions on Islam and Muslims to take place and build on existing theories that address identity questions of minorities as complex and often competing constructs borne out of equally complex transnational tensions (Hall, 1996; Bhabha, 1994).

My research presents a narrative of the nature of young Muslims' lives and addresses the diversity of *Muslimness* as much more mundane and personally motivated, complicated, messy and aspirational, grounded in the banal and mundane aspects of everyday life. I will start with an anthology of 'Muslimness' (as identity, experience, position, power dynamic), which I have drawn from and developed from multiple sources. I then look at the literature on identity that brings together the seminal anti-racist scholarship work done in the 1980s to generate a better understanding of how Muslim identities fit into this picture. Following this, I look at the important literature on intersectionality which I have found instructive in helping me to think about how the young Muslim people I have worked with lead lives cut through by gender, race, class ethnicity as well as religion and age. Finally, I will examine the ways in which notions of belonging help them create their own connection to local, national ideological spaces. The discussion of these concepts, their relevance and how they are used provides a guide by which the reader can gain a greater understanding of the way these young Muslims experience

everyday life, and crucially, the ways in which they create new spaces and forms of belonging and cultural production.

“Muslimness”

“... I mean, what I call myself is a natural Muslim, 'cause it's just me and God. You know, going to the mosque, the ritual and the tradition, it's just not in me to do. So I don't do it.”

(Ice Cube, 2011)

In an interview with the Guardian newspaper in 2011, the rapper Ice Cube was asked whether, after converting to Islam in the 1990s, he still considered himself to be a Muslim. Why this question was necessary or even relevant to the interview that was supposed to address Ice Cube’s film *Three Kings* is an interesting one in itself and sheds light on how Muslims are often made to respond to queries about their religious identities at any given time. Presumably, Ice Cube’s identification as Muslim make him interesting, perhaps because he does not necessarily fit the serotype of ‘the good Muslim’ (Mamdani, 1998) and thus his identification as one warrants explanation. Whatever the case may be, Ice Cube’s answer, his identification with being what he calls ‘a natural Muslim’ who does not attend the mosque and is not concerned with the praxis of Islam as it is manifested by the performance of attending the mosque, is a particularly pertinent one for this research.

What Ice Cube describes as a ‘natural Muslim’ is an expression of being Muslim that many of the young Muslims in this research have also described using multiple terminologies (“not-practising” was a commonly used term to describe this). This iteration of Muslimness in all its various forms that manifest in different ways according to the individual is one that moves

beyond praxis and beyond the confines of essentialist and reductive understandings of Islam. To do so would be to brush aside the importance of analytical and descriptive principles that would ordinarily be applied in sociological research.

At the heart of it, this research seeks to understand the multiple ways in which Muslimness is lived, expressed and performed. This understanding of the multiplicity of ways Islam is lived by participants has an impact on their identities as well as their sense of belonging. Muslimness, like identity, is also seen as a ‘positioning’ (Hall, 1996, p502) – fluid and changing, contextual and shaped by the everyday.

Therefore, it is important to break down the different ways in which Muslimness is expressed, experienced, lived and negotiated. This does not imply that there is an exhaustive list as there are multiple, overlapping formations of ways an individual’s Muslimness can be expressed and one must not fall into the trap of essentialising the lived experience of Islam into a tidy list of ‘Islamic expressions’. However, for the purposes of this study, in order to understand some of the various facets of Muslimness that arose from the research, I will provide some conceptualisations of Islam, general understandings of how Muslimness may be identified so that the young people’s connection to being Muslim, and the multiple ways this can be expressed, performed, articulated and felt with the aim of contributing to a more meaningful, nuanced understanding of the lived experience of being a young Muslim in Canada.

This is not a discussion on theology or an interpretation of what Islam should be or what a ‘true Muslim’ is or is not. Neither is it a discussion of the various sects, schools of thoughts and interpretations of Islam through the ages. Rather, as Ahmad writes, I am seeking to use the words Islam and Muslimness “in a manner that expresses the historical and human

phenomenon that is Islam in its plenitude and complexity of meaning” (Ahmad, 2015, p5). This is a starting place for thinking about the nuanced and complicated ways in which religion is performed and felt in daily life. Thus, the following all overlap and shift and can also dissolve.

Muslimness as a Praxis

Praxis is an element of Muslimness that aligns closely with conventional, elementary often essentialist understandings of Islam that stem from Islamic theology and *aqidah* (creed). Praxis often derives from the five pillars of Islam of *Shahada* (belief in one God), *prayer* (in its physical manifestation), *fasting*, *zakat* (charity) and the *Hajj* (pilgrimage) (Rabbani, 2008). Along with this comes basic understandings of the practice of Islam that include things like the wearing of the hijab, beards, eating halal meat and refraining from recreational drugs and alcohol. A large portion of academic and policy work on Muslims tends to concentrate on this expression of Muslimness (Mahmood, 2011), highlighting the struggles that Muslims face expressing their religious identity in this manner (i.e. prayer, hijab, fasting etc.) and on Muslim youth who align themselves more closely with these elements of Muslimness (Moghissi, 2009).

This is not to say that praxis is confined to an individual’s conceptualisation of Muslimness but rather in concentrating on the study of praxis, the complexity of religious expression is not adequately addressed. When I initially asked many of the youths I worked with if they would be willing to take part in this research, they often said things like “*you should ask [Maryam]. I am not a good Muslim, I don’t even pray*” (discussion with Aliza, June, 2012). This prominent understanding of what being Muslim means not only affects what others understand Muslimness to be but also young Muslims’ own understanding of their religiosity. While the study of Muslim youth and praxis is necessary and beneficial, much of the work done on

Muslim youth, along with radicalisation, has been dominated the study of this iteration of Muslimness. Recent work by Zine (2008), Moghissi (2009), Bayat (2010), Mir (2014), to name a few, all focus on young Muslims who are concerned with many of the issues outlined above. Less than a quarter of my research participants focused on issues of praxis and many did not even know the basics of prayer, the Quran or Islamic sharia.

Political Muslimness

Along with praxis, academic work has often focused on the political conceptualisation of Muslimness with discourse concentrating on Islam and how it is performed through an alignment with political Islam (Roy, 1994), political activism (Rana, 2011; Esposito, 2011), political thought and history (Mamdani, 2005), radicalism and extremist political Islam (Ramadan) and young Muslims' responses to these notions (Bayat, 1992; Gest, 2010; Modood, 2010). In simpler terms, for the purposes of this research, I am using this term to describe the ways Muslimness is performed and articulated in its political form, be it through resistance, activism in social justice or the very notion that being Muslim in and of itself is a political act of resistance (Malcolm X, 1962; Doultzai, 2010). The latter iteration of Muslimness is what Sohail Doultzai calls 'the Muslim International' (2010).

The Muslim International is a performance of Muslimness that has an affinity with the Muslim third world, black radicals and black Muslims. This facet of Islam is concerned with the idea of justice for the Muslim *Ummah* as well as people of colour, particularly black international communities (Doultzai, 2010). Anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist struggles are closely intertwined with the idea of the Muslim International. Contemporary historical figures that are prominent in the ideology behind political Islam are Sayyid Qutb, Maulana Mawdudi (Mamdani, 2010) and Malcolm X (Doultzai, 2010). The connection between religious identity

and the struggle for social justice is pronounced here in this aspect of Muslimness. The mere notion of being Muslim in the world is seen in this way as being an act of resistance and activism.

For the young Muslims in this research, there were quite a few people who expressed their Muslimness through the lens of the political. Malcolm X, who was both an African-American and a Muslim, was someone whose name came up repeatedly in discussions about politics for young Muslims. He voiced many of the concerns and problems associated with being a person of colour and a Muslim in North America. However, Daulatzai's argument that all Muslims feel connected to and can be subsumed into black struggle is problematic. Much as political blackness was a term that many Asians in Britain did not feel connected to (Modood, 1994), the idea that the 'Muslim struggle' and the 'black struggle' is the same also suggests the false essentialism that all Muslims have something in common other than how they are seen and treated by others. Also, within the Canadian context, 'black' connotes people of Caribbean and/or African origins, which does not fully appreciate the distinctive concerns of other ethnic Muslim communities such as Asian, Arab, Indonesian, Turkish etc. and the fact that many people from these backgrounds do not see themselves as being part of the 'black international' (Daulatzai, 2010). Regardless of this, the idea of the 'Muslim International' is very useful in this research as it connects to the idea of identifying as a Muslim as a form resistance in and of itself and how Muslimness manifested in the everyday can be seen as a political act (Daulatzai, 2010).

There were also cases in my research where politics were confined to individual choices. Political stances – such as not buying certain brands because they were made in Israel, taking part in public protests or getting involved with advocacy groups for Muslims in their schools

and universities – were aspects of political Islam Muslimness that were seen in young Muslims’ daily lives. It is also important to note that it is difficult for young Muslims to completely ignore the political facets of being Muslim as it is often brought to their attention via the media and their social networks, schools and friends. There was often pressure to engage with political Muslimness yet many were much more concerned with their own personal lives, happenings and desires: *“I was playing Call of Duty, and I did think it looked like Iraq or something”*, said Essa. *“I thought it looked like the stuff you see on the news when they are bombing and everything. I know I should think about it. But I don’t. Not really.”* (Interview with Essa, April 7, 2012). These pressures and media representations of Muslims do in many ways affect the way young Muslims in this research see themselves or at least give them pause for thought as they consider their own identities through the lens of the other and the way they are represented in popular discourse (Hall, 1997, p2).

Social/Cultural Muslimness

This conceptualisation sees identifying as a Muslim as an expression of Islam in and of itself, and can often be devoid of praxis and politics and sometimes be ambivalent to the creed of Islam and the ‘rules’ that go with it. A broad example of this can be seen in Faisal Devji’s ‘Muslim Zion’ where he discusses the religio-cultural identity-based creation of Pakistan (Devji, 2013). He rejects the idea that the country was formed due to hereditary linkages and religious practice and instead presents the argument that Pakistan was formed around the crucial ‘idea of belonging’ (Devji, 2013). His argument that the closest ideological parallel to Pakistan is the creation of the state of Israel is particularly valuable for this research. As Devji notes, Jewish settlement in Israel and Muslim migration to Pakistan are both based on secular

ideas of religion and faith, but ones that accept notions of being Muslim or being Jewish as an identity and as part of the narratives of belonging and ‘home’ (Devji, 2013).

Linking with the idea of belonging, this concept can also align closely with the idea of being a part of a community (Esposito, 2000) or alternately can have minimal encounters with public Muslim expressions of Islam such as going to the mosque. A few of my participants who fall into this category see themselves as Muslim, but do not believe in the basic tenets of Islam or in God; however, they have grown up Muslim and identify themselves as such. Others, like Ice Cube’s identification as a “natural Muslim” above, are those who do have ‘beliefs’ but choose not to perform them in ways we have been accustomed to seeing Islam performed in the West but indeed are expressions of Islam. Over half the young people in this study fall into this category. This is the grey area of Muslimness that is often overlooked. It is where the ideas of belonging and nuance become critically important.

This is also where the idea of doing things *in a Muslim way* come in – a subtlety of expression that is particularly relevant to my research. These are performances and embodiments of religious expression not necessarily obvious to the outsider, or even to anybody other than the individual. An example of this from my research is the story of a young man who is a drug dealer but says that he is never dishonest about it and that he does not scam his clients because “*it’s not the Muslim thing to do*” (Rashid, 2012). This can also manifest in such ways as a Muslim woman who does not wear a hijab but will not wear tight or revealing clothing either – a trend that has recently been named ‘modest fashion’ by academics, fashion bloggers and fashion houses (Lewis, 2014). But this is not a new trend as these complexities have existed since the inception of Islam (Esposito, 2000). To some, examples such as these in the West could be seen as a result of what Paul Gilroy calls ‘conviviality’, which in some cases might

hold true; however, the idea that this type of nuance and this range of overlapping shades of religious expression and belief as an individual interpretation is one that has been a part of Muslim everyday life, culture and expression for over 1,400 years wherever Muslims have been present (Ahmad, 2015).

Shahad Ahmad talks about the complexity and nuance of religious expression as he retells an exchange he witnessed between an eminent academic and a Muslim scholar who were seated next to him at a dinner:

The Muslim colleague was indulging in a glass of wine. Evidently troubled by this, the distinguished don eventually asked his dining companion if he might be so bold as to venture a personal question. “Do you consider yourself a Muslim?” “Yes” came the reply. “How come, then, you are drinking wine?” The Muslim colleague smiled gently. “My family have been Muslims for a thousand years”, he said, “during which time we have always been drinking wine.” An expression of distress appeared on the learned logician’s pale countenance, prompting the further clarification: “You see, we are Muslim wine-drinkers.” The questioner looked bewildered. “I don’t understand”, he said. “Yes, I know”, replied his native informant, “but I do.” (Ahmad, 2015, p3).

This conceptualisation of Muslimness essentially develops the idea of being Muslim as one that is mostly concerned with Muslimness as an identity, breaking away from religious and moral judgements, notions of what constitutes a ‘good Muslim’ or ‘bad Muslim’, and one that moves away from categories such as traditional, progressive, moderate and extremist. Crucially, my argument here is that in doing so, I am developing the idea of Muslimness from a sociological perspective and as a feature of everyday life that is constantly being negotiated. (Ahmad and Noorbaksh, 2015; Said, 1977). Broadening our conception of the scope of ‘The Muslim’ and the complexity of religious expression is key to breaking down the multiple layers of essentialism and ignorance that constitute much scholarly work in this field (Ahmad, 2015).

Muslimness in all of its ever-changing forms and facets is the lens from which this research and future scholarly work on Muslim youth needs to be read and understood.

Spirituality and Muslimness

The relationship between spirituality and Muslimness is under-researched. When looking at religious identities and the role they play in people's lives, it is vital to consider what these identities actually consist of, what value and challenges they bring to young Muslims' lives and their perception of self. Many youths identified themselves as Muslim through the language of spirituality. In broad strokes, this can also be known as 'ideology' in the way that Raymond Williams has talked about it, which can range from political ideologies to more common-sense meanings or 'taken-for-granted' beliefs (Williams, 1977, p5). In terms of this research, however, many of these beliefs are often assumed and imposed by others according to essentialised notions of Islamic beliefs and practices. William's work on 'structures of feeling' is also useful here in the way that he sees *feelings* as important to perceptions and negotiations of the self (Williams, 1977). This idea of *feeling* is one I will draw on to discuss the role of feelings related to spirituality.

In order to conceptualise this, the work of Saba Mahmood is useful (2011). In her work on Egyptian women activists in mosques, Mahmood talks about the importance of considering the rationale of why women's piety has placed them in conflict with structures of authority (Mahmood, 2011, p17). She looks at the relationship between modesty and hijab as an example. While hijab is connected to the Islamic virtue of 'modesty', Mahmood illustrates that hijab is not the only way 'Muslim modesty' can be expressed, but rather is often reduced in Western discourse as the central, primary way modesty is expressed. She argues that there are other

ways Islamic modesty can be expressed other than through the hijab. Mahmood states that the motivations of veiled women are seen in “terms of stated models of sociological causality (such as protest, economic necessity, anomie, or utilitarian strategy), while terms like morality, divinity, and virtue are accorded to the status of the phantom imaginings of the hegemonised” (Mahmood, 2011, p16). Mahmood calls these Islamic ideas and virtues *positive ethics* – a concept that I will draw from in the last chapter. These positive ethics can be seen as broad concepts that link to Islam in a spiritual sense, such as the duty to parents, honesty and community. I will be using Mahmood’s work to illustrate the ways in which Muslim youth articulate and perform these spiritual ideas and ‘positive ethics’ to inform and imbue their ideas of Muslimness in everyday life.

Identity

What is identity? This question has been asked hundreds if not thousands of times yet the answer to the question remains contested. Stuart Hall (1992) argued that various developments such as Marxism, psychoanalysis, feminism and ‘the linguistic turn’ of language as something that not only carries meaning, but makes meaning, have problematised the notion of identity. Furthermore, in the context of Muslim youth, the notion of identity has often been characterised as ‘a problem’ or discussed in terms of a supposed clash of civilisations (Huntington, 1996), a set of conflicting identities (Muslim vs. Canadian for example) or an ‘identity crisis’ of sorts (Gest, 2010). As there are various meanings associated with the construct of identity, it is important to consider what is meant by ‘identity’ in the context of this research.

Steph Lawler’s work is useful in addressing the study of identity, pinpointing how identity can and be usefully addressed from a sociological perspective (2014). Similar to Lawler (and

others), throughout this research, I use the term ‘identity’ in a broad way as an ‘identification’ and inclusive of both its “public manifestations – which might be called ‘roles’ or identity categories – *and* the more personal, ambivalent, reflective and reflexive sense that people have of who they are” (Lawler, 2014, p7). These identities are not mutually exclusive, absolute or bound but rather ones that can cross categories (Hall, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 2011; Lawler, 2014), creating fluid, at times different, changing, multiple, overlapping categories which cannot be seen as fixed (Hall, 1990).

Specifically, in the Muslim tradition, these public and personal identities can be broken down into three realms. Firstly, it sees identity as one’s notion of self, or *fitrah* – one’s natural essence as it is known in Islamic philosophy (Al-Ghazzali, 2000). This identity is one that is internalised and ‘felt’. This notion of self, however, does not work in isolation. Alongside somebody’s internalised ‘self’ is the perception of how others see them and how they or their identities are positioned in wider society (Brah, 2009). Charles Taylor also speaks to this point and to the dialogical nature of identity formation. He argues that when discussing the ways that a group or an individual see themselves, it is important to recognise the role of others’ perceptions of them (Taylor, 1997). These different spheres often intersect, overlap or indeed can be separate and distinct. In the case of this research, young Muslims negotiate these identities, form new ones and shift identities through their experiences, and through the banal, mundane or extraordinary encounters and events that occur in everyday life (Back, 2007; Hall, 1990). Identities are expressed and represented in a multitude of ways, embodied through talk (Hewitt, 1986), hobbies, actions, language, social media ‘likes’, dislikes and *selfies* and –particularly common for this age group – clothing, ‘style’ and dress, seen as both visible representations and expressions of identity (Lewis, 2014) and the ways they are articulated.

This approach also sees the question of identity being grounded in expressed historical, diasporic and/or national realities. This is a view where the temporal nature of identity encompasses both an ongoing negotiation of the ‘image of the past’ while being open to the possibility of the future (Bhabha, 1996, p59), meaning that young people are able to take their own histories, both personal and communal, and “reinscribe the past, reactivate it, relocate it, *resignify* it” at the moment of encounter in the times and places that they pass through in everyday life in what Bhabha calls an ‘ethics of survival’ that allows us to work through the present (ibid.).

Identity, Religion and New Ethnicities

Essential to this research is Stuart Hall’s discussion of the ‘impossibility of identities’ and ‘new ethnicities’ (1996) where identities are seen as fluid rather than permanent and need to be seen at the specific points of conjecture (Hall, 1996, p431). Hall’s approach is useful in thinking about the ways alternative discourses on Muslim youth’s identities can be expressed. Hall’s notion of identity is one that moves away from essential categories, exclusionary discourses and bounded, racialised identities, avoiding what Gilroy (1993, p75) has called the trap of ‘ethnic absolutism’ where ‘master identity’ (Hall, 1996) can be seen as a central, social, guiding identity for an individual. This process of identity formation is not an end in any way as the very notion of identity is an unresolved, incomplete project (Hall, 1996). Hall sees identity is not a way of being but rather a *becoming*, rearticulating at points of encounter (Hall 1996, p6). In my research, I see identity as something that must be seen within contextual situations, as Hall has stated that “the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourse and practises which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into a place as the social subjects of particular discourse, and on the other hand, the processes which produce

subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us (Hall, 1996, p6)”.

Seeing identities as ‘points’ of temporary attachment and the way they are continually made, remade, articulated, negotiated and formed at the point of encounter and then negotiated once again is a useful way to look at how young Muslims’ multiple identities shift, are performed and expressed. Following Hall’s work, I seek to break down essentialised notions of Muslim identity, moving away from seeing identities as a series of absolutes. Hall’s ‘new ethnicities’ (Hall, 1996) in particular is vital as it questions both racial dualism and essential categories of being, acknowledging the complex, nuanced nature of identity, highlighting the unique and ever-changing process of identity and encounter (1996). Along with Hall, Les Back’s work on young people’s identities and sense of belonging are performed within the realms of everyday, urban life provides a profound site for transcultural communication and is also important and relevant to my research on Muslim youth (Back, 1996).

Much scholarly work on Muslim youth tends to focus on the Muslim identity as an absolute, essential, settled and fixed identity – one that supersedes other identities or one that conflicts with other notions of identity, presenting what is often identified as an ‘identity crisis’ (Gest, 2010). While the idea of Muslim identity as one that at times supersedes other forms of identity is one that I did see in my research, it is still crucial to use Hall’s argument that people and groups should not be reduced to their cultural significance where one ‘master identity’ dictates one’s views, motivations and articulations of self (Hall, 1996). Therefore, while I did see a few instances of a ‘prominent Muslim identity’ that continued to inform the way other identities were negotiated, I argue that young Muslims’ identities cannot presume to be guided by their

Muslimness *de facto*, which I will talk about in greater depth later in the thesis. In addition, we must abandon the notion that race or religion or an intersection thereof function to fix identity as a static notion that is predicated on the idea that one's politics or affiliations are essentially derived from one's religious identifications. Rather, what is needed is a conception of identity that both recognises the possibility of moments of 'connection' to Muslim identity for Muslim youth and the negotiations that occur within these moments while opening up space to negotiate difference in all its manifestations without falling back on the 'guarantee of race' (Gilroy, Hier and Bolaria, 2006, p9) or, in this case, religion as a prominent indicator of identity.

This section has looked at the theoretical approaches to identity that are useful when looking at Muslim youth identities. They do not, however, adequately address the complexity of Muslimness as discussed in the previous section and how Muslimness cuts through, against and exists alongside other forms of identity. Muslimness as an identity also shifts and is an unfixed identity that is negotiated but I argue that there are times where these attachments are held for longer periods of time before they again shift and move into something else. In this research, young Muslims negotiated extremely complex, overlapping identities, both religious and otherwise, at times instantaneously and sometimes with premeditated intent, while at other times when responding to a particular context within hierarchical power structures, times and places. This is not dissimilar to other kinds of identity negotiations; however, there are times where youths' Muslimness becomes a point of difference that cuts across other forms of identity.

Belonging

Closely connected to notions of identity is the idea of belonging. Like identity, belonging is not static but changes and bends. Belonging can also be seen as a process – in my fieldwork, many young Muslims fled in and out of notions of belonging depending on their situation at that moment. In this section, I will first discuss the notion of belonging on an emotional and intersectional, structural level and secondly on a national level.

Nira Yuval-Davis' discussion on the intersectional nature of belonging is particularly useful for this research. I will build upon her understanding of belonging towards different analytical levels: social location; identifications and emotional attachments. The ways in which young Muslims struggle to belong, negotiate challenge and resist belonging is a key argument that illustrates their desire and reconciles often notions of belonging that are seen as conflicted (i.e. belonging to an ethnicity, religion or nation). One of the aims of this research is to explore the dynamic process of belonging for young Muslims in the spheres addressed by Yuval-Davis, but more specifically, to explore young people's sense of belonging within the spaces they embody – how they belong to the ideological and physical space of the *Ummah* (the local and global Islamic community) and the idea of national belonging, or 'belonging to' the country of Canada.

Social Location

Yuval-Davis argues that when people are described as belonging to a certain gender, class, race, age group or nation, what is also being talked about is how these people are positioned in their social and economic locations. These distinctions have implications in terms of their relationship with the notion of power in society (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p3). These categories – such as a black man or a middle-class woman – can be positioned within multiple hierarchies

of power (ibid.). In this research, for example, I have found that for many light-skinned Arab youths, their proximity to whiteness, regardless of their class, can bring them closer to the realm of 'power' and their sense of belonging to Canada and how they belong to the nation, which in turn has implications for the local and the way they live their everyday lives. How a young person is socially located within a situation often has implications on their sense of belonging. This intersectional approach is crucial for understanding the complexity of belonging and how race, age, gender and class intersect with religion in Muslim youth's lives. Yuval-Davis' understanding of the importance of social locations is extremely useful in my research; it does however simplify difference to fall within certain categories and thus does not adequately take into account the alterity within those categories and intersections in the way this research aims to explore.

Yuval-Davis' conception of identifications and emotional attachments is also relevant to this research. This can be described as the desire to belong and the emotional investment put into wanting to belong (Yuval-Davis, 2006). This type of belonging is not exclusive and runs alongside others' constructions of what constitutes belonging. For this research, I would also expand this definition to include a construction of belonging that encompasses the idea of 'safety' or 'feeling safe' as Les Back's work on youth in Deptford illustrates as well as the performative dimension of constructions of belonging (Bell, 1999). Young Muslims in my research articulated and performed notions of belonging to particular spaces in these terms, in terms of physical safety, freedom from surveillance and safety from police and other authority figures that made them feel unwanted and vulnerable in certain spaces. Emotions shift according to different times and situations, the connections they feel, and the attachments they make also shift and change. As Yuval-Davis states, "the emotional components of people's constructions of themselves and their identities become more central the more threatened and

less secure they feel” (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p6). This again connects to Back’s work on youth – an essential resource to my research – and his work on ‘safe spaces’ and how young people feel safe and their sense of belonging within the spaces they inhabit, which also impacts their constructions and expressions of identity (Back, 2006).

National Belongings

The nature of Muslim youths’ subjectivities *vis-à-vis* belonging or longing to belong to ‘the *Ummah*’, or the spiritual, ideological religious community of Muslims, is often presented as a problem (Gest, 2010; Taylor, 2007). Again, Doultzai’s concept of the Muslim International is relevant here. His argument that the civil rights movement shifted the black international movement to one that was broken into nation states is similar to what has happened in Canada post-9/11. The notion of the *Ummah* was increasingly being articulated as a threatening notion to that of the state. Alongside this, as a survival tactic of sorts, as Muslim communities were being told “they don’t belong” to Canada (Siddiqui), Muslim communities began articulating their identities as Canadian Muslims. This differentiated them from American Muslims as well as Muslims that were connected to the ‘global world’ even if only through symbolic language. This hyphenation also downplayed other forms of identity be it race, ethnicity, gender or class. No longer were they seen as Arab-Canadians, or Indian-Canadians, but rather reductively marked as Muslims, and by their Muslimness alone (Ali, 2014).

Although this desire to belong to the nation or to articulate oneself as Canadian was not really a common one in my research, it was nonetheless expressed in different ways. A sense of belonging in Canada was demonstrated in particular ways, be it administrative (taxes), through education (schools and universities) or through ‘Canadian’ things as simple as loving the Leafs

(Toronto Hockey Club) or reprimanding a friend for going to the American chain Dunkin Donuts rather than the Canadian chain Tim Hortons because it was unpatriotic. In my research, everyday life and the way young people perform a sense of belonging and a desire to belong exhibits itself in curious, subtle and also obvious ways. Yuval-Davis' intersectional approach on belonging as well as Les Back's work on youth and spaces within the city both shed light on unpacking young Muslim's tentative relationship and sense of belonging in Canada.

Diasporic Belongings

Considering the nuances and multiplicities of diasporas and the various ways they are expressed and lived in the Canadian context is important in order to break down the essential ideas of the 'Muslim' and of 'Muslim communities' in Canada. Many of my participants were either recent immigrants or from immigrant families. Current understandings of diaspora are as a 'people' dispersed from their communities; as transnational (Brah, 1996); and as communities making new spaces of belonging away from 'home'. These hold true in my own findings to an extent but at that the same time I noticed different types of diasporic families – ones who somewhat temporarily settled in Canada and eventually moved back or families who due to work opportunities were split up continentally.

Through my fieldwork, I found that almost half of the young people in my research had had experiences of multiple migration and had feelings of multiple 'homes'. Indeed, 'diaspora is an incomplete project' (Hesse, 2007). There are multiple variations of diaspora but one thing they all share is a temporal relationship with the country they 'live in'. Immigration, practically speaking, is often not a 'one-way' journey where ties are broken from the originating country (Saunders, 2012); this was the case with some participants, especially those who are refugees, for whom immigration as an ongoing process of moving from country-to-country while

maintaining relationships and bonds in other countries. This was found to be quite important in young people's identity constructions. Muslim youth in these situations often developed a fluid, temporal and messy sense of belonging and not-belonging. The desire to 'fit in' becomes less important and the desire to lay claims even less so. This is not to say that there is no intention to 'belong' but that rather that the desire to belong is not confined to one particular country or region, ethnicity or citizenship, or in this case belonging to 'Canada' as a nation. For example, Zayn (aged 19) gets along with his schoolmates in Hamilton and has a lot of friends there during the school year. He has a job and is a prominent member of the youth club. But when he goes back to Saudi Arabia, he has the same things there. He feels he belongs in both places. This transnational understanding of diaspora and belonging is essential in understanding the complicated ways in which Muslim youth find belonging in their everyday lives.

This phenomenon could easily be seen as being caught up in the class of civilisations narrative (Huntington, 2002) or contributing to the 'caught between cultures' trap of young people being victims of the competing forces of modernity and traditional cultures (Modood, 2010). I personally view it as a new diasporic reality which is often transnational, where young people find spaces of belonging in the places they inhabit, however many places that may be, as well as a desire for an imagined home (Brah, 1996). Brah's work on diasporic space and her conceptions of home and diaspora as being places that implicate both fixed-ness and non-fixedness (2005) are important to this research, which seeks to explore how Muslim youth find belonging and home in Canada.

Intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, class and age

In this research, I argue that between race theorists, policy theorists and the field of theology, the notion of Muslimness and religious-based identity needs to be developed further to include a range of aspects within these disciplines and the intersections between them in order to gain a greater understanding of what constitutes Muslimness. When addressed within the realms of race and ethnicity, the notion of spirituality and the feeling of being Muslim is not always addressed. Within the study of theology and practice or policy discourse around community, security, immigration and minority groups, the intersections of race, class and ethnicity are also not sufficiently addressed. These ways of looking at religious identity lack the interdisciplinary approach needed to think about Muslim youth and fully appreciate the effect of various racial and ethnic backgrounds, classes and ethnicities, multi-racial and overlapping diasporic communities as well as the multitudes of Islams that are expressed (or not) within this group. It is my view that these things all work together simultaneously in the everyday lives of young Muslims to produce new cultures as religious identities intersect with race, class, age, gender and other forms of identity. Addressing these intersections and the ways they cut across others is a necessary tool in bringing these things to light in the way I wish to in this thesis.

Introduced as a named discourse by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989, intersectionality has come to be understood as how race, class, gender and sexuality together make up intersecting systems of power (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Hill Collins, 2009, p88). Like Crenshaw, I see these intersections as a fluid, collective set of ideas that can help us think about social inequalities and power relations and how they differ within different times and places. It is also key to see how these identities are constructed and negotiated within multiple systems of power and how these intersections can be seen as a social process that is ongoing and fluid. But rather than seeing intersectionality as an approach confined by these categories, what is needed is a

‘thinking across categories’, or as Yuval-Davis calls it, a ‘transversal approach’ (Yuval-Davis, 2006, Davis, 1010) where focus is given to the ‘sites’ and contact zones where multiple identities are performed rather than on the categories themselves (Swanton, 2003). Rather than theorising Muslim youths’ identities as an abstract set of categories and experiences, it is important to think about how these identities are formed within social structures, hierarchies and structures of power. This way of looking at religious identity is one that falls in line with how race theorists and ethnographers have looked at the idea of race and how race is situated and negotiated through everyday relations and interactions (Back, 2005,2012;Alexander, 2000; Nayak, 2017).

Hall’s notion of race as a discursive system (1990) is based on the notion that race is never entirely ideological or cultural but situated in everyday social and economic relations. The convergence of religious identity in everyday situations with other various strands of identity such as gender, sexuality and class requires the ‘cross-cutting’ of categories and intersecting strands of identity within young Muslims identities. This view of race aligns with the view of Muslim youth in this research that aims to further develop the intersections of race, gender, class, age and Muslimness in everyday life.

As is the case with the wider population of Muslim Canadians, which I will discuss in more detail in chapter two, my participants came from different racial backgrounds. Prominent backgrounds in this research were black, south Asian and Arab. Of interest here are the nuances that exist within racial categories and how they are further complicated according to the participants’ backgrounds, ethnicity, gender and class. For example, the position of a young male, Somali refugee – in Canada associated with criminality (Saunders) – is quite different from that of a youth who is Black, born in Canada and middle-class. This racial nuance is also

evident when looking at Arabs or participants from Middle Eastern backgrounds such as Turkish or Iranian/Persian who hold a precarious racial space within the field. Suhair Majaj's work on Arab Americans and the concept of 'honorary whiteness' is useful in understanding the nature of racial hierarchies within my group of young Muslim participants (Suhair Majaj, 1999).

My research also builds on the existing work on the examination of young people's identities that are expressed and performed within multicultural and urban and everyday environments (Back, 1994; Hewitt 1988; Willis, 1990). These studies provide a strong base from which to understand the relationship between culture, class, identity and race.

Claire Alexander's work on the Asian Gang has also furthered our understanding of the 'complex intersection of age, race and gender' (Alexander, 2000, p127) where issues of race, crime, violence and fear are highly racialised and gendered. This work also highlights the nature of young people's identities, exploring the binaries of representation and reality that young people like my participants negotiate on an everyday basis (Alexander, 2007).

Suki Ali's (2003) work on mixed race and her discussion of class and race in particular is relevant to this research. As class in Canada is not often spoken about in the national discourse (Porter, 2015), in this thesis I demonstrate that issues around class are pertinent when researching Muslim youth. Class, in the British sense, does not exist in the same way in Canada as a structured, recognisable concept (ibid.). In Canada, class works in different ways, and for the lives of Muslim youth in this research, class positions are often performed in relation to consumerism. These class identities and positioning are often negotiated through spending money and through the use of 'buffers' (Ali, 2003). Buffers can be seen as a way into spaces

that young people may otherwise be excluded from. I have talked about buffers in relation to class and have also included the idea of the ‘exceptional qualities’ that youths have that often provide them with a temporary ‘buffer’ in certain situations and circumstances. I will talk about this further in Chapter Four.

These texts provide a framework for understating the fluidity and ever-changing nature of young Muslims’ complicated and multiple identities and how they are situated in race, gender, class and age among other categories. However, ethnographic research, perhaps due to the focus on race, gender and class in prior analysis, has resulted in a relative lack of work that also takes religion seriously. In the last few decades, within a post-9/11 narrative, discussions and research surrounding securitisation, criminality and radicalisation of young Muslims has come to the forefront and has thus left a gap in the research. Existing theories do not adequately address the nature and shifting nature of youth’s religious identities and the role they play in everyday life. Current understandings of race, class and culture do not fully capture the role played by religious subjectivities, spirituality, religious practice and belief.

In a discussion with Les Back, Stuart Hall has talked about the role of events such as 9/11 and its aftermath and potential influence on identity politics (Back and Hall, 2009). The role of religion in identity formation has always been a complicated one and as Hall states, is not one that ‘magically’ arose out of September 11th but is a question that is increasingly contested as the debates surrounding Muslim as a racial category emerge (Back and Hall, 2009, p47; Tryer, 2008) and as the ‘Muslim Other’ becomes a new folk devil (Kundani, 2007).

The daily happenings of everyday life and the transruptions and negotiations that take place within these contact zones and moments of encounter, as well as how they are performed and

the way they produce culture, are key features of my research. As such, ethnographically important work such as Les Back's (2005, 2015) and Dan Swanton's (2008) that highlight everyday, ordinary encounters and the intersections of context, history and lived experience are useful in this discussion. Adding to that, Peek's (2005) study of Muslim university students and Moghissi's (2009) study on the Muslim diaspora in Canada stressed the ordinary, everyday and challenging existing notions of essentialised, static identities and are important when looking at the banal and mundane events in young Muslim's lives. However, both works concentrated on religiously observant Muslims and presented the nature of their observance as static, unchanging positions. I would like to build on their work and take it further in order to explore both the fluid nature of religious identity as well as expressions of Muslimness outside of the lens of praxis or the many overlapping ways in which Islam, religion and spirituality are expressed by young Muslims in every day environments, within various contexts, times and places.

CHAPTER OUTLINES

Chapter 2: Setting the Scene

This chapter outlines my methodological framework, my positionality in the field and as a researcher. The context and geographical locations that field work took places in are introduced and are followed by a detailed discussion of all field sites. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on ethical considerations. Short biographies of the research participants, introducing the key Muslim youths who took part in this research are detailed in Appendix II.

Chapter 3: All Routes Lead to Home

This chapter explores notions of belonging to the nation and what it means to be ‘Canadian’. I also discuss Muslim youths’ understanding of Canada as a political entity and how they see their relationship to the nation as residents, citizens, and as self-identified Muslims. Three overlapping narratives will guide this chapter: one tells the story of a new immigrant; the second is of a youth who was born and raised in Canada; and the third is an account of being Canadian as told by a refugee from Iraq. These stories highlight the different ways in which young people came to ‘be Canadian’ and/or relate to the notion of Canadian-ness and belonging in Canada.

Chapter 4: Hanging out

This chapter discusses Muslim youths’ sense of belonging and performances of belonging in their local spaces. In it, I provide an overview of the local spaces, cities and towns they live in and move through. Within those spaces, young Muslims spend most of their free time ‘hanging out’ in three key spaces: the mall, public transportation and in cars. In these spaces, youth are often surveilled; however, this surveillance takes different forms according to gender and class and is further complicated by race. I also discuss the key role consumerism plays in Muslim youths’ performances of belonging. It discusses young Muslims’ relationships with salespeople, people on the street, acquaintances and friends as well as the ways they negotiate their space within their local spaces.

Chapter 5: More than a Feeling

This research began with the question of ‘what does it mean to be Muslim?’ This chapter focuses on this question through the stories of my participants. Using primarily data from

interviews, young people discuss their relationship with religion, spirituality and belonging to the greater '*Ummah*'. In this chapter, a distinction is made between religious identity and identities linked to spirituality. At the core of this chapter is the ways in which Muslim youth connect to notions of Muslimness, spirituality and the role they feel Islam plays in their lives.

Chapter 6: Alchemies

The concluding chapter discusses the implications and themes that emerged from this research. I provide an overview of the key findings and what they mean for the study of Muslim youth in Canada. This chapter will also outline the implications this research has on broader understandings of young people's religious identities. I conclude the chapter, and this thesis, with an overview of my key contributions and potential areas of future research that have grown out of this study and with a reflection on the ways in which this ethnographic work provides new spaces from which to research Muslimness and Muslim youth.

CHAPTER TWO: SETTING THE SCENE

Methodological Approach and Immersing into the Field

As a Muslim by confession, a Canadian by birth, a Londoner by locality, and a woman of colour whose parents are immigrants, questions of identity have had a profound influence on my life. My self-identification as a Canadian Muslim is a result of a number of factors including the constant negotiation of multiple and often competing factors of identity formation and the impact of multiple racisms. As someone who does not wear the hijab yet considers herself to be a “practising” Muslim woman, I want to find my place within the contested space of Muslimness. I have grown up mediating the same social tensions which I now study. These tensions, like the secular vs. the sacred, are ones that I am intimately familiar with and will explore further in a different historical context. In this research, I am going back to the cities where I spent a lot of time over the years and to the locations of my personal negotiations with identity, religion, multiculturalism and nation.

My own experiences as a secondary school teacher in Ontario, then as a senior policy analyst specialising in diversity, equity and multiculturalism for the Government of Canada, have given me a particular perspective, as I have worked with youth as a teacher and also as an advisor on issues related to youth, schools and diversity. Other than my own personal background, the topic of Muslim youth in particular became even more ‘personal’ after a former student of mine called Saad Gaya, along with 18 other young people under the age of 22, was arrested and subsequently found guilty of being part of a conspiracy to commit acts of terror on Canadian soil (Teontino, 2006). Before this, issues and talk of security and terrorism in Canada were largely connected to ‘somewhere else’ – either abroad or in the US and

predominately to adults. This terror plot was considered to be ‘home-grown’ and orchestrated by youths who had been raised in Canada. Along with that, these were not youths from the inner city but rather from the suburbs – relatively middle-class, white, and affluent communities. Insecurities began to threaten the cocoon of the suburbs and many Muslims in the area were scared to leave their houses; some told their children to take off their hijabs and shave their beards so they were not identified (Baksh, 2011). “Our house is on fire” said a prominent Muslim scholar, in a way blaming Muslims for what had transpired – “we have to put out our fire before we worry about the rest of the world” (Yusuf, 2006).

At this time in Canada, as the gaze turned inwards, fears of Muslim youth as a group specifically ramped up. At the time, John Thompson, President of the Mackenzie Institute, a Toronto think-tank, summarised the young suspects stating:

“These are kids at a transition between Islamic society and Western society. A lot of people will get militarised if they're unsure of their own identity. They're just young and stupid. If you're 17, bored, restless, you want to meet girls – ‘hey, be a radical’. The cops have a nickname for it – the jihad generation.”

Muslim community leaders started to ask questions in Friday their sermons, asking worshippers “where did we go wrong?” This perception of Muslim youth in Canada started to grow, and the more it did, the more I started to wonder about Saad and what had happened. “How did I not know?” I asked myself. “Surely there had to be something that I had missed?” As I asked myself this question, experts on Muslim youth continued to crop up seemingly out of nowhere. There were all kinds of explanations given as to why this happened, most of them echoing Thompson’s ‘clash of civilisations’ argument that Muslim youth were having an identity crisis and were caught between two worlds.

What I became interested in understanding over the course of this research was what Muslim youth faced, what their days were like and if cases like Saad's and a 'jihad generation' were truly something to worry about. But what I found was that being young and Muslim was like being like other youth in Canada except that they are 'being young people' within the current political, socio-cultural context of young Muslims, with Muslims in general being feared, suspect, racialised and marginalised – this obviously influences the way Muslim youth live, and how they find belonging and home in Canada.

Canada, the Greater Toronto Region (GTA), suburbs and Southern Ontario are important spaces to consider within sociological and policy spheres as the multicultural reputation of Canada (Adams, 2010) coupled with the region's cultural diversity contrasts sharply with youth's everyday encounters with 'the nation'. The Muslim youth in this research were selected because they were accessible to me as I had lived in the area and initially because I was interested in researching the suburbs and areas outside of Toronto. I did not simply go back to the space where I grew up but also went to Toronto to see what is going on in cities like Hamilton, Burlington, Mississauga and Oakville. These outskirts are not often looked at in academic research on Muslim youth in Canada, which tends to focus on Toronto 'proper', and issues dealing with 'inner-city life'.

In this chapter I will discuss the qualitative methodology that I used in order to access the everyday lives of my young Muslim study participants. This was born out of a conviction that lived experiences and the lives of young people needed to be explored through in-depth, immersive research techniques such as ethnography and in-depth interviews (Willis, 1980). Following that, I will further explore my own place in this history in the local community where I grew up and where I returned for this research. I will then introduce the field sites where I

conducted the research and finish with a discussion of ethical considerations. Biographies of the young people who took part in this research are listed in Appendix II.

Immersing Myself in the Field

I have already discussed my personal connection to the research at the beginning of this chapter. Early on in my fieldwork, an encounter took place which highlighted for me that I was simply not a bystander but was positioned in the field as a Muslim woman within the Muslim communities that I felt I belonged to but had also been absent from for a number of years.

During the month of Ramadan, a few months into my fieldwork, I was in the lounge area of a youth club with a few young people. It was coming up to the Maghrib time when those youths who were fasting would break their fast. People were getting ready and arranging food and drink for everyone. My job was to help Hassan make fruit punch with a few of his friends. I didn't know him very well at this point, but he was always very friendly towards me. Someone ran in and told us "Hurry! Only ten minutes left!". We continued what we were doing and Hassan began to explain to me that it was a few minutes to Maghrib, and that sunset is the time when Muslims break their fast. He explained a bit more about what Ramadan is and eventually I said to him that I knew what Ramadan was, and that I was a Muslim and was also fasting. He seemed shocked.

The first thing he said was "*YOU are a Muslim?*" I said "Yeah, why are you so surprised?" He then told me that he was just shocked because I didn't 'look like' a Muslim. So I asked him what that meant and he told me: "*No offence, it's the clothes you wear and all the stuff you know, Muslim girls don't do that. They don't wear stuff like that stuff*".

I was completely taken aback. Finally, I managed to ask “What does a Muslim girl look like then?” and then we started talking about that for a while until we were called to break our fast. A few days later, Hassan apologised to me. He said he didn’t mean what he said and that he was sorry if he hurt my feelings. I told him not to worry and that he didn’t hurt my feelings. Truthfully though – he did.

The thing that I learned from this incident was the realisation that in order to do this research I had to recognise that – as a Muslim woman – I was part of this research. Things would be said that I might or might not like or agree with. People like Hassan, while well-meaning and honest, may say things that might sting a little, and make me question my own relationship with my religion and spirituality. In some ways, Hassan’s words made me feel like a ‘bad Muslim’, if only for a short time. But being able to have these conversations provided me with an opportunity to start a different conversation – in this case what a Muslim woman ‘looks like’. These uncomfortable situations often led to the opening up of a space for discussions that would not have come up otherwise. Knowing that I was also implicated in the discussion sometimes helped young Muslims feel like I was not just ‘taking from them’, but that I was in my own way a part of it too. I also had to deal with the way I was positioned in the same discourse as my participants, as both a threat and with questions and pressures about being ‘Muslim enough’ within Muslim communities.

As a researcher, I had to constantly negotiate and reassess these tensions, asking myself questions about my role as a researcher throughout the process. Should I wear hijab at the mosque or not? When someone is saying something that I know to be incorrect in terms of religious ‘rules’, do I correct them? Or do I pretend not to know what they are talking about? If I pretend not to know, will they find out on another day that I did in fact know and did not

say anything? Will they then not trust me? Or will they trust me more? These were all issues I had to evaluate and re-evaluate according to the time and place I was in, and according to who I was with. Generally speaking, I tried as much as possible to be ‘the way I was’ and to do what I would do normally in my own life but I had to constantly bear in mind my role as a researcher and the power dynamics of myself as an older, female, middle-class researcher and them as participants as racialised, Muslim youths, many of whom I was to find out later were in precarious situations.

There were many advantages of being a native researcher, not only in terms of sharing the same religion as my participants but also, in some cases, growing up in the same community as them. This gave me an understanding of some of the spaces and histories of places they spent time in. My knowledge of Islam – studied, lived, and practised – along with my ability to speak Arabic and Urdu helped me understand the nuances of many discussions on religious and spiritual beliefs and practices. It also illuminated some seemingly mundane acts practised, such as only smoking weed after ten because young people only started smoking after the last prayer of the day so they were not praying while they were high. These are examples of the intricacies of being a native researcher and the challenges that arose for me, which at the same time enhanced my understanding of the nuances and particularities of both cultural and religious expressions. My knowledge was therefore situated. This understanding became increasingly important as I defined my key sites and started the fieldwork.

Methodological Approach

The conceptual framework outlined in Chapter One has grown organically out of the methodological approach that I used to access the everyday lives of the young Muslims

involved in my research. In seeking to understand the nature of Muslim youth's identities, I want to focus on the areas of encounter and the places and ways in which this identity is being shaped. The impacts of migration, gender roles, sexual orientation, class, internal and external racisms, interpretive debates and the phenomenon of fundamentalism need to be examined. My contention is that the Muslim identity, although at times influenced by the mosque (which is often seen as the primary space for Muslim encounters), is significantly shaped outside the parameters of the 'religious realm'. Of particular interest to me is how new forms of culture emerge to express these identities and whether the development of culture is an indication that these identities are being accepted, while simultaneously providing catalysts for further identity development and definition. For example, donning the hijab is not merely an act of faith but also a contested cultural image that can have political and social connotations.

In order to examine these issues, I used the following methods: participant observation and qualitative, semi-structured and open-ended interviews. In total, taking account youth present in all field sites who were Muslim, 1640 Muslim youth were part of this research. More specifically, 152 youth were observed more closely through participant observation. Of those youth, I spent the most time with 70 young people and their friends on a regular basis. These 70 youth primarily made up the core of this research and were the ones who were 'part of the scene'. Of the 70 youth, 42 were interviewed. The 42 youth interviewed were my key participants, youth I saw or spoke to on a regular, sometimes daily basis. All 70 youth were not interviewed as some of these participants were friends and acquaintances of key participants who were not regularly present.

Central to this study is the notion of the 'everyday', or the lived experiences of Muslim youth. In this case, an ethnographic approach was clearly needed (Lofland, 2004; Marcus, 1998).

Much of the data in the areas of inquiry I am concerned with on Muslim Youth in North America has come from the work of Haddad and Esposito (2000). While beneficial, this type of research was done via questionnaires and resulted in closed-ended answers lacking the depth and analysis to engage with the realities and experiences of Muslim youth's everyday lives. Thus, a qualitative, ethnographic approach is not only preferred but necessary.

Participant-observation (PO)

My primary research method was participant-observation (PO). This provided me with the primary data needed as well assisted me in selecting the young people I interviewed. PO provides a unique space in which the power dynamics inherent in the research process can attempt to be addressed (Seale, 2004) and that can reconcile the unknown and unpredictable effects of the research process (Bulmer and Solomos, 2004, p143).

PO enabled me to understand the young people being researched and the surrounding environment, as well as their interactions with fellow young people, staff and administration. Furthermore, PO allowed me to participate in the 'everyday' qualities I aimed to explore. A greater understanding of these experiences cannot only be extrapolated by answers given in an interview but also by observing the 'everyday' interactions of Muslim youth where actions, attitudes and non-verbal clues play heavily. When a youth takes time out of their day to pray, while another plays a board game in the same room, that is very telling, but is something you cannot understand entirely through interviews. Also, as an interviewer, this method helped me develop a rapport with the participants and gatekeepers and their surroundings, which I feel was conducive to delving into deeper discussions during interviews. Through my participant-observation, I selected 10-15 young people from each site to observe more closely.

In order to fully ‘experience’ these sites, I took minimal notes during my observations, further assisting in developing a relationship with the participants and decreasing the gap between myself as the interviewer and them as interviewees. I got involved in the sites whenever possible in whatever manner the administrative staff saw fit. Therefore, taking notes during observations was not feasible. However, I recorded my observations each day at each site in my field notes, which were either verbally recorded or written up at the end of every observation in order to ensure that the events of the day were still fresh in my mind.

In-depth Interviews

My secondary method was face-to-face interviews (semi-structured and open format). As mentioned above, 42 youth were interviewed. This enabled me to explain complicated questions and use more unstructured questions while taking advantage of observing non-verbal clues and attitudes (Seale 2004, p165). This method allowed me to access information about how people identified and self-identified as young Muslims in Canada because it was intimate, private and anonymous. It also helped me to understand their histories and backgrounds. I had got to know these young people and they trusted me and wanted to share their stories with me. This helped me further understand the kinds of performances that I observed during the PO parts of the research because I was able to ask participants to clarify questions and issues that arose during the fieldwork.

The interviews were informal, semi-structured around certain themes, with some questions asked sequentially; however, most were open-ended and unstructured, “designed to use the views of the interviewee in detail” (Seale, 2004, p165). The response format was open where

respondents formulated their own answers rather than choosing from a predetermined set (ibid, p171).

The first thing I said in the interview was “Tell me about yourself”. Responses did not always follow the same trajectory as some answered with more background information about where they were born and about their upbringing while others talked more about their current state of mind or told me about their hobbies, likes and dislikes. This initial discussion provided me with a starting point that I could elaborate on or lead to other pertinent questions. It was also an attempt to conduct more informal interviews that were more like conversations and where the participants felt more at ease. This was also an opportunity to let participants lead the conversation and speak about what they wanted to. As this is a data-driven thesis, where analysis came from the data rather than a pre-existing position or opinion, the use of face-to-face interviews contributed to a more personal feeling, creating a safe, private space from which to discuss issues that participants may not be comfortable talking about in public. This private atmosphere was particularly required when participants talked about family matters, difficult issues, their childhoods, and, for refugees, what their life was like before they came to Canada. At the same time, while ‘words’ were important, I also paid attention to the non-verbal elements of interviews in terms of performativity and discourse. (Rapley, 2001). Interviews were more of a conversation rather than straight questions and answers, so it was important to retain focus on the ‘centrality of listening’ (Back, 2012, p23) and developing an ‘everyday ethics of attentiveness (ibid.)’ towards participants, and a genuine interest in who they are and what they have to say. Back (2010, p9) has also stressed this point, referring to Silverman’s (2007) statement that even ‘manufactured’ interview data can be useful if understood as an “activity awaiting analysis and not as a picture awaiting a commentary”. There were also times when participants initially did not have very much to say. At those times, I asked them more general

questions about their day and what plans they had for the weekend, which was usually helpful in getting the conversation going.

During the interviews, I addressed a few key themes. We talked about family, school, friends, aspirations and issues around Islam, gender and race. We also discussed wider political narratives around radicalism, security, and terrorism and what their opinions were about those things and if they had any effect on their lives. I asked specific questions about belonging, Muslimness and identity such as “What does it mean to you to be Muslim?”, “What does that look like?” and “How do you feel about that?” I also asked them about living in Canada and whether they felt Canadian and whether they felt a sense of belonging there. As many of these themes came up in the fieldwork, I also used interviews as a way of ‘filling in the blanks’ about things that I didn’t fully understand, or details that I didn’t know (e.g. “Where were you born and raised?”, “What’s your story?”, “Your background?”) The interviews also helped clarify things that had happened during PO. It was also a space to discuss broader issues around spirituality, the nation and other matters such as love, relationships, personal struggles and family problems.

Most participants were interviewed three times, mostly because we did not have enough time to go over everything in one session. I had expected they would only take an hour but as I conducted the interviews in the last two months of my fieldwork, I had gotten to know the participants quite well and they were very open and talkative about things by this point. I never had to ‘convince’ anybody to be interviewed. In fact, I had a few people who were not core participants in my research ask if they could be interviewed. I was later to understand that they just wanted someone to talk to – an indication of how many Muslim youth lack opportunities where this is possible. Most interviews took three days with one- or two-hour interviews on

each day. I tried to do the interviews in consecutive days so we could easily start again where we had left off.

In some ways, the things discussed in the interviews surprised me. As I had done over a year of fieldwork by this point, I thought I had pieced together my participants' stories. Specifically, the last topic we generally discussed ("What does it mean to you to be Muslim?") was something that did not necessarily coincide with the things I had observed during PO. For example, one of my participants, Gina, did not eat pork. As most of my participants did not eat pork, I did not necessarily see this as something ideological but rather a typical thing you would find in a Muslim family. However, in her interview we talked about how this performance and notion of praxis was connected to other issues, such as a connection to her parents who had passed away. Not eating pork for her was not necessarily only about *halal* and *haram* (lawful and unlawful) but was connected to something else. I will talk more about Gina's story in Chapter Five.

Social networks and texting

Social networking

In addition to my visits to the youth clubs and the face-to-face interactions I had with my research participants, social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat were utilised to communicate with the participants. In addition, we communicated via email, text messages and texting applications such as WhatsApp, Blackberry Messenger (BBM) and iMessage. These communication platforms were initially used to keep in touch or clarify the contents of conversations we had, and rather than being 'virtual ethnographies' (Friedenberg, 2011) these platforms were used to support and extend understandings of the key

themes of the research. However, even when I was in Canada we still kept in touch and had conversations on these platforms in addition to our face-to-face interactions. It became clear to me early on in my field work that for many of the youths in my study, texting and Facebook were often the primary methods they used to communicate with each other and their friends. One youth messaged me, *“I’m easy to reach - Facebook me, BBM me, snap me, text me, call me. In that order.”* (Sana, June 2012).

While I was in the UK and/or when primary research participants were not accessible face-to-face, we started keeping in contact via Facebook. This was not always welcome, of course, and I often had Facebook Messenger pop up late into the night. One day, Sana (aged 17, August 2012) kept messaging me until I responded. When I finally did, it turned out she wanted to talk to me about a fight she had just had with her mother. She had never spoken about not getting along with her mother before and via Messenger, she was very open about what had happened. We continued to interact in this way this and often we talked about things much more openly than in person. This opened up a new set of conversations, many of them quite thoughtful and personal.

The Facebook Messenger chat between myself and Sana introduced a new way of conversing – one that was more private. I felt that it showed that she trusted me to a certain degree to share this information. I treated these ‘conversations’ as private and never brought them up when we were around other people. More generally, Facebook conversations between participants allowed me to keep in touch with them and build upon our existing ‘in-person’ relationship (Ellison and Boyd, 2008) when I was in the UK and when I was not ‘in the field’. It allowed the young people to chat with me when they felt like ‘talking’, which they often did, often late at night.

Similar things happened with Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp where publicly viewable conversations took place between myself and participants, participants with each other and participants with their peers and ‘random twitter people’ (Hanna, Aug 23, 2013). Sometimes one of the youths would ‘tag’ me along with others in a tweet about something as mundane as a tweet exclaiming “*I want pizzzaa*” (Roze, Dec 14, 2012) to other posts about the deteriorating situation in Syria.

Instagram and Snapchat are social networking platforms where people share photos with one another. A few of the young people, primarily females, added me to their Snapchat and Instagram. I also use my Instagram account regularly, so this was a good way for us to keep in touch and also see what kinds of things the participants liked. The communication on this platform ranged from sharing photos about clothes they want or fashion inspirations to places they went and friends they went with. I noticed that photos of events shared on Instagram were often not shared on Facebook, and if they were they were usually not framed in the same way. I brought this up with a few of the young people during their interviews. One of them told me “*Instagram is the real me. I’m friends with people I don’t know really. They like the things I like. They like my style. When I post photos on Facebook, all the brown people see it and talk shit about me behind my back. They don’t even like me*”.

Adding to this, Arabic, Hindi and Urdu words also had their own texting shorthand – some of which I already knew and others which were new to me. This text speak was a different language, with a unique pace (rapid and immediate) with its own set of rules – a language that I had to learn quite quickly in order to keep up with the conversation and respond in kind to. Furthermore, texting was used by participants while they were simultaneously having

conversations in person. For example, on one occasion, during a cooking class, one of the youths was asked by the person conducting the class if he knew what he was doing (trying to blanch the tomatoes). He responded by saying “*Yeah, yeah... got it*” (Amir, April 2011). A few seconds later, he sent a text to his friend who was also in the class who laughed and showed it to me. The text said “*How the hell do u blank a tomato? Ask that girl [me]*”. There were many occasions such as this one where texting was used as a form of cross-talk (Hewitt, 1986).

Text messaging

The use of BBM, WhatsApp and texting introduced a whole new level of not only instant conversation but language of communication. This is where I got a crash-course on acronyms and abbreviations that I had never encountered before. FML (fuck my life), IDK (I don’t know), TTYL (talk to you later), ATAB (ain’t that a bitch) and the often-used (and overused) YOLO (you only live once) were now a part of my fieldwork vernacular. This is in no way meant to imply that the conversations were all frivolous or banal, although they often were, but even deeply sensitive topics of conversations were interspersed with texting short-hand, which often brought a short dose of humour to a heavy conversation.

I found these methods to be very useful and informative. These methods have also been used in research that has explored the communicative practices of migrant youth, as these ways of communicating are very common for young people (Leurs, 2001). Thus, social networks and text messaging were an important part of my research methods.

Defining the Sites

My primary sites for my field work were three youth clubs located in Southern Ontario. They were: The New Generation Youth Club (NGen) in Hamilton, Halton Youth (HY) in Burlington and Oakville, and The Muslim Interscholastic Tournament, Toronto Chapter (MIST) which is centred in Toronto, Mississauga and surrounding areas. I also spent time at other sites, which came out of the fieldwork process. In particular, participants spent a lot of time in local shopping malls and food courts.

Initially, when trying to organise and approach prospective sites, I wanted to find spaces that were not mosques or Islamic centres. The reasoning behind this was that I felt that current literature surrounding Muslim youth in Canada centred on ‘religious youth’, or those who were outwardly practicing Muslims (Bramadat 2006, Moghissi 2013). Further into my research, I came to realise the term ‘practising Muslims’ did not necessarily mean what I thought it did. My simplification of the ‘type of youth’ who goes to the mosque was naïve and flawed. After spending time in mosques and other places where Muslim youth ‘hung out’, I ran into a lot of the same youth in different places. I was reminded that people – youth – go to mosques for all kinds of reasons. Some go with their families, or for Friday prayers, or to use the basketball nets on the weekends. Some youth attend the mosque to help out as it is a requirement for them to do 40 hours of community service to graduate from high school. And yes – there are youth who regularly go to mosques to attend religious classes and pray. Some of those youth I would run into later smoking weed in the school parking lot.

Nevertheless, I began my fieldwork concentrating on youth clubs and spaces designated for young people. I began attending meetings and events for Muslim student associations in Clarkson Secondary School and Erindale Secondary School in Mississauga, Ontario. Their

events ranged from dinners to comedy nights to preparing for competitions. A few of my participants came from this group but unfortunately at the time there were some political complications. The Government of Ontario had announced that there would no longer be prayers in school. These events would often begin or end with the afternoon prayers as the prayer time would run out by the time the students got home. The schools unofficially let prayers continue but did not want this to be publicly acknowledged. My presence, they felt, would make this 'public' and thus I was asked to discontinue my fieldwork at these schools.

Gatekeepers, Friendlies and 'Un-friendlies'

Through my previous work volunteering with Muslim groups in the Toronto Area, I had maintained strong contacts with all three organisations I am about to introduce. Initially, I briefed the organisational staff on the aims and scope of the research. I had volunteered at two of my field sites and had a good working relationship with the organisations' administrators.

Through my volunteer work, I have built a large network of contacts within Toronto's Muslim community. This has provided me with access to organisations and groups and has given me background information and experience about what growing up in Canada is like for some Muslim youth. At the same time, being a researcher, my role now was different to my previous role as participant. I strove to maintain a commitment to representing research data as participants presented it while being aware that due to my background, prestige bias may occur and respondents may be distant in their answers or perhaps distort them in order to "impress the interviewer or fool themselves" (Seale, 2004, p173).

Furthermore, being a ‘native researcher’, I was careful that my own knowledge or experiences in the ‘culture’ did not bias my research. Claire Alexander states that, “for ‘native researchers’, even more than ‘non-native’, the dangers lie in claiming of a specialist knowledge or access – of ‘going native’ or, indeed, ‘being (made) native’” (in Bulmer and Solomos, 2004, p.146). Merely saying I am a Muslim is not sufficient to understand these complexities. However, as someone who has studied Islam, grown up and lived in the region and had personal and professional and historical ties to the area, what we did have in common was a shared identity as being Muslim Canadians in Southern Ontario.

Geographical Location

The sites in this research are based in Southern Ontario, primarily in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Hamilton and the surrounding areas. Toronto is the most ethnically diverse city in Canada and has the highest population of Muslims of all Canadian cities (352,530, Statistics Canada Census 2006).

Almost three-quarters of Torontonians aged 15 or older have direct ties to immigration. Over one half (52%) are immigrants while another 22% are second-generation immigrants with at least one parent born outside of Canada. The remaining 26% of the Toronto population (aged 15 or older) is comprised of individuals born in Canada to two Canadian-born parents (Statistics Canada, 2006). The ethnicities in this region vary considerably and therefore do not have a predominant ‘culture’, although the majority of immigrants who have settled in my research areas are predominantly Middle Eastern, Sub-Saharan African, Somali, and South Asian (Statistics Canada, 2006). I will talk more about local spaces and geographical particularities in Chapter Four.

My research sites are geographically close together but are very different in nature and attract very diverse members. NGen centre is in inner-city Toronto in a low-income area. The Halton Mosque is located in an affluent area that is predominantly white Anglo-Saxon. Although the attendees of the mosque range in ethnicity from white-converts to African-Canadian to West Indian, most of the families have Arab or South Asian heritage. Most of the youth come from highly educated and affluent families and their experiences differed from the youth at the NGen.

Field Sites

New Generation Youth Centre (NGen)

On their website, NGen is described as “an inclusive, positive space where youth are supported to develop leadership, work together, and build community. We recognise that young people's identities cannot be put into a box. Everybody is welcome” (NGen, 2013).

NGen is a youth centre located in downtown Hamilton, a city known as ‘the hammer’ for its multiple steel factories and working-class roots. The centre is dedicated to the integration of immigrant and refugee youth. However, large numbers of Canadian-born youth frequent it regularly. Offering career guidance and professional development, counselling, employment services and training, this is a place where young people congregate and socialise (SISO, 2009).

The New Generation Youth Centre was formally known as ‘The Globe’ but due to a misappropriation of federal funding and the subsequent arrest of its two directors, it was closed down in 2009 (Spectator, 2009). This came as a shock to the youth there as it happened so

suddenly. They found out when they went to the centre to find a sign that said ‘The Globe has been shut down. Thank you for being a part of SISO’ (Settlement and Integration Services Organisation – its previous administrators). *“Yeah – we literally showed up for homework club and everyone was standing outside looking at the sign. We had nowhere to go. We had nobody to call. We didn’t even know their [phone] numbers. It was like we lost our home”* (Zayn, September 12 2011).

Approximately 14 months later, a few of the regular youth attendees of the centre approached community organisations and youth workers to help them get funding for a new space. As a result, the new centre – The New Generation Youth Centre – now founded and led by youth and a few previous Globe staff reopened in the heart of downtown Hamilton. Together with a coalition of youth from diverse backgrounds, NGen partnered with the Centenary United Church and with the East End Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club and Empowerment Squared to reclaim and revitalize a vital social space for young people at the heart of the town (NGen, 2011). The centre had grown since I first went there for the reopening – during the time of my fieldwork there were over 80 young people, both Muslim and non-Muslim who attended programmes and participated in the life of the centre on a daily basis.

Walking into the new space, the lounge is the epicentre of activity where teens meet to talk, watch movies or play video games. The games room draws those who like to play pool, foosball and air hockey, while the resource room offers a dozen computers that the young people can use for school, work and leisure. The kitchen and hall provide a space for the two most popular programmes – the cooking class, which takes place on a weekly basis where youth from a variety of cultural backgrounds cooked and ate together; and the B-Boy/B-Girl Hip Hop Culture Club – a dance club for youth.

During my time there, I had the opportunity to attend events that showcased the talent and creativity of the NGen community. NGen organised a youth-led arts production entitled, “Does my voice even matter?” as part of a youth-led research project around the exclusion of young people in Hamilton. Youth from all across Hamilton converged to discuss personal and social issues they were confronting in their lives, which led to the germination of an idea to share their storied knowledge through a final public production, held in the local shopping mall, Jacksons Square. The centre engaged with the wider Hamilton community regularly through such events, lectures and charity work.

Despite the resourcefulness of the youth, staff and volunteers, the ability of the centre to function was constantly threatened by budgetary constraints. During my time at NGen, I saw this first hand and observed how it affected the youth, the centre and the staff. The centre closed down a few times due to the fact that they did not have the funds to pay their bills.

Approximately 81% of these youths identify themselves as Muslim (NGen, 2013). Their ages range from age 13 to 25. However, most of my participants, both male and female, were between the ages of 18 and 20.

NGen is located in Hamilton, an urban ‘blue-collar’, predominantly working-class city, and an arrival point for new immigrants and refugees specifically. The centre is for all youth, both Muslims and non-Muslims. Many who live in this area live in council housing and most of the youth had very little money. Many had afterschool jobs to help their families with paying the bills and for their own spending. Many youth didn’t have enough money to buy food and would come to the youth club for dinner, which was offered five days a week. Youth primarily came

from less privileged backgrounds with a high population of Somali, Iraqi and Syrian refugees as well as new South Asian and Egyptian immigrants. NGen provided me with a completely different experience from that of MIST and Halton Mosque as it was in an economically deprived area, in an urban centre with youth who were struggling financially and otherwise. This was a space that was open six days a week, 14 hours a day with new people coming in every day.

Halton Muslim Youth Club (HY)

Both immigrants and Canadian-born Muslims attended this suburban youth club, which was primarily located in the mosque. This field site was the most economically affluent of all my sites. Most migrants were from wealthier backgrounds although many of them did not have the same amount of money they were used to before moving to Canada. The youth here were diverse in ethnicity, class and levels of religious beliefs and practice, however, for the most part HY comprised of middle class youth who attended both private and public schools. There was a higher population of youth from middle eastern backgrounds in this field site compared to my other field sites. Most of my participants had cars, or shared a car with their siblings. There were also youth who came from extremely wealthy backgrounds, who drove luxury cars and wore designer clothing. Many of these youth were migrants from the Middle East, specifically from the UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

This mosque also has an Islamic school, Arabic classes, youth activities and regular social gatherings. There is a basketball court outside and youths often use these facilities or use the mosque to ‘hang out’. My research concentrated on the Halton Muslim Youth group which holds bi-monthly meetings and events throughout the year of both a social and a religious

nature. I attended meetings and volunteered at events and outings planned by the youth group. I observed the youth group and their events and then as time went by and I got to know them better, I was invited by different groups of youth from the youth group to socialise with them at other times. I was invited to tag along as they ‘hung out’ together and did the things that many suburban kids do such as going to the mall, going to see movies and spending copious amounts of time at coffee and corner shops.

HY is geographically the closest field site to my house and some of the youth lived minutes away. This gave me the opportunity to see them quite a bit. Both males and females from the group included me in their activities though I developed a much closer relationship with the girls. Part of this was due to the segregation in the mosque during prayer times. We spent a lot more time together in that environment than I did with the boys. On many occasions after prayer, some of the girls would linger behind and sit in a circle and chat about whatever the news of the day was. We would often sit for hours just chatting and then go out afterwards. There were also times where everyone socialised together as there was a Starbucks nearby. This gave me a chance to observe how the two genders interacted with each other, as it was not necessarily always physically possible in the mosque during classes and meetings.

This site consisted largely of upper-middle class participants but at the same time Halton and the city of Burlington, in particular, has been an area which has had an influx of immigrants in the past 5-10 years. Burlington is my home town, so I had some background knowledge of the area and the high schools the participants attended. At the same time, things have changed considerably in that city in terms of demographics and the involvement of the Halton Mosque in projects around the city. I was reminded of the advice given to me by someone before I started field work, which was “Forget everything you think you know”. His advice proved to

be essential in keeping an open mind and not being blinded by assumptions based on my experiences in the city and Halton Mosque.

I was also very aware of who I am and my family's reputation when I was at this mosque. It is where I grew up. A few young people definitely recognised my family name but most of them had never met me and did not recognise me. In some cases, as a native researcher, who you are helps you gain access and at times trust. At other times, who you are becomes an issue, as young people are scared to be themselves due to the fear that you know their family and they know yours. In this space, I made the decision not to approach youth I know relatively well or who are in some way connected to my family (family, friends, relatives etc.) due to an obvious conflict of interest. At the same time, having been involved in the Muslim community in the GTA my whole life, it is almost impossible for me to observe any group or site without having some knowledge of the people involved in it. This is something that I had to continually monitor and reassess.

The Muslim Interscholastic Tournament, Toronto Chapter (MIST)

MIST is a youth programme created specifically for Muslim Canadians and Americans. My research with this group provided me with insights into the experiences of Muslim Canadian youths in youth programmes. MIST was chosen as the context for this study because of its innovative design as an interscholastic tournament (connected to youths' 'home schools', public, religious and private) and commitment to creating a 'safe space for Canadian Muslim Youth' (Mist Toronto, 2011). This organisation is led by high school students and youth up to the age of 24.

MIST attracts youths across the GTA from varying backgrounds, ethnicities, socio-economic levels including first- and second-generation Canadian Muslim youth. Members of MIST also vary in terms of their religious observances. There was a noticeable mix of youth from middle class, working class and upper class backgrounds. As MIST held many out of town events, a degree of financial resources was necessary. There were, however, programs in place by sponsoring schools and the organisers of MIST to fund those who were not able to fund themselves for trips and excursions. Youth here also came from geographically diverse areas, with most participants coming from cities and suburbs as well as those from more rural areas. Some students are very 'religious' and some do not pray or get involved in religious activities at all. It is primarily a space for them to get together with youth their same age who share similar experiences and issues. The conversations and activities that MIST organises tend to focus on issues of religious identity and belonging in Canada.

In the last five years, MIST has become a phenomenon in North America, with chapters in almost every major city. The number of participants in the GTA has doubled from 1,000 to roughly 2,000 (Mist Toronto, 2016). MIST events are comprised of interscholastic competitions, workshops, film festivals, art shows, basketball games, awards ceremonies and other formal activities which revolve around a yearly theme. MIST participants register to participate in competitions in at least one of five academic or artistic categories, which are further divided into sub-categories. Prior to the regional tournaments, the students meet with their high school teams to prepare for their competitions (<http://www.misttoronto.ca/> accessed May 5, 2013). Most MIST preparatory meetings occur during after-school hours, sometimes in the school itself or in community centres.

Regional champions go on to compete in the North America-wide tournament, which takes place every summer for three days. I was given permission by the organiser to participate in the North American Championship in Atlanta in July where the 60 students who had won in Toronto took part in the championship. We travelled together by bus to Atlanta and stayed together for the four-day championship. Taking this journey with MIST participants allowed me to observe this group and develop a rapport with some of the participants and eventually assisted me in selecting my interviewees.

When we returned to Toronto, I regularly attended MIST events, championships and meetings. After the first few months I was part of the MIST family and was often invited to socialise with '*misters*' outside of the scheduled events. This is where I gained a better understanding of what these youths did in their day-today- lives.

I had been told by the Toronto head organiser that the MIST group was extremely diverse in terms of their religious practice. Initially, I could not help but think that this diversity was confined to a particular segment of youth: middle and upper class, moderate yet traditional Muslim Youth. This troubled me a little as I had hoped for a more diverse range of participants.

However, as I began to spend more time with these young people and assisted them as they practised for their competitions, and spent time 'hanging out' with them, it became evident that first appearances were in fact deceiving. A few young people in particular helped me to understand what MIST was about and some of the reasons of why MIST is so important to them. Musa, Ahmad and Dawud were three friends who competed and won in the comedy category. They said that MIST was initially just a way for them to hang out and travel together

but they ended up taking on organisational roles in the MIST community (Dawud, September 1, 2012).

Through MIST, I also met Maryam. Maryam told me that she was proud to be Muslim but *“most of these guys are so sheltered – they think everyone is like them. They don’t know what it’s like to grow up the way I did [(in a multi-racial family with a non-Muslim mother)]”* (Maryam, August 2011). Maryam wore a hijab the first day but by day two she took it off saying, *“It’s too hot – I don’t give [a] fuck if they don’t like it”* (ibid.). Although there were no rules regarding dress or hijab on this trip, I suppose in Muslim events these ‘rules’ are sometimes implicit as one does not want to be singled out for being different. This can make it difficult to make even the simplest of observations such as if a youth wears hijab or not but at the same time I found that it made me question my own preconceived notions on what ‘a hijabi’ would think or do in a particular situation. In some ways, the fact that everyone but Maryam and I were wearing hijab at MIST actually forced me to be more open-minded and reflective of the baggage I carry as a native researcher.

Shopping Malls

Initially, fieldwork concentrated on three youth clubs but as nothing about the field is predetermined (Clifford, 1997), the research then extended beyond the physical space of youth clubs as the mall became part of the field by embodied practices (Clifford, 1997). As I began, rather by chance, to ‘hang out’ in spaces other than their youth clubs and schools, the more I realised the role that informal, public spaces such as the mall played and how differently young Muslims acted in those areas than during more structured times of the day.

Through my fieldwork, the mall emerged as an important space for identity construction and as a place where young people feel like they belong. As such, it became a key research site as the amount of time spent here was consistently more than in the other places participants would frequent. Muslim youth from all three youth clubs spent time at the mall, as well as other youth who did not attend the youth clubs. These youth came from different classes, socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities. I will go into more detail about the youth's backgrounds who I spent time with in chapter four.

The interactions that take place between young Muslims, salespeople, friends, acquaintances and mall staff in a time and place that is largely unsupervised by parents is an important venue for researching the ways in which young people's intersecting identities are negotiated and produced and how identities are often produced and defined by these experiences. This is a place that young Muslims chose to frequent in a habitual and consistent way, and fieldwork here provided a greater understanding of the realities of young people's lives and how the way they *live* difference is *lived* and experienced. This approach "shifts our gaze to the affectivity and turbulence of intercultural interaction and foregrounds perspectives on multiculturalism from below" (Swanton, 2008, p241).

Mall culture is an important facet of being a teenager in Canada (Manzo, 2005). Teens go to the mall to shop, spend time with their friends, work, do their homework, eat, flirt and sometimes even sleep. It is a place to 'get away' from responsibilities and expectations. Young Muslims in this research were no different as they spent the majority of their leisure time within this space. Every single participant in this research was seen at a mall during this research period. None of my other field work sites were frequented *by choice* by my participants as much as the mall, and thus it emerged as an important space for researching young people's

everyday lives. It is within the mall that the micro-politics of everyday social contact and encounters (Amin, 2002) can be seen through the banal, mundane and routine experiences that take place.

The mall provides an important venue for understanding how identities are made and negotiated through local and everyday encounters that are a genuine, natural part of young Muslim's daily lives. Les Back's work on youth cultures in a housing estate in South London highlights the importance of such spaces and how national narratives are mediated through everyday understandings of racialised identities that are made through 'encounter and in place' (Back, 1996).

When researching a racialised and often stigmatised group such as Muslim youth, there is also a danger of exploring issues of identity construction and negotiation in stereotypical, 'ethnic' spaces such as mosques, cultural centres and during times of crisis. This is problematic. Such approaches fail to broaden our understandings of 'imaginaries and place' and how racial and religious identities are forged in response to the structures of power and within multi-ethnic yet predominately white spaces. (Dwyer and Bressey, 2008, p6). Back and Nayak's (1999) work on race in the suburbs and Watt's study of youth in a small, home-counties town are examples of alternative approaches from which to build on the study of youth in 'non-place' spaces (Watt, 1998).

The two malls I spent time in with my participants were very different in terms of physicality, location and 'feel'. The difference in malls, I feel, echoes the differences between the participants in the two spaces. Mapleview mall is a very suburban, white and middle-class space while Jackson Square is in a busy, urban, deprived, and predominantly working-class

city. Although the malls are quite different, and are situated within contrasting urban spaces, the challenges and problems they encounter are very similar. However, the ways in which they negotiate these challenges and how they perform their sense of belonging are multiple and varied.

Hours after school are a significant time at the mall. What makes this time different is the company that the young people are with and the fact that they share the space with their peers without supervision from parents or known authority figures. I quickly found that it was far easier and more ‘natural’ to meet with participants after school wherever they might be hanging out, which happened to be at the mall. My participants, like other young people, often did not tell their parents that they were going to the mall and often said that they were staying late afterschool to work on homework or for extra-curricular activities, so this becomes a time where they don’t have to ‘do anything’. One reason for this was that weekends were often filled with family responsibilities, work, sport and other engagements. Young people often needed to ask permission from their parent(s) on the weekends or inform them of their whereabouts. On weekdays, it seemed to be far easier for young people to make plans immediately afterschool. As I was to find throughout my research, belonging is, indeed, performative. I spent time with the young people at the mall in the same way they did – it had become habitual, convenient and normal to meet there. Eventually, many would ask for my opinion about an item of clothing or share gossip and catch up on the events of the day. In doing so, I became a part of their time there and experienced, as much as I could, the ways in which “attachments are made through repeated actions and rituals that occur naturally” (Bell, 1999).

Multi-sites

At the centre of this research are ideas about what is ‘home’ and multiple, nuanced variations of belonging. As I was to find early on in the fieldwork process, young people spent time in various other places other than the youth club and the mall, including school and at home. As I became closer to my participants, I was increasingly invited along to ‘hang out’ in other spaces. Some of these spaces were the obvious ones such as their schools or places of work. I was invited to many of their houses and met many of their families. I regularly went to watch them play soccer, or hockey and other such sporting events. I even used to accompany a few of them to video-game championships, of which there were many.

Young Muslims spent a lot of time at Tim Hortons and Starbucks, which are both popular coffee chains in Canada. One of the reasons for this was the simple lack of spaces for young people to spend time in, especially those that were not ‘monitored’ by parents or other such known authority figures in their lives. Youth who spent more time at Starbucks primarily came from middle class, more affluent families whereas those who spent time at Tim Hortons were from diverse class and socio-economic backgrounds. Tim Hortons is a ‘cheap and cheerful’ Canadian coffee chain, with some locations open 24 hours. This was a place where many of my participants, from all backgrounds, would end up in the late hours of the night.

After school hours, we would also spend time in shisha cafes together as we collectively ate and smoked into the late hours of the night. These were particularly important times in terms of building trust with my participants. They were often relieved that I, a ‘grown up’, was not judging them or explaining the dangers of double apple shisha inhalation. Sometimes I would get a text message at 11 or 12 at night asking me to come out with them to a club or out for a

drive during the summer. In the beginning I went often, worried that if I refused I would miss something interesting.

Through the generosity and willingness of my participants to let me be a part of their everyday lives in some way, I was able to spend time with them in the places that they made their own. I began to understand what belonging meant to them, however transient or permanent it may be. These sites within sites even said something about where they felt comfortable, safe and free to be who they were both collectively and individually. While the youth clubs provided a specific context to bring out elements of young people's lives and identities, these multi-sites were essential in helping me to understand how their identities shifted and morphed according to their environments and how these places were not just 'sites' in which to observe young Muslims but sites within which young people negotiated intricate, complicated identities and ever-changing ways of belonging.

Rumours and Religiosity

While undertaking my fieldwork, I heard my fair share of rumours. Some of these rumours impacted the way I was positioned, my own privacy in the field, and at the same time helped me understand some of the subtle nuances of religious expression, and how religion played into youth's lives. Since most of our conversations were private, or there was an understanding that I would not share them with others, people often told me things about their friends, colleagues, families and other people in their lives. A lot of these rumours centred on being Muslim. Personally, I was to find out later that I was also not immune to the rumours.

A few months into the fieldwork, Gina told me that somebody told her that she should watch out for me, that I was married to someone religious and left him “*out of nowhere*”. Without going into the personal details of my life, I was in fact going through a separation and later a divorce throughout the fieldwork process. I did not think that this would have any bearing on my fieldwork – in fact, I was looking forward to fully immersing myself in it and focusing on the work. I had never met Gina before I was introduced to her at NGen. In fact, I did not know any of the youth before I did my fieldwork there. It turns out that a few of them knew my ex-husband as he was well known in the Hamilton area. Through Facebook, they could see that he and I were ‘friends’ and I assume this is where the rumours started. This ended up not being a problem at NGen as I saw them almost daily and we quickly established our own relationships within the club, but I also had no idea that people were talking about me. Their parents did not mind either, as many of them were immigrants and refugees and had little knowledge about ‘the community’. Many were happy that their children had someone to talk to and help them out. Also, with their backgrounds and in a city like Hamilton, they were used to their children getting around on their own and being independent. In fact, they needed them to be. It was a similar situation with the youth from MIST. Some did not know me and others knew me from before. In the end, what was more important to them was that I was a researcher whom they could trust.

In Halton, the rumours about me became a problem for some of my participants. Many of the girls’ parents wanted them to hang around with a responsible adult and my marital status became a problem for them, making me seem ‘irresponsible’. The fact that I did not wear hijab was also an issue for some parents in middle-class communities. Ironically, my ex-husband did a lot of work in Halton, and his messy marital status did not seem to be a problem to these same parents. The reasons for this are obvious. I lost a few of my participants due to parents who did

not want their children spending a lot of time with me, in the fear that I might be a bad influence. When it came down to it, it was not necessarily that I was a woman that was that problem. It was the fear that, due to my circumstances, I was not a ‘good Muslim woman’. Perhaps I wasn’t. But going through marital problems with a prominent Muslim man was not the reason for it. This misogyny is, of course, not only a problem for Muslims but is present in wider Canadian society. In this case, it took a different form – focusing on respectability as a Muslim woman and what that looks like. In the end, due to the relationships I had built and the reputation of my parents and family as being ‘good Muslims’, I was given a pass. This problem eventually became less and less of an issue but I still was contacted in this way frequently by a few parents and siblings of my participants. If they were late coming home from the mall for example, I would often get an angry phone call from a family member asking me where their child was. The mother of one of the participants rang me one night, asking “What kind of a Muslim girl hangs around boys at night?” For this reason, I discontinued my research with her child, who was really annoyed and who said that her mother did not know how “good” I was. In fact, I did not know her mother at all, but she seemed to have made some conclusions based on what she knew about me. There is no such thing as a singular ‘Muslim community’, even in a small town like Burlington. But there are rumours which can take hold and become significant in certain contexts, especially when dealing with marginalised and vulnerable groups who are fearful about unsavoury influences on their children, as is their right and their reality.

Rumours around religiosity and religious identity were frequently heard at all of my field sites. They were not confined to the more ‘practising’ participants but also extended to those who were, as Hassan called himself, “*Muslim only by name*”. The bulk of the rumours concentrated less on issues of practice and more on issues of morality and representation. There was a lot of

talk about Yusuf, who was a drug dealer but also went to the mosque on Fridays. Some asked, *“How can he go to the mosque when he is doing something so wrong?.”* Or there was the case of Bilqees, who wore hijab but also drank alcohol. Another Muslim girl something pointed this out to a group of us, quite angrily stating, *“she shouldn’t call herself a good Muslim then”*.

One night, a heated, public argument took place on Facebook between two friends, Aliza and Gina, because Gina had said ‘Merry Christmas’ on Facebook. *“What kind of a fucking Muslim celebrates Christmas?”* commented Aliza. Gina replied *“The kind of bitch that knows how to pray. You wouldn’t know.”* This public argument went on for hours, with other friends chipping in and others like Zayn trying to defuse the situation. He wrote, *“Being a good Muslim is about how we treat each other FAM.”* Roze, another participant, chimed in with *“Everyone hates us already and we are gonna fight about this shit? Fuck you all”*. Then there was the aftermath. There was a meeting at the youth club about the Facebook fight where one of the admin staff, Sharon, who was trying to resolve the situation, said *“Why are you guys even fighting about this? You’re friends. None of you are even religious anyways.”* This was met with silence, with everyone just staring at each other until Amir broke the silence and said to her: *“I’m really sorry but you don’t understand”*. The situation was not resolved that night and the two of them stopped speaking to one another. *“She insulted me,”* said Aliza. *“She called me a bad Muslim and that I don’t know how to pray. I know how to pray. She doesn’t pray either,”* she told us. Rather, as the situation was later resolved, Aliza said that she had heard rumours that Gina had a Christmas tree and that that was not OK. *“I don’t know shit about being Muslim. But I know that Muslims shouldn’t do Christmas”*. For Gina, saying ‘Merry Christmas’ or celebrating Christmas did not mean anything, but rather being Muslim was about trying to be a good person and wishing a merry Christmas to those who were celebrating.

This feud went on for months. In the end, Gina and Aliza made up. Gina said that what Aliza said made her feel like she didn't know anything about Islam, and the reality was that she didn't know a lot. It hurt her. "*It stabbed me in the heart*" she said. Aliza said a similar thing about what Gina said to her. This brings me back to what the admin person, Sharon, said about none of them being particularly "religious anyways" and Amir's response that she "*doesn't understand*". Here lies the very heart of the issue. One of the key issues that came up out of my fieldwork was the space articulated by Muslim youth between religious praxis, religious expression, beliefs and knowledge. During this time, I began to see the different ways in which Muslimness is expressed, not only through practice, but also as values and ways of thinking. I began to explore how young Muslims expressed their ideas of spirituality and spiritual beliefs at times alongside religious praxis and performance, and other times separately and distinctly. While many might not be 'practising', this did not mean that their spiritual identity was not important to them. This observation ended up being key to the methodological framework of this research.

Ethics

Muslim communities in the GTA are a marginalised minority group and under immense scrutiny and pressure (Rasack, 2008). Researching vulnerable groups raises the issue of unequal power dynamics between a researcher and their participants. As I not only worked with this marginalised community but specifically with youth, who can be seen as even more vulnerable, I acknowledged my position of power as a researcher and was cognisant of these dynamics throughout the field work process. This was not always a simple process and I constantly reassessed and negotiated my relationship with my participants. The recent discussions of ethnography and the ethics of care (Benson, 2015) in reference to Alice

Goffman's controversial ethnography of young men in Philadelphia (2009), underlines the importance of considering the ethical implications and responsibilities particularly of immersive ethnography.

Ethical challenges arose in a few cases in my research that involved criminal activity. For the most part I observed things that were going on, and I myself did not see and was not present when any of this activity took place. For example, there were a few participants who were drug-dealers, and one of these participants mentioned it to me. I felt, at this point, I had a duty of care to talk to my participant about the danger he was potentially getting involved in. This could have affected the way he spoke about this part of his life, and what he decided to share with me in the future. I did not, however, report this to anybody in the youth club due to confidentiality. I had also told him, and others that I was there if they needed someone to talk to or were in danger.

I was also concerned about drug-usage in general and being around youth that were perhaps drinking and taking drugs irresponsibly, though I never witnessed it myself. There was a case, which I will talk about in chapter four, that involved drunk driving, with my participant, who was a refugee, in the passenger seat while his friend was driving drunk. This was a difficult situation not only as researcher but as now, a friend and someone who cared about this individual. I had to consider how to treat this information as this incident later contributed to the deportation of his friend, who was also a refugee. While this individual talked openly to his friends about it, I didn't discuss this with anyone nor did I acknowledge that I was aware of it. I did talk about it in detail with my participant and tried my best to make him aware of the implications this could have on his life, if he was to put himself in a situation like that again. I

also referred him and put him in contact with an immigration lawyer and another pro-bono lawyer, whose firm later represented my participant in the case.

In another situation, one of my female participants, who I met at the mall one day, had bruises on her face, and she admitted that she was physically assaulted by her partner. She did not want to go to anybody about this because she feared this relationship would be ‘made public’ to her parents and friends. We had many long discussions about this and I would regularly keep in touch with her to see how she was doing. At one point her friend, another participant called me and said that she needs to go to the hospital because she had badly been beaten up. I met them at the hospital and drove her home when she was released. As she was over the age of consent I did not inform her parents about this, though I suspect they were aware something was going on. I felt a responsibility to be there for her, and talk to her about the situation and gave her information on the local women’s centre and counsellors, which she did meet. Thankfully, she removed herself from that relationship and things got better but during the time of my fieldwork, there were a number of incidents that did cause concern and I had to use my discretion on how to speak to her about it without imposing my own power as a researcher and as someone older than her. These incidents presented very difficult situations for me as researcher and I dealt with each on an individual basis, taking into consideration the safety and wellbeing of participants and myself as the primary concern, above the field work and this research. In all cases, these youth who were already vulnerable and marginalised in the broader context were further vulnerable due to their circumstances. I have paid special attention to the ways their stories are written, and the details around them, in this thesis, in order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

I am aware of the potentially harmful effects of research and I made every effort to ensure that the well-being of my participants was considered throughout the process (British Sociological Association (BSA), 2002). Risk was assessed as an ongoing process and appropriate steps were taken when necessary.

In more general terms, in order to balance the situation, this research adopted a least-oppressive model (Ali, 2006). To alleviate power relations, I provided the young people with transcripts to clarify what had been said and clarified points with them as I wrote. I was available to the young people for queries, in person or via phone, email, text-message and social media. This contact information was also circulated in the respective youth clubs and posted on their bulletin boards.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Data, records and identities have been kept confidential (BSA, 2002). In some cases, where information was sensitive, I did not record it all (BSA, 2002). Data was stored safely and securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 (HM Government, 1998).

I have used pseudonyms for all respondents and to guarantee their confidentiality without compromising the data's authenticity (BSA, 2002) and in some cases used more than one pseudonym. Other signifiers and links between data and individuals, such as the cities they live in and the youth clubs they attended have also been reduced or altered to minimise the possibility of identity disclosure.

Confidentiality of data and identities has been upheld in all cases unless participants were at risk (i.e. physical danger, security). Being from the same background and geographical area as many of the participants, I am aware of the implications of working within one's own community (Alexander, in Bulmer and Solomos, 2004) and took all possible measures required.

CHAPTER THREE: ALL ROUTES LEAD TO HOME

Utopian narratives, diasporic journeys and new belongings

*If you are a dreamer come in
If you are a dreamer a wisher a liar
A hoper a pray-er a magic-bean-buyer
If you're a pretender come sit by my fire
For we have some flax golden tales to spin
Come in!
Come in!*

“The Invitation”, Shel Silverstein, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, 1974.

When I was a child, this poem was posted on the door of my fourth grade classroom. I saw it every day as I walked in, each day reading a line or two and by the end of the year, I knew it by heart. If I ever got in trouble and was sent out into the hallway for a ‘time out’, I’d stare at it endlessly as I pondered my fate. I once was asked in Islamic school, which I attended on Saturdays, to translate a poem called *Bachche Ki Dua* (A Child’s Prayer) by the Urdu poet Muhammad Iqbal (Iqbal, 1902). I had memorised the translation, but I was so nervous I mistakenly recited the Shel Silverstein poem instead. The class erupted in to laughter and I was sent out to the hallway once again.

Years later, when I was in high school, I took the book off my shelf and gave it to my little brother. As we leafed through it, I came across this poem again. Even though I knew it so well, I never really understood what it meant. Come in where? What were they talking about? My brother had similar questions. We asked our big sister, as she seemed to know the answer to most things. She confidently told us it was about being in America and being an immigrant. She said it was about how it doesn’t matter where you’re from or what you think, but that

everyone belongs here (North America) and that everyone can ‘come in’ and is welcome. I remember my father chiming in from the other room something to the effect of, “Yes, come in!! As long as you have the money!”

Again, after decades had passed, I came across the same poem during my fieldwork. I was helping Abdi with his English homework and there it was again, as a hand-out glued onto the front page of his notebook. Abdi was 19 years old, a recent refugee from Somalia and was in an ESL¹ programme. It was from a list of poems they learned in class in the first few weeks of school, and his assignment was to write a reflection on the poem. He was talking about what to write with some of his friends at the New Generation Youth Club (NGen). I told him that I knew the poem, and that I learned it when I was in school too. He seemed surprised by this, and commented that maybe this means that his English is “*pretty tight*”² (Abdi, September 2011) because we had both read the same thing.

I asked him what he thought about it:

***Abdi (September 2011):** You know, to me, it reminds me of being refugee. Kind of, you know, it doesn’t matter what happened to you or what bad things you’ve seen, you need to not worry about those things. But everyone is here now. Like – it’s good, it’s ok. You are here now, you can be here now.*

***Me:** What about other people in your class?*

***Abdi:** Kind of the same thing, like about moving to this place [Hamilton, Canada] and stuff like that. Like, they were happy too because it’s like saying it is good here now.*

¹ English as a Second Language (ESL).

² ‘Pretty tight’, a slang term of saying ‘pretty good’.

You're ok. You don't have to worry so much. I don't know. I didn't listen too much though.

As Abdi spoke, Aliza, who had migrated from Kashmir four years before, nodded in agreement. She had also read the poem in her ESL class in a different school.

Aliza (September 2011): Yeah, I thought it was about Canada -- basically they want to say we are welcome in Canada right? My teacher said "We all come from immigrants. All are equal here in this country". That's what they keep telling us [laughter]!

Me: Do you agree with that? Do you feel like everyone is equal here?

Aliza: I think some people think that. But it isn't true, is it? Look at black people, look at the Red Indians.³ Look at how they get treated. And they are the real Canadians, right?

Quite rightly, Aliza saw the problematic response of her teacher while talking about the poem. Her teacher, while trying to teach a lesson on inclusion, at the same time excludes the existence of the indigenous people of Canada when she says, "We all come from immigrants", thus negating the experiences of First Nations, Aboriginal and Metis who were in Canada for thousands of years prior to the arrival of the first Europeans. Along with that, she questions the idea of equality that came out of the discussion of the poem, and she thinks that it is untrue.

I asked her if she spoke up in class about it:

³ An offensive term to Native peoples, however I don't think Aliza meant it in an offensive way.

Aliza: Yeah, some of us said “What about this and what about that?” You know, we were new and we are seeing all these things around us that we didn’t even know about before we got here. So it’s like, who do we talk to about it?

Me: How did that go down?

Aliza: Yeah, I said what about Red Indians? And this other girl was like, something about ‘Yeah, they kicked the Chinese people out of Chinatown’. We all said a bunch of stuff to her.

Me: So, what did she say about that? Did you guys talk about all that?

Aliza: Yeah, a little bit. Oh yeah, to the girl that said about the China thing, she was all ‘Check your facts, you can’t believe everything’.⁴ But basically, she was like that stuff was bad for sure, but it’s all in the past. We can’t think about those things from the old days because you know we can’t change them and life is better in every way now in Canada. Like that was old Canada and now we are new Canada, and we have to be positive and all of that if we want to make it here.

When I first heard this poem, I was too young to think of all of these things. I remember thinking that it was about the classroom and my school – more of a literal meaning to the words in the poem. Nevertheless, my experience was coloured by what it meant to me the same way it did through the decades when read by my brother, Abdi and Aliza. The ‘invitation’ is now a memory for me and a lot has changed since the 1980s when I was growing up. However,

⁴ This is not ‘untrue’ and is possibly a reference to the first Chinatown in Toronto, Ontario. Chinatown, Toronto’s first Chinese community thrived between 1900 and 1925, Toronto’s first Chinese community formed around Elizabeth Street, running all the way south to Queen Street. It was a bustling commercial and residential area that included restaurants, grocery stores, and traditional clan associations until the late 1940s when the “City of Toronto began its controversial expropriation of much of the neighbourhood to make room for a new city hall and the future Nathan Phillips Square. Demolition finally took place in 1955. Some Chinese businesses could not afford to re-locate and closed. Others packed up and moved west along Dundas Street to Spadina Avenue where they became the heart of today’s ‘Old Chinatown’.” (http://torontoplaques.com/Pages/Torontos_First_Chinatown.html)

institutionally, I can see why a poem like this was and is still used. While catchy and whimsical, it is entertaining and at the same time it fits into the larger, national narrative being promoted of Canada as a welcoming, inclusive place. A place where difference is a good thing and where your dreams can come true.

In my previous work as a senior policy analyst for the Ministry of Education in Ontario, one of my jobs was to review the curriculum to make sure that the government's larger messages and priorities were reflected. The reoccurrence of this poem and through it the promotion of themes of diversity and multiculturalism within the school curriculums, in my opinion, was not a coincidence. Rather, this is the type of the work that the state does to promote its image as a multicultural haven, both nationally and abroad (Bannerji, 2000).

For the purposes of this chapter, the prevalence and meaning of the poem is less important. What is more pertinent is how we all got a meaning out of the poem and what it can tell us about our visions of Canada filtered through our own outlooks, histories, experiences and the way we felt during the moments when we read it. All three of us had our own interpretations of the poem – yet all three of us are part of a larger conversation with Canada, on living in Canada, who we are, what Canada looks like, where we came from and what it means to belong.

This chapter focuses on national belongings, on being Canadian and how Muslim youth negotiate their identities, live in Canada and find belonging within the country that they call home. These identities include their Muslim identities, along with other intersections of identity, for religious identities cannot be looked at as entirely separate and do not always come to the fore. The argument I am making in this chapter is that the idea of national belonging and

being Canadian is, for Muslim youth, not at the ‘top of their mind’⁵ in their everyday lives until they encounter situations or events that raise questions or if they are asked about it. For my participants, it was generally not something they thought about.

There are times when national belonging and national identity do become relevant in Muslim youth’s lives. This is especially evident when looking at the different routes that the participants took to ‘becoming Canadian’. This included the participants who were refugees and newcomers (recent immigrants) (Statistics Canada, 2006)⁶, for example, who were very concerned with not only belonging but the rights and freedoms that come with legal citizenship. Whereas those who were born in Canada, while Canadian in the legal sense, were less concerned with ‘being Canadian’ mostly because they did not have to think about it unless pressed. Here, there is an interplay between how participants see themselves and how they are perceived by others as Canadian or not, which affects the way they identify with being Canadian and belonging in Canada. This process of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ is not static and is negotiated, contested and at times, fought for.

The young people in this research who live in the GTA have all arrived from different passages and routes. Roughly half of them were born and raised in Canada and the other half migrated to Canada with their families either in the last decade or when they were very young. Many of these migrants came to Canada as refugees from Somalia, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. This chapter will focus on the journeys that they took, and their often traumatic arrivals as they made Canada their home. Three journeys in particular will be discussed: those who were ‘born and

⁵ In the same way it might not be of concern to other, non-Muslim Canadians

⁶ According to the 2006 Census, newcomers, also known as recent immigrants, refers to landed immigrants who came to Canada up to five years prior to a given census year. For the purposes of this research, “newcomers” and “recent immigrant” will refer to youth who have migrated to Canada up to five years prior to my fieldwork.

raised' in Canada, recent migrants and refugees. These three experiences and the overlap of their stories and experiences sheds light on the notion of belonging and what constitutes 'home'. Furthermore, the shared aspirations of these youths, their visions of a 'Canadian dream' and their often precarious, fluid positioning within it will be discussed.

To understand the intersections of both people and places, but also of pasts and presents as talked about by Avtar Bhah in 'Cartographies of Diaspora' (1996), these processes need to be addressed alongside each other. Suburban towns like Burlington as well as cities like Toronto and Hamilton are mentioned, each with their own distinct characteristics and histories, and their inhabitants bring their own histories and share everyday experiences together. Living in Canada can only tell us so much about young Muslim everyday lives. While they share some experiences with each other, each has come through different routes, and with different roots. Yet, within these diverse particular circumstances, there are some similar experiences, aspirations and desires. Understanding how their past and present converge and bring about newness, new spaces of cultural production and the new experiences that arise from it are notions that are crucial in understanding what it means to be a Muslim youth in Canada. Through these stories, we can broaden not only our understanding of what being Canadian means and the different ways young people come to being Canadian but also how the relevant ideas of national belonging, citizenship and feelings of home are to my participants as well as what their Canada and their fellow Canadians look like. Is Canada the place of opportunity that Prime Minister Trudeau and Aliza's teacher spoke about? Is it a place of opportunity where all its inhabitants are equal? Is being Canadian important to Muslim youth and perhaps, more relevant, does it need to be?

To discuss and problematise some of these questions, this chapter will be divided into three parts. The first section will discuss the different journeys and ways that the young people ‘arrived’ in Canada. In order to gain an insight into what these young Muslims feel about Canada and their place in it as they move forward in their lives, it is important to look at what has come before. As Homi Bhabha said, “The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past...we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (Bhabha, 1994, xi). In order to appreciate the fluidity of the past, present and the future, and of time and space, we must address them together and consider how young Muslims’ ‘past lives’ are very much a part of their present and future.

In the second section, the national narratives about ‘Canadian-ness’ will be discussed. In doing so, it is necessary to discuss the prominent portrayals of Canada as an ideal multicultural space. Following that, I will talk about Canadian nationalism and patriotism – notions that often are filtered through popular culture, but nevertheless do encapsulate ideas of nationalism, national belonging and the ‘ideal citizen’.

In the third section, I will talk about young people’s views of Canada and what it means to belong and to be Canadian. I will discuss the complicated nature of belonging within the context of everyday life in Canada and consider the role of racial hierarchies, legal status, class differences and religious identities that play into notions of belonging and how young people are able to negotiate their place living in Canada. Everyday negotiations of Canadian-ness will also be discussed. This will include how the participants performed their Canadian-ness (or did not) in certain ways, and in specific times and places. At other times, they were ambivalent to the idea of being Canadian. All these ways of belonging to Canada, and the complexity between

them, also took on a different meaning when expressed collectively as a group. In this case, I will discuss the happenings of Canada Day celebrations that also produce new ways of belonging and new, fluid cultures of Canadian-ness and also of Muslimness in Canada.

Arrivals

Diasporic identities in contrast carry the weight of embodied, racialised histories and a more collective orientation. Those in diaspora would look to particular sorts of bodies and cultural cargoes for emotional, practical and spiritual nourishment, guided by the ultimate security that there is somewhere to return to, even if only as a sustaining imaginary (Parker, 2003, p. 166).

Muslim youths' sense of identity can be shaped by family, friendships, gender, class, race, religion and nationality as well as the affiliations and attachments that come with diaspora spaces. The young Muslims in this research study are indeed shaped by all of these things, but along with that there is a need to consider the messiness that lives in between these connections, emotions, attachments and belongings that overlap between these identities. Within the context of this chapter, which concentrates on national identity, the young Muslims' relationship to Canada and their views about the nation are not static, and are shaped through a multitude of factors, personal, historical and national, as well as their upbringing, geography, whether they live in urban or suburban spaces and how national narratives arise and are encountered in the everyday.

Ideas of home, both imagined and performed, are key to this discussion. As many of my participants were newcomers or refugees to Canada, many of the youths expressed the idea of multiple homes and belongings. For Abdi, a refugee, he saw his village in Somalia as his home,

a place he left which no longer exists in the same way that it did when he was there. Due to the violence in that area, he cannot return there, at least not at this point in his life. He said:

“That home, it’s not just actual soil or my house even. It’s also just a life that was you see, my own life. My friends, my family, people like me. I can never go back. I can never go back to that place. I can’t even go back at all though, you know what I mean?”

(Abdi, June 2012).

Abdi expressed an idea that was also echoed by the other participants, which was a desire, or longing for a home that was somewhere other than Canada. This concept of home falls in line with notions of diaspora space where the “discourse of ‘home’ and ‘diaspora’ are creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing the discourse of fixed origins” (Brah, p. 193). Abdi’s ‘origins’, which I will talk about in more detail, are complex, both settling and terrifying at the same time with an emotional longing for his home in Somalia, a place that he himself recognises is no longer a reality and that is filled with real danger. Nevertheless, the yearning for the home that he remembers, and the life he lived, is one that he has often expressed. There were others who became Canadian under different circumstances. Many of them also expressed ideas of home not only as somewhere else, as multiple places, but also as Canada. These expressions were also unfixed and often changed in certain situations.

As mentioned above, Abdi came to Canada as a refugee. His experience was one of settlement as a refugee in Canada after a sudden displacement and dislocation under traumatic circumstances which played a role in his idea of home, both in Somalia and in Canada, as well as his sense of belonging. This highlights one of the key themes that came out of this research, which is the role played by the specific routes that brought young Muslims and/or their families to Canada. My participants were either immigrants, from immigrant backgrounds, or were

“heritage Muslims” (born and raised in Canada), with family histories in Canada. These youths with multiple backgrounds, as Muslims, were part of a diasporic space, which Brah argues, is “inhabited” not only by those who have migrated and their decedents but equally by those who constructed the space and are represented as indigenous (Brah, p. 181). Along with this, Muslim youths whose families have been in Canada for generations were also seen inhabiting this diaspora space as their identification and perception by others as Muslims often positioned them as ‘not Canadian’ and as ‘the other’.

The various routes to being Canadian, and participant’s experiences of them, have impacted the ways in which the participants view Canada and their relationship to it and, indeed, how they find belonging within the Canadian ‘mosaic’. Thus, before I begin a lengthier discussion on Canadian-ness and what Canada means to my participants, it is important first to begin with the young Muslims’ stories of *arrival*, some from afar, some born within the womb of the country. These stories of home, about comings and goings, and of the routes to becoming Canadian contribute to shaping these identities and help to deepen our understanding of the relationship between race, class, gender, religion, age and the role that they collectively play in the way that young Muslims negotiate their national identities.

Participants

My participants come from different family backgrounds, different sects of Islam, ethnicities, classes and genders and lived in different types of cities and towns with their own set of demographics and histories. Like most people, they have dreams, aspirations and interests that are uniquely their own that intersect and come with their own set of challenges and circumstances. This seems obvious but quite often it is these things that are overlooked when

discussing Muslim youths. There can be a tendency to both generalise their experiences and also on the other side of the scale, to look at their experiences as ones that are so nuanced and specific that common experiences and understandings are overlooked. This is why it is crucial to take into consideration both the differences and similarities of these experiences in order to explore the complicated nature of identities and how parts of these identities shift and change while others, while still diverse, can endure.

This idea of sameness and difference can be seen through particular situations that call for their own complex layers and nuances, which is what Homi Bhabha calls a “diversity of universals”:

No true universalism can be constructed without recognising that there is a diversity of universals on which analyses are based, and these are often in fact quite particular – not universals at all, but rather interpretations devised for particular historical and conceptual situations (Bhabha, 2000, p. 583).

The current understandings of diaspora is ‘a people’ dispersed from their communities, as a transnational (Bachu, 1996) and as communities who are making new spaces of belonging holds true to an extent, but at the same time, I noticed different types of diasporic families – those who somewhat temporarily settled in Canada and eventually moved back, or families who, due to work opportunities, were split up continentally. This produced a set of circumstances for certain youths where they lived in Canada during the school year and spent the summer months in another country – often the country which they migrated from. This was particularly true for participants, like Aisha, who came from Dubai and whose father stayed there to work while the rest of the family came to Canada. However, these participants also expressed that as they got older, and the more attachments and friends they made in Canada, the less time they spent in their previous ‘home country’. Some (often those from the United Arab Emirates or Saudi Arabia) had similar experiences of migration as Aisha. Others were

more like Sana. She completed high school in Canada but decided with her family not to settle in Canada permanently but keep her Canadian residency status while living in Qatar. However, after moving there, she talked about wanting to come back to Canada.

Throughout my fieldwork, young Muslims often voiced having similar experiences to each other at some point in their lives in Canada. While the participants had multiple iterations of diaspora, what they had in common is that they all lived in Canada in the present. With immigration, practically speaking, it is often not a ‘one-way’ journey where ties are broken from the originating country (Saunders, 2012) and as is the case with some of the participants, especially those who are refugees, immigration is an ongoing process of moving from country-to-country while maintaining relationships and bonds in other countries. This is quite important in young people’s identity constructions. Muslim youths in these situations often develop a fluid, temporal and messy sense of belonging and not-belonging.

The desire to ‘fit in’ becomes less important and the desire to lay claims even less so. This is not to say that there is no intention to ‘belong’ but rather that the desire to belong is not confined to one particular country or region, ethnicity or citizenship, or in this case, belonging to ‘Canada’ as a nation. For example, one of my participants, Zayn, aged 18, lived in Hamilton, Ontario and spent his summers in Morocco, the country that he had moved from with his family in 2008. He got along with his school mates in Hamilton and had a lot of friends there and played soccer on a team. He had a job and was a prominent member of the youth club. But when he went back to Morocco, he said, he had the same things there. There, he also had friends, family, a job for the summer and a house to live in. More than that, he said it was nice to be able to speak in Arabic, to be in a hot country and to be around people of the same ‘culture’ who ate the same food and had the same sense of humour as him. Zayn said he belonged in

both places: *“Both places are my home”* (Zayn, March 2012). When I asked him if he would want to move back to Morocco after he finished high school, he thought about it for a while and said:

“Probably not. Maybe one day I could, but I don’t know if I would want to by then. My whole family lives here now, my friends too. I’m going to apply for college here and then there is all the NGen stuff that I really want to do stuff for” (Zayn, March 2012).

While Zayn said both places were ‘home’ to him, he had still decided to begin building a life for himself in Canada by going to college there and staying involved in the long-term future plans of the youth club. He sometimes talked about going back to Morocco but in reality, at least at the time of our conversation, he had no plans to do so, even though for him, unlike Abdi, it was a possibility. Yet he still had a strong sense of attachment to both places and feelings of belonging to both, albeit in different ways. This transnational understanding of diaspora and belonging is useful in understanding the complicated and shifting notions of belonging in relation to Muslim youth in their everyday lives, and how they can have multiple attachments to different ideas and numerous conceptions of what constitutes ‘home’.

Keeping these ideas in mind, Hall’s notion of diaspora as *‘a form of consciousness’* (Hall, 1990) is particularly relevant. As Hall talks about moving away from the black essential subject (1990), this notion of diaspora helps us to move beyond the idea of the essential, homogenous Muslim youth. Though these youths do not come from same homeland or often even share the same ethnicity, through their self-identification of being Muslim, and the convergence of their histories and experiences, a diasporic identity is constructed and negotiated which crosses national borders, boundaries and cultures. Hall’s work is useful as a starting point in helping us to understand the interplay of histories, differentiated cultural identities and the structural

realities of subordination that minority groups face; the way Muslim youth, as a religious group in particular, see themselves and how they are perceived within the nation lies at the heart of their experiences.

The experiences of Muslim youth are often seen as homogenous (Kasimpur, 2014) and lumped together, or paradoxically, seen as so diverse that they can be perceived as being both unwieldy and ‘unmanageable’ within the context of the nation state or as victims that need to be saved and guided. The stories of my participants tell a different story of belonging ‘to Canada’, one that ebbs and flows according to their individual context, experiences and realities. The happenings of everyday life and the places young Muslims move through are also spaces where these national paradoxes, narratives and allegiances that are national, cultural and religious are brought to the fore, and played out in everyday encounters.

A Refugee’s Story

Abdi

Abdi, age 19, was a refugee from Somalia. He left his village in Somalia at the age of 16 under extreme circumstances, where his life was in immediate danger. At that time (2010), there was a civil war going in Southern Somalia and the militant group Al-Shabaab were making moves to control the region. The year that he left, they had gotten word that Al-Shabaab were getting closer and a few people in the village had already had a few run-ins with them. People were scared and many of Abdi’s friends and family had paid smugglers to escape on boats to Libya, and then on to Europe. Abdi’s parents had paid local handlers to take him and his brother to the boats which would leave from Khartoum, Sudan.

They would have to travel through Ethiopia first and would have to do it without their parents. Each leg of this journey had its own dangers and perils. Abdi had never travelled alone but “*we were scared, we knew if we stayed there it wasn’t safe for boys anymore*”. Weeks before they were to leave, word came that a group that had left earlier had encountered serious problems. One of them was Abdi’s cousin, Yusuf, who was stopped in Khartoum and was detained by the police there as he did not have the proper papers. His other friend fled to Kenya when this happened and was in hiding until he figured out what to do. Both lost all of their money. Another family they knew – a husband, wife and two kids – made it on one of the boats, but the wife and one child drowned during the journey. “*We had no idea what to do, my mother, she was scared to keep us there and scared that we had to leave.*” They had also heard that the UN convoy was also getting closer to trying to help them, and then decided to stay longer and come up with a new plan. Abdi told me that “*Then it was confusing you know – I was happy that maybe we could be saved but then worried that Al-Shabaab would get here first*” (Abdi, July 2013).

A few weeks passed in this state of both worry and hope. Then, Abdi told me, late one evening after *Isha* prayers, Al-Shabaab entered the village.

“They was dragging people out of their houses, throwing and stealing stuff from their homes. Just throwing them out and then shooting them if they didn’t want to go. Even if someone was slow, they were just ‘bang bang bang’.”

Abdi, his family and others ran away and hid in the trees for the night. When they came back, their houses were on fire and there were injured and dead people lying on the ground. Many people were missing, especially young boys.

“One of my friends, Omar, he was taken by them. I just lost my friend. We don’t know what is gonna happen to him or anything. We were just hoping maybe he went and hid somewhere else. Or that somebody is taking care of him.”

The next day, Al-Shabaab came again and once again, they hid. This went on for a few days. Every morning, they went looking for Omar and another one of his friends who had gone missing called Ahmed.

On the fifth day, things got more violent as the local villages began to fight back. *“They came back, then the people in our village and next to us – they were fighting...everyone was fighting. You could hear the guns and the screaming”* (Abdi, July, 2013). A few hours later, they heard helicopters and then they came out to see knowing that the militants did not have helicopters. It was the United Nations convoy. He described what happened next:

“They were like – go get your things. Get your passport. Your money. Leave everything else. They took us to our houses and helped us but they were yelling too, real loud like HURRY, HURRY! My mom, she was just crying like crazy and there was a nice lady who was helping her but mama don’t know English so she kept crying. I wanted to help but I had to get all the stuff. You could hear shooting and guns. Real scary. I was worried about my friends, all my cousins and aunts and stuff - all of the people. Grandmother too. They were like ‘quickly, quickly’. We were ok because you know something was gonna happen. My dad made sure we all had our suitcases packed.

We took all of our stuff and these guys, the army men, they were helping my mom and grandmother and we ran to the helicopters. I was running fast but there were other people who were running too and they were getting shot. You know, they were shooting at us, I guess, Al-Shabaab. You know what it means? It means youths. Funny, huh?

That's some real fucked up shit [shaking his head]. I was running around all these people, dead, shot on the ground. Like, you know, like an animals. The army was there too, Americans for sure and I think Canadian. I remember the Canadian flag on a guy but my brother, after, he said it was an England one.

The week before that, there was a lot of death in the villages. Al-Shabab, you know, they keep coming back. Like remember what I said about Omar? I didn't see him again. Well, Ahmed though. I see him one day. I was running to go hide one night. Then is when I saw Ahmed. He is a real friend, you know, this one. He was shot. I don't know if he was alive so I kicked him to see. But he didn't move. Not even one movement. I just stopped and try to help him, but then someone else yells to me 'Let go, he's gone, he's gone'. Then everyone was yelling at me to go so I don't know - real fast - I just took his shoe off and I look at him real good. I prayed for him, you know. I prayed he go to Jannah. I pray God to help him, maybe he can be okay. Maybe he be alive. Then I ran. I don't know why I took his shoe. Just something I needed to remember him by. Then when we came back, his body was gone. We were looking everywhere and then we didn't know what to do. We just prayed, you know.

I was thinking about him you know (when they evacuated the village) – like maybe we are leavin' him behind. Maybe he hid somewhere. I'm looking everywhere and yelling his name, my other friends too. His family. Helicopters were leaving so we had to go. Then we got in and it started to take off. I was just looking at where I saw him, that place (Ahmed) when we were goin' up, up up. I saw my house a little and we were all looking as long as we can. And then we were gone. We feel safe now, for sure. But I feel dead. Everything is gone.”

Abdi was extremely composed and articulate as he told me this traumatic story.⁷ When I first started thinking about my research and my fieldwork, one of the things I wanted to concentrate on was the mundane, the banal, the everyday things that are a part of these Muslim youths' lives. A story like Abdi's at first seemed extraordinary to me. And it was, in many ways. But his story was not isolated. Other youths who were refugees also had traumatic, often violent things happen to them, and to their families and friends.

Abdul, also from Somalia, travelled to Italy on a boat before he came to Canada. Roze came as a refugee from Afghanistan after her father was killed by the Taliban. Hussain was displaced from his town in Iraq during the war on terror. Layla's family left Syria in secrecy and had to walk across the border to Lebanon because her father was a journalist and was being chased by Assad's militia. Saima's family had to leave Pakistan because, as Shia Muslims, their lives were in danger in the village that they lived in. All of them had spent time in refugee camps, and all of them had lost people who they loved.

It is therefore difficult to talk about Canadian Muslim youth and people like Abdi and Abdul without taking into consideration what life was like before they came to Canada and what 'home' was like for them. These things and these feeling about their 'old lives' do not simply disappear once they set foot on Canadian soil. The experiences and the routes these youths took to get to Canada impacted the way they lived their lives in many ways. These memories and experiences did not go away; they inform them of many of their decisions, aspirations and

⁷ Abdi had never formally been in school since he was 11 but his spoken English was very good. He learned a lot from Hollywood movies, he said to a tutor at NGen one day when she commented that he spoke well. He said he really liked American music too and learned a lot of English through that. He also used to 'practise' the American accent, thinking he might move to America one day.

outlooks. Their experiences were often mentioned in passing as a small anecdote that was seemingly trivial. But I and the other youths, when we heard some of the stories, were often taken aback by the grave nature of the anecdotes.

It was almost a shock at times. On one occasion, some of the kids were playing *Call of Duty*⁸ at the youth club and Hussain commented that it was exactly like that in Iraq. He pointed at the screen and said they would run around the streets, avoiding getting shot just like it shows on the screen. They treated us “*like dogs*”, he said and then went back to doing his homework while everyone else looked at each other in horror. Like Hussain and Abdi, many youths would talk about their refugee experiences in the most banal way, often without emotion as if it was just a part of life. And for many of them – it was. And there were many that I came across as I went through my fieldwork.

My intention for my research was not to focus on refugee youths, new immigrants or home-grown Muslims but rather to access a variety of youths with different histories and backgrounds. What struck me is that so many of them were refugees. Refugees coming to Canada fly into the cities of Toronto, Ontario and Montreal and Quebec (Globe and Mail, January 17, 2017). They are then dispersed to 36 cities where the Canadian government has established agreements with organisations that can provide specialised services for refugees (ibid.). Those who settle in Ontario initially settle in the cities of Windsor, Ottawa, London, Kitchener, Toronto and Hamilton. Toronto and Hamilton are both cities which I conducted my fieldwork in, and as a result, had a higher number of refugees.

⁸ A popular, first-person shooter, war-based video game played on gaming consoles (Call of Duty, 2015).

The NGen youth club, one of my field sites in Hamilton, had previously been part of SISO, a refugee settlement provider, but it was subsequently closed down due to a mismanagement of funds with 4 million Canadian dollars unaccounted for. When the club reopened as the Globe (later renamed NGen), many of the youths continued to go there even though they were not getting the same level of help and service that they had been before. Most of the youths said that they went there because they felt comfortable, and the people there were like them. As Musa said, at NGen, there were people “*who actually cared*” (Musa, November 2011).

Along with that, cities around Hamilton and Toronto, such as Burlington, Mississauga and Oakville also had refugee youth living there as many had moved away from Toronto and Hamilton. A few youth voiced concerns that the assistance provided at the designated centres was simply not enough. They got no help with school work, for example, and the places did not cater to the issues of youths, especially Muslim youths, with staff who often lacked cultural awareness (Abdi, August 2011; Abdul, March 2012; Layla, May 2012) like the staff member who, on multiple occasions, told Layla that she did not have to wear hijab anymore because she was in Canada (Layla, May 2012). For these reasons, along with the general complaints that the refugee participants had about the general lack of services provided to refugees, many of the youths went beyond support centres and went where they could get the support that they needed. A lot of the refugee youths involved in my research were also in need of emotional support and a sense of community, which they found more of in youth clubs, mosques, churches, schools and other youth organisations.

The experience of refugee youths like Abdi is talked about by Berns-McGown in her work on the Muslim Somali diaspora, and the challenges faced by Somali refugees in terms of housing and placement (Berns- McGown, 2013). But in this research, Abdi’s story in particular can tell

us more about the impact of the war-on-terror and the effect that extremist groups like Al-Shabaab can have on the lives of young Muslim Somali boys who were often were in danger because of their religious and ethnic background whilst in Somalia, and who continued to live in precarious and unsafe situations in Canada due to their positioning as young, black Somali refugees (Tiilikainen, 2015).

Migrants

Some 20% of Canadians were born outside of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011). Almost a third of my participants had migrated to Canada at some point in their lives. Some had come when they were just babies and some more recently. Sana migrated to Canada multiple times (see below). Sana moved to Canada when she was four from Egypt and then moved back to Egypt when she was 16. Then, primarily because of the conditions surrounding the Arab Spring, she moved back to Canada with her family in 2011, rather abruptly. Sana had a difficult time in both countries and in particular had trouble fitting into ‘Canadian society’ or ‘Egyptian society’ as she put it.

On the one hand, Sana she said never really fitted in in Canada because she was not born there (January 2012). On other day, she mentioned that “*white people*” would tease her at school. “*I didn’t get their ways. Like I would do things like talk Arabic on the phone and then people would make fun of me. So then I’d stop but then they would say stuff like that I have lots of hair on my face of something*” (Sana, May, 2012). Sana went through a period of clinical depression during this time and was also diagnosed with anorexia. She said “*I tried to be perfect, like if I look perfect like those skinny bitches then nobody can say anything to me*” (ibid.). Unfortunately, what happened then was that people teased her for being too skinny. After a

while, Sana started to get new friends, a group that she said were ‘*white, black, brown, purple, gay, straight – you name it*’ (Sana, May 2012). Then she started to feel like she belonged more.

It was at that time that her mother decided that Canada was a difficult place for her, a single mother, to raise a family of five on her own. They moved to Egypt to be around her mother’s family so that they could help her take care of the children. “*She was just like ‘that’s it I can’t take it anymore’ and told us that she already made the plans and we would move in the summer[summer 2009]”* (Sana, May 2012).

This was both a relief and a shock to Sana:

Sana (May 2012): *I never really, really got over the shit that happened with me. Like I still struggle with it. I always still worry about what I eat and stuff. So I was like ‘maybe this will be good’ you know? I can get away from that stuff and this fucked up place. But then I was also like ‘are you fucking kidding me?’ Like, this place is my home. I had just started doing well in school and now I have Josh and Roze,⁹ so like, what the fuck woman? Get your shit together. Now because of you, I have to start all over again. So yeah. I was basically like ‘fuck my life’ you know? [laughs].*

Sana moved to Cairo, Egypt in July 2009 with her mother, sister and two brothers. She enrolled in a private Canadian school that had mostly American and Canadian students, many from expat families as well as affluent Egyptian nationals.

⁹ Josh and Roze were her two closest friends.

Sana (May 2012): *Those were the real assholes. Bunch of rich, stuck-up assholes. They were all high-class people, you know. Like real Egyptian princesses. They looked at me like ‘miskeena’¹⁰ ‘cos like in Egypt, everyone knows your shit right? They know your business.*

Sana went on to talk about her experience in Egypt while going to a Canadian school. She was on a different level from all of them, she said. She could get along with the teachers because they were all Canadians and the rest of the ‘white girls’ from Canada because they had all lived in Canada. On the other hand, she felt that the ‘Arab’ girls would come and talk to her in Arabic, to call her out as not really being Arabic and as being ‘whitewashed’:

Sana (May 2012): *So I’m sitting in my world issues class, and Rana goes in Arabic, Hi, I’m like, Hi! How are you? I go, Sorry who are you? I think is she being mean to me because to her I’m not a real Egyptian? She’s just seeing what I’m about, so she wants to show that I can’t speak Arabic for my life, right? Like I’m too white to know how to be like them.*

Me: *But your Arabic is pretty good though, isn’t it?*

Sana: *It is now. Before it was pretty good too, just not like as if I had grown up in Egypt. Like they know I’m not really Egyptian like them.*

Me: *What do you mean? Because you lived here?*

Sana: *Yeah so I’m like too ‘Western’ even though I’m not. But it’s more the high-class thing. Like they have these annoying high society hoitee toitee accents, like, ‘keeeefik, habiibtii’, it’s annoying as shit.*

Me: *And what about yours? Your accent?*

¹⁰ In Arabic it means poor or pathetic.

Sana: It's like a mix. A bit of a Canadian accent but also not high-class. I mean, you can tell I'm like – that my family is from the village. Just a bit rough sounding, hard. You know what I mean. Like a bit harder.

Here, Sana's discussion about the girls at her school underlines the significant role that class can play in belonging as well as the way that class and race intersect. While in Canada, she said that her Egyptian identity was stronger than her Canadian identity. Sana said this was because she was Muslim. She argued that people knew she wasn't Canadian because they knew she was Muslim. Yet in Egypt, because most people she interacted with there were Egyptians who were born and raised there and who spoke fluent Arabic, she saw herself as Canadian, as less Arab and in her words, "*more Western*". At the same time, she was aware that her accent is not as 'high-class' as the 'rich girls' at school, and that they looked at her with a sense of pity, calling her '*miskeena*' because they knew her situation (that she was not from a high-class, wealthy background). She began to feel out of place and told me that she never invited people over to their house because they didn't live in a 'rich area' and she didn't want people to know (Sana, May 2012).

Sana tried to get used to life in Egypt. She made friends there and started to enjoy being around her family. After a year, she felt 'even more Canadian' in Egypt in a way that she never did in Canada. Sana said, "*Basically, I'm Canadian in Egypt, and I'm Egyptian in Canada*". Having spent most of her life in Canada, she also was not used to life in Egypt and her differences as what she called "*a real Canadian*" became more prominent. "*I started acting really Canadian too like. If someone said I did something wrong, I was like 'Oh well, that's how we do it in Canada'*" (Sana, May 2012). She talked about how she often overdid her 'Canadian-ness' in Egypt because she knew at the end of the day, she had "*what they wanted*" (ibid). Sana said

that she also could not really get used to the culture there, and that although she looked Egyptian, she did not act Egyptian. In her view, people thought she acted ‘white’ or was ‘whitewashed’. This also made her feel more Canadian than she did while she was living in Canada.

Sana (May 2012): *Then when all the shit went down in Tahrir Square [January 28, 2011], our schools closed down. We had fuck all to do. Police were everywhere and scaring us when we were just at the mall and shit. We couldn’t do anything for months. So basically Mom was like ‘Who knows when this will end’, so she was like, ‘OK, we are going back’ and we were like ‘Thank fuck for that!!*

Sana’s story was an example of being from one place and of another. Her feeling of being perceived as Canadian and belonging to Canada only happened once she was in Egypt, where she was seen by some girls at school as being different and from ‘somewhere else’ but she herself also felt that she did not fit in. In Canada, Sana felt more Egyptian but she also said that she saw Canada as her home. She felt like she was an “*Egyptian in Canada*”, mostly because of the way people saw her – as a Muslim and ‘different’. Sana’s example shows the ways in which different environments and situations can highlight different identities; in Canada, her religious and ethnic identity became more prominent whereas in Egypt, her Canadian-ness, her ‘whitewashed’ ways and her class difference came to the fore and, although she was born there, these experiences ultimately impacted on her sense of belonging in Egypt.

Abdul

Abdul moved to Canada before he started high school as his parents wanted their children to eventually attend university in Canada, and thus thought that it was important that they could

become accustomed to life in Canada before starting university. As young people who primarily grew up in countries with large non-white Muslim populations, this made their early high school years, which can be a difficult adjustment for most teens, even more difficult.

Through diasporic communities in Canada as well as through links to ‘back home’ via social media, Skype and visits, participants kept strong ties to the places they once lived, which strengthened their notions of multiple belongings on a national scale. Homi Bhabha talks about these kinds of multiple belongings, as do others (Yuval-Davis, 2011; Back, 2007), where ideas of multiple ‘homes’ and belonging to multiple places engenders a synthesis of the past and the present (Bhabha, 1990). As youths who were on the precipice of childhood and adulthood, many often had to do some ‘adulthood’ as Sana called it, often having to help their parents and siblings with communicating in English, with administrative tasks and interpreting medical and immigration appointments as well as helping their families negotiate their new life and social positioning in Canada. For many of the migrant youths, their responsibilities to their families were greater than their Canadian peers. Lastly, as a by-product of the points-based immigration system in Canada (Kazemipur, 2014), most youths were of middle and upper class backgrounds, which often made it easier to adapt to life in Canada with more money at their disposal and where class often acted like a buffer (Ali, 2003), and where they often knew how to act and operate within certain environments and/or benefitted from the social capital that can come with playing an instrument, like Zayn did, or having a parent who was ‘a professional’.

After migrating to Canada, these class structures, while at times beneficial, became even more complicated and, often due to a lack of money and jobs, their perception of their class also changed. Many youths essentially went from identifying as middle and upper-class people with money to being seen as working-class and living in working-class communities such as

Hamilton. The way that they were perceived by others, due to their lack of money, in some ways affected how they saw themselves. But this did not necessarily mean that these youths saw themselves as working class but rather as youths from middle or upper-class families who temporarily did not have money (Hana, Selma, Yusuf, June, 2012).

Canadian Born (Heritage Muslim Youth)

Many of my participants were born and raised in Canada, and primarily were from various and often multiple diaspora communities. Three of the youths came from white Anglo-Canadian convert families who had been in Canada for generations. Most of those born in Canada came from middle-class backgrounds whose parents worked in professional fields. The majority of these youths lived in the suburbs of Toronto in the cities of Burlington, Mississauga, Oakville and Hamilton. Of the youths who were Canadian-born, some had moved from other parts of Canada to the GTA. One of these youths was called Essa.

Essa was born in Montreal to Pakistani parents who had migrated to Canada before he was born. Then, when he was ten years old, they moved to Burlington, a largely white, middle-class suburb of Toronto. (Essa, April 2012). Growing up in Quebec, Essa has a strong loyalty to his Quebecois upbringing and saw himself as a French-Canadian who had settled in English-Canada (Essa, April 2012). Essa's Canadian-ness was further specified as Quebecois, and crucially as different from being from English-Canada. Coming from a diasporic background, he also identified with his Pakistani and Muslim backgrounds. What he struggled to identify and belong to, he said, was English-speaking Canada. Essa said: *'It's not a big deal to be brown in my school, like, there's so many brown people'* (Essa, April 2012) but he often felt like an outsider because he was born and raised in Quebec. What further complicated Essa's relationship to being Canadian was not his Muslimness but rather, as he said, his loyalty to the

Montreal Canadiens, the rival hockey team of the Toronto Maple Leafs, which is the ‘home’ hockey team. He wore his Canadiens paraphernalia, not only as a fan but also as a statement about his identity as a French-Canadian, and his background and upbringing in Montreal (Essa, 2012).

On Canada

The Environics Survey

Current debates around multiculturalism and post-911 narratives about citizenship, integration and belonging have problematised the notion of being young and identifying as both Canadian and Muslim. A recent, highly referenced Environics survey¹¹ of Muslims in Canada suggests that Muslim youths feel Muslim first and Canadian second, and that religious observance and attendance has strengthened over the past decade among Muslims aged 18 to 34 (Environics, April 2016).

Among [the] young respondents who said their citizenship and their faith were important parts of their identity, 61 per cent said being Muslim was the most important part of their identity and six per cent said being Canadian was the most important. Twenty-six per cent said both were important. (Environics, April 2016)

Putting aside the methodology of this survey, which can be argued as being problematic due to the fact that the quantitative method and closed-format questions used tell us little else as to *why* only 6% of Muslim youth said “being Canadian was the most important part of their identity” (Environics, April 2016) or what “being Canadian” meant. As a prominent Canadian

¹¹ This survey was talked about at length in all major Canadian media outlets, the Toronto Star, The Globe and Mail, the National Post and CBC and was referenced in Federal Government discussions as well as by Muslim organisations and spokespeople. It was also covered internationally on the BBC and in the Guardian and The New York Times.

legal scholar, Azeezah Kanji, responded to this question in the survey. “I really do think it's a product of the tremendous pressure that's been placed on the Muslim Canadian community to declare itself not a fifth column in Canada ... to prove itself loyal” said Kanji (CBC News, April, 2016). This hints at the increasing pressure on Muslim youth to prove their patriotism and to express nationalistic sentiments towards Canada as some sort of a requirement to belonging, which is not necessarily seen as a requirement for all Canadians or more importantly as a requirement for citizenship and the freedoms that come with it. These types of questions are not new, and they are ones that have been asked in the UK and in the US going back to the civil rights movement. As Sohail Daulatzai argues, *The Muslim International*, a group similar to the black international, who during the time of the civil rights movement were continually asked to prove their loyalty to their country, rather than to the international black movement. This move negated important and critical questions that needed to be asked regarding the growing importance of nationalism, patriotism and citizenship and are important questions facing the *Muslim International* today (2010).

Another question that arises out of the Environics survey is what it actually means to be Canadian, and how this is defined. What is Canadian is often taken for granted, but in fact, as all other identities are shifting and changing, it would seem that this definition of being Canadian also goes through the same fluid and dynamic process and is not to be simply understood. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, identities are also reciprocal as they can be given and self-perceived, and as such, questions about Canadian-ness and belonging bring with them other people's perceptions as well as the young people's own. Thus, in order to discuss how young Muslims feel about Canada and being Canadian, it is helpful to outline both popular and national narratives about being Canadian, and their ambiguous relationship

towards nationalism as well as the complicated histories, both territorial and imagined, that have merged together to create the nation that we call Canada.

The young Muslims in this research study, from those who were born and raised in Canada to those like Abdi who had been (often violently) displaced from their ‘home’, were entering a new reality of living in Canada at a time where issues around Muslims and Islam are often fraught and contentious. These different routes can help us to understand how past, present and future histories overlap, collide and are connected, as well as enabling new ways of belonging in Canada and finding a home for young Muslims as well as all other Canadians as these “histories have their real, material and symbolic effects” in everyday life (Hall, 1990, p226). This is the nature of a diasporic space. Furthermore, as Homi Bhabha states, “As we negotiate this transnational territory, we often find ourselves in the interstices of the old and the new, confronting the past as the present” (Bhabha, 2000, p579).

These histories, old and new, material and symbolic as well as ideas of family, home, boundary, belonging and history connect to ideas about the nation, national belonging, newness and the new cultural experiences that arise from the intersection of personal narratives and histories, the nation and the cities in which young people live. These experiences, much like the earlier experiences of colonialism that many diasporic communities have experienced in their countries of origin, tell the story of multiple nationalisms, belongings and ‘homes’ and give “meaning to nationalist emphases on a family of ideas all of which, in the end, connected ideas to imaginations of place: home, boundary, territory and roots” (Bhabha, 2000, p579).

Canadian Multiculturalism

On October 20th, 2015, I watched Justin Trudeau give his victory speech after a decisive win over the Conservative Prime Minister, Stephen Harper. Trudeau's speech echoed the one given by his father, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, 44 years before when he declared that Canada would adopt an official multi-cultural policy, recognising and respecting the diversity in race, ethnicity, language, religion and customs in Canadian society. Justin echoed the same commitment to diversity and equity and pronounced that a "new age" would begin where differences in race, gender ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion would not only be celebrated, but protected. "We all come from somewhere else", he said. "We all believe different things but one thing we share is that we belong to this country, and this country belongs to us".

This vision of Canada was one where he argued that "our differences make us stronger" and that no matter what race, religion or background people are, "a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian" (Globe and Mail, September 25, 2015).

Trudeau Jr's vision of Canada as an inclusive place, one that celebrates difference and diversity, a country that is a place of opportunity for immigrants and people from varying ethnicities, races and backgrounds, is not a new one – it is one that was also promoted by his predecessors. As a nation that was said to be built by immigrants (Government of Canada, 2017), this image of a Canadian mosaic that is characterised by difference as well as unity is one that is deliberately different to America's melting pot model of assimilation and 'melting into one'. This image, very much a core tenet of the Canadian narrative, is strengthened and built on by official Multicultural Policy (1979) and is one that is very much the 'face' of Canada abroad

and is publicised as such. But do young Muslims feel like they belong in Canada? What are their feelings about calling Canada home? Do these youths feel that “a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian”?

The Myth of Diffidence – Canada’s Soft Nationalism

How national cultures and peoples see themselves undoubtedly has real-world implications and, in this case, the way that Canadian nationalism is expressed as a national narrative impacts on the sense of belonging that Muslim youths feel in Canada. Canadian style nationalism is often referred to as ‘soft nationalism’ (Millard et al., 2002, p18). This type of nationalism is one that is not ‘in your face’ and works as a device allowing Canadians to distance themselves from American-style nationalism, while at the same time deploying an American-style level of patriotism (Millard 34) where the rules of what is considered Canadian exist on a more subtle yet pervasive level. This is also known as the ‘myth of diffidence’ (Millard et al., 2002). At times, participants in this research study often struggled to find a place for themselves in the subtle, shaky terrain of Canadian nationalism. This type of Canadian nationalism is deeply rooted in performance and public, national, narratives that are exported internationally and within the country itself. Canadian-style nationalism still brings with it the idea of ‘us and them’. Millard argues that Canadian diffidence can be explained by the lack of a coherent ‘in’ group or ‘us’ that, in effect, weakens nationalistic affiliations.

I would argue against Millard’s claim that there are not coherent ‘in groups’ in Canada. Canada is known as having ‘two poles’ (Government of Canada, 1971) – English and French – with this formation steeped in both British and French colonial encounters whose histories continue to dominate the national narratives of Canadian-ness, both formally and informally. While the

two solitudes (McLennan, 1945) of English and French Canada are considered socially and culturally isolated from each other and distinct, their prominence in the narrative of Canadian-ness further marginalises groups such as diaspora communities and founding First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities.

Despite the soft nationalism of Canada, who the 'in' group is and who is the 'us' and the 'them' also becomes clear in everyday interactions and through the narratives found in Canadian popular culture. Ideas about what is Canadian are often translated through talk of multiculturalism, through adverts about coffee, diversity, hockey, cold weather and through a national love for Tim Hortons coffee, beer, bacon and maple syrup. As harmless as some of these ideas sound, behind them are ideas rooted in white, Eurocentric, middle-class experiences that people of colour, diaspora communities and in this case young, racialised Muslim youths do not experience in the same way, if at all.

Keeping nationalism in mind, as is the case with my participants, Brah writes, "Border crossings do not occur only across the dominant/dominated dichotomy, but that, equally, there is traffic within cultural formations of the subordinated groups and that these journeys are not always mediated through the dominant culture(s)" (Brah, 2005, p291) or in this case, by English and French Canada. The collective identities of these youths and the intersections between their journeys and experiences also produce their own cultures, practices and ways of belonging despite the dominant culture and histories of other colonial pasts. Even though there is an awareness of not being seen as Canadian or feeling Canadian in a more metaphorical sense, or at times a longing for another 'home', they are in fact representing their Canadian-ness in their everyday lives. These ways are not patriotic or nationalistic as such, but rather coming from a place of experiencing life in Canada, living there and the banal realities of

everyday life. This kind of a longing towards their ‘home country’ can be seen as destabilising or contradictory to the national narratives of belonging in Canada, but they are a normal and ordinary part of young Muslims’ diasporic identities and their negotiations of them that incorporate their diverse histories and journeys into their lives in Canada.

The Politics of National Belonging

As mentioned above, within certain communities such as Indo-Canadian and Syrian/Lebanese Canadians, Canada also presents a diasporic space where past colonial histories converge in a country which itself has also been colonised by the British and the French and primarily is one that operates with the ongoing subordination and systemic oppression of its Aboriginal peoples. Looking again to Avtar Brah’s work on diaspora, the concept of ‘Englishness’ is very helpful here to further understand the complicated and layered intersections that are at play within diasporic communities and, in particular, the politics of ‘ness’. Brah looks at the diaspora space of ‘England’ as one where “African-Caribbean, Irish, Asian, Jewish and other diasporas intersect among themselves as well as with the entity constructed as ‘Englishness’” (Brah, 1996, p209).

Englishness is formed through internal colonial encounters with Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as through the relationship with colonial conquests abroad and rivalries with other European countries (ibid.). Specifically, ‘Englishness’ is continually reconstituted through existing diasporic formations as well as through the multiple border crossings that were taking place; border crossings that were territorial but also political, economic, psychological and cultural (ibid.). Brah argues that these border crossings do not only occur in the dominant culture, in this case England, but also within the subordinated/minority groups and, most

importantly, that these “journeys are not always mediated through the dominant culture” (ibid.). Therefore, being British-Asian, for example, does not necessarily mean that being Asian is a peripheral ‘minority identity’ in reference to the dominant ‘British identity’. She argues that these identities can run alongside each other as well as through each other.

In the same vein, an argument can be made of ‘Canadian-ness’ as a concept where national narratives intersect with old hierarchies which often reproduce and re-inscribe themselves in Canada itself. Canada is often seen as a multi-cultural utopia (Adams, 2008) where people merely arrive, discounting their lived histories and journeys as something that is in the past while simultaneously giving the existence of diverse ethnic and cultural groups as proof that the cultural mosaic of Canada is a “successful example of multi-culturalism” (Globe and Mail, May, 4, 2017).

In this way, people embody multiculturalism but it does not embody them and their experiences, histories and paths that led them to Canada. As Canada has been formed through colonisation by the British and French, indigenous settlement, multi-immigration and the cultural imperialism of the United States (and to some extent of Europe), it has within it a deep history of marginalisation, inequality, racism and a Eurocentric and American world-view which filters through its inhabitants, its policies, its ‘story’ and thus the daily experiences of Muslim youths in Canada. But do the identities of Muslim and Canadian run alongside each other in this context? Is the idea of Canadian-ness a dominant identity, or is it possible that young people’s identities as Muslims are able to shift and be expressed separately and not as ‘minority identities’?

In my research, I found that some of the young Muslims' experiences supported this idea of a 'Muslim identity' as one that was prominent and ran alongside their Canadian-ness rather than being informed by it. But crucially, this was not the case for many other Muslim youths, specifically new immigrants and refugees. These religious identities were tempered and complicated by issues of class, race, and gender. For example, Essa was an observant Muslim and being Muslim was an identity that he felt the most affinity and loyalty to. So did Musa. But Essa was born in Canada, of Pakistani decent, was middle-class and went to a school that was very diverse and had many other Muslim students. In a way, his environment made it easier to express his Muslim identity the way he did in his daily life.

Musa, on the other hand, was a new immigrant from Kenya. He was black and had an accent when he spoke English. He also went to an ethnically diverse school with many Muslims in what they would call 'a rough part of town' in Hamilton. While Musa called himself religious, tried his best to pray and, as he said, was 'a good Muslim', he was very concerned about fitting into Canadian society. He constantly negotiated his Muslimness in an environment (a school with mostly immigrants and refugees) where learning about Canadian customs and ways of being had social currency. On the other hand, Essa was able to, in some ways, take his Canadian-ness for granted and was in an environment where he could express his Muslim identity more freely. For Musa, although he and Essa shared similar beliefs and the desire to be good Muslims, it was not as easy for him as he also had to perform his Canadian-ness in a way that Essa did not. Going back to Brah's argument, it is relevant to Essa's case but not in Musa's, because Musa did not have the same sense of entitlement towards being Canadian as Essa did. Thus, Musa negotiated his Muslimness and his performance of it according to what he deemed was acceptable – in this case, public religious observance in Canada.

Making Canada Home

Home is an idea – a place where people feel that they belong and where they can be themselves. It is often a place that we miss when we are not there. The young people in this research study called Canada their home for multiple reasons and, as discussed earlier in this chapter, they all had their own journeys and their own paths that had led them there. However, for many of them, home was not only Canada but somewhere else as well, be it the country they were born in or somewhere where they felt a sense of belonging along the way or even a collection of different places – a myriad of homes. For migrants and diasporic communities, this discontinuity can lead to a feeling of always being from somewhere else. In his essay ‘Imaginary Homelands’, Salman Rushdie describes how those of the Indian diaspora can feel about their lost homes and can construct ‘fictions’ – imaginary homelands or “Indias of the mind” (Rushdie, 2012, p10). In this case, home becomes a place in the mind born out of memory and a collection of experiences and feelings that coexist with the realities of the present time and place in which they are living. The migrant occupies a displaced position, never fully in one place or the other. This has also been described as living ‘in-between’ places (Bhabha) but this is not what I observed with my participants.

While my participants – particularly the refugees and new immigrants – talked about feelings of displacement in a physical sense, I observed young Muslims who saw home as not just one place but multiple homes, often in an emotional and imagined sense. Many also felt a sense of comfort and belonging to more than one place at one time and saw this as part of their identity. This was particularly true for two of my participants – sisters Lina (19) and Maryam (21) who had grown up in Qatar (Lina and Maryam, June 2013). They spent a fair amount of time in both Qatar and in Canada during the year. They also vacationed extensively with their family and friends both in Europe and Africa. Their experiences, while still diasporic, were also

influenced by the fact that they came from an affluent, rich upper-class family and spent time with other youths who came from similar backgrounds and also had (both materially and emotionally) multiple homes. Home was just not one physical space but a collection of spaces, both material, geographical and imagined. To them, these ideas of ‘multiple homes’ were normal and went beyond the idea of an imagined home to one that was performed and lived. However, as Lina and Maryam negotiated these multiple belongings, they also expressed aspirations for the future and for making Canada their – as Maryam called it – “*permanent mailing address*”. Maryam and Lina’s buffers of class and cosmopolitan upbringing, and the money that came with it, helped them to find belonging and comfort in multiple places and homes.

Abdi

After Abdi left Somalia, he and his family were taken to Egypt where they stayed for two years while awaiting a placement in a permanent home country. They were eventually given a choice between settling in Sweden and Canada. As I talked about in the introduction, Abdi felt the story he had been told about Canada through the video he saw was a fairytale compared to the reality of life in Canada

Abdi said he was treated more like a human in Somalia, and that in Somalia he had no opportunities because there was no work and because the country was poor and in the hands of criminals. But in Canada, he said, he had no opportunities because of the way he looked, and where he came from – that people didn’t see him as a human but as a “*criminal, a thief – a terrorist*” (interview with Abdi, September 2012). “*No matter what good things I do, these people (Canadians), they won’t let me belong.*” Abdi saw Canadians not only as white but as

people with a European background as well as – “*smart people like you*” - he said to me, people who he said “*understand how things work*” (Abdi, September 2013). Here, he equated being Canadian with whiteness and also with someone ‘smart’ or educated who understood the ways things worked in Canada; he presumably thought my South Asian background was not a hindrance to belonging.¹² He saw himself as someone who not only did not belong but could never belong – who was excluded from belonging regardless of how ‘good’ he was.

Abdi’s experience is not isolated. Being a young black Muslim male had, in his opinion, affected his initial dreams about living in Canada. He wanted to feel like he belonged in Canada but felt that his ethnicity, race and religion were a hindrance to this – not in his mind, but in the minds of others. He felt that he was seen as a problem for multi-culturalism and as being from a group that rejects being Canadian as incompatible with their cultural background. At the same time, he was also seen as a young black male and an essential black subject (Hall, 1990) – a view that is further complicated by the post-war-on-terror narratives of dangerous, criminalised radicalised Muslim youths (Ali, 2012) that need to be monitored and cannot be trusted.

Despite these circumstances, Abdi said that he was happy to be living in Canada. For him, it was a matter of having the opportunity to have a life, and to make something of himself. Yet he often talked about his life in Somalia and the friends and family he had there. He was somebody there, he used to tell his friends. When I asked him if he missed Somali and the life he had there, he simply said, “*In Somalia I had life but no freedom. Here, I have all the freedom – but no life*”.

¹² He had mentioned to me on different occasions that being Indian is seen as a good thing in Canada.

Cold Shoulder

Another common remark about Canada by my participants was the fact that it is a cold country. This is an everyday complaint during the wintertime from those who are refugees, migrants and second-generation Muslims. Through my fieldwork, it became evident that these types of complaints were sometimes received in particular ways that reflected on the young Muslim's unwillingness to belong to Canada. The following story illustrates the ways that even cold weather can be used to create distinctions between Canada's inhabitants.

Yasser, age 18, was born in Canada and moved to Pakistan with his family when he was five (Yasser, June 2011). He moved back to Canada when he was 14. He said that he loved Canada and always wanted to move back. He felt like he never really belonged in Pakistan and that he was too different. He felt that his family was different and they never really understood how things worked in Pakistan.

I used to have a Canadian flag in my room. We used to watch hockey on the satellite and me and my brother would always talk about how we can't wait to move back. I don't miss Pakistan, just more like I miss my cousins and Nanee but we go back lots anyways so it's like OK.

Yasser also expressed some problems that he had after moving back. Even though he was born in Canada and called it his home, on a regular basis people would treat him as if he was from somewhere else.

At the youth club after school one day, he was telling his friends about an incident that happened between him and his white maths teacher in class that day:

***Yasser:** I'm freezing my ass off and then I said to Mr. Mills, like it's so cold... we need the heat turned up. I'm just right by the window and it's fucking minus 25 or something! So all of em were saying that everyone was pissed and saying it was too cold in the room. All of us were sayin' it. But then just to me he says to me in front of the whole class 'Well it's Canada, sunshine! It sure as heck isn't Saudi Arabia' anymore is it?!'*
Or some shit like that.

***Amir** (laughing): Saudi Arabia what???*

***Yasser:** Yeah, like I'm Paki bro! For some reason, this guy says Saudi Arabia to me. Not even Pakistan! Everyone was laughing their asses off and I just laughed like 'Hahaha' but I was really like 'FUCK YOU ALL AND FUCK THIS GODDAMN PLACE'.*

Yasser's encounter in the classroom was clearly racist, Islamophobic and gendered. The fact that the teacher mentioned Saudi Arabia to Yasser in particular, being a brown male Muslim, was significant. Perhaps due to his Muslim name, Yasser was perceived as being from 'somewhere else' because he was a brown person complaining about the cold, whereas others who were not from his background were free to complain about the cold without their Canadian-ness being commented on. Adding to that, the fact that his teacher mentioned Saudi Arabia was an obvious correlation with him being Muslim. Either his teacher thought he was from Saudi Arabia rather than Pakistan due to Yasser's religious background and skin colour, or he just said it as a passing comment because Saudi Arabia is hot. Either way, using the country of Saudi Arabia was a way of 'othering' Yasser and outing him as being a 'foreign' person who could not take the Canadian weather, and pointing out that Yasser was a Muslim. Along with that, the teacher's use of the term 'sunshine' – a patronising term that seemed to be a comment on Yasser's masculinity – implies that he wasn't tough enough. This is one of the

everyday ways that young men like Yasser feel othered. It was if, even though he called himself a Canadian and had Canadian citizenship, he was not really one of them. His way of dealing with it was to just go on with his day, as he felt like “*this is just the way it is*” (Yasser, 2011).

The issue of the cold weather is not a uniquely Canadian one, but being able to endure it is a notion that exists in Canadian popular culture, and in everyday expressions of Canadian-ness. It is not to be discounted. I would also argue that this pride about being able to handle the cold weather is, if not racialised, is at the very least rooted in a Eurocentric world-view. Most diaspora groups with immigrant histories in Canada who are not white predominantly originate from countries that are hot rather than cold. In this way, Yasser not being able to deal with the cold was considered to be very un-Canadian. This is a very subtle way that soft nationalism operates in the everyday and where the lines of ‘us’ and ‘them’ may not be overtly preached but are drawn in the snow, as it were.

“I. Am. Canadian.”

In a now infamous Canadian beer ad, Joe the Lumberjack stands proudly as an idiotic-looking American asks him where he is from. Joe goes on to deliver a ‘rant’ of all the things he likes, says and does that makes him Canadian and then screams into the dumbstruck face of the American man three simple words: “I. Am. Canadian.” (“The Rant”, Molson Canadian, 1999). During their interviews, I asked my participants the same question that was put to Joe the Lumberjack: “Do you consider yourself a Canadian?”

Contrary to Joe, who had a very clear view about this, this question was often met with confusion and scepticism as if I had asked something that they didn’t expect or that they hadn’t

thought of. This was precisely the case. “*I never really thought about it,*” said Mona. Amir asked me, “*What does that mean? Do you mean do I have a citizenship?*” One of the participants looked at me with a confused look on his face and said “*Obviously*”. Later, as I listened to the interviews, I had a question for myself – why did I ask this question? In some ways, September 11th was still a vivid memory in my mind. What I remember during the aftermath was hearing a lot about being Canadian in a way that I had not before. “We must assert ourselves as Canadians”, I had thought to myself. Following this experience, I suppose on some level, at the beginning of my fieldwork I associated ideas of belonging with asserting one’s Canadian identity. As I was to hear during my interviews, this was not necessarily the case. I eventually stopped asking the question and talked about it only if the topic came up in conversation. That being said, as the question of ‘Do you feel like you belong in Canada?’ is routinely asked in popular and policy discourse (Environics, 2016) without a deeper understanding of its responses, I continued to ask questions related to what belonging or not belonging to Canada means, and what it entails for Muslim youths.

Canada Day, 2012

Abdul was born in Yemen and is of Middle Eastern decent. His family moved to Canada when he was seven years old. I asked him if he felt like he was Canadian.

Abdul (December 2012): *That is the most annoying thing if I think about it. I get it. But look. I go to school, I work two jobs, I help my family... I pay my taxes. I do the whole thing. I even help old ladies cross the street, OK? Everything. But do I feel Canadian? Nah. Not really. Do I have to? I mean, it’s not like they think I am anyway, know what I’m saying? You know they aren’t thinking that. But nobody can tell me I don’t do the right things.*

Abdul expressed a sense of ambivalence to the idea of feeling Canadian as if it was something he did not really find to be relevant in his life, while at the same time addressing the fact the he was doing everything he was supposed to. He had an awareness of what was expected of him living in Canada but at the same time he said that he didn't feel Canadian. During my fieldwork, he made frequent references to Canadians as people who were not like him and that they tended to be people who were white. A few weeks after this interview, it was Canada Day and a few of us went to see the fireworks by the lake. Abdul was there, in fact, he was the one who had organised the outing for everyone. I made a comment to him about how his patriotic nature was coming through and he laughed. He said any excuse to go out with friends was good for him, and that he hadn't had a day off from work in ages.

While attending Independence Day festivities could be interpreted as a patriotic gesture, I did not really observe any of that with the group of teenagers that I was with, except for Aliza who had her face painted with a Canadian flag. To Aliza, aged 19 (July 2012), celebrating Canada Day was important. Aliza was born in Kashmir, India to Italian and Indian parents. She moved to Canada when she was 17 after living in the UK for a few years and told me that on that day, *"I'm proud to be Canadian. I feel like crying when I think about this country"* (Aliza, July 2012). But that night, everyone was making fun of her, joking that she was too "keen". She did it for Instagram, she told them. She said that she needed something cool to post. Abdul joked with her later on that she could get away with it because she actually looked like a real Canadian because she was so white.

While the young Muslims at the Canada Day celebrations did take part in the festivities, there was again a sense of ambivalence about being Canadian. Many were there because it was

something fun to do and a chance to hang out with their friends. Even Aliza's face-painting did not seem like an expression of patriotism but rather an appreciation and homage to the country she lived in rather than expressing belonging in an obvious way. They were there to take part in the celebrations but they also talked about how it reminded them of being younger, and the childhood activities that they took part in while growing up. They talked about how they used to have fireworks themselves and with family when they were children – in Pakistan, India, Albania and Morocco. Here they were, young Muslims from all of the different corners of the world, attending Canadian celebrations and reminiscing about their shared experiences as kids. At this moment, being there and being from somewhere else was what united them and what the majority of conversations were about that night. On the other hand, there were many kids from their schools there, who also seemed to be there just for a fun night out with friends. In the diaspora space of Canada, these young Muslims expressed their Canadian-ness in the same way that their peers did. They joined together in celebration despite some of their reservations about calling themselves Canadian.

Who is Canadian?

During my fieldwork, my participants frequently used the term Canadian to mean 'white'. According to Abdi, it wasn't just about being white, but also thinking 'white'. *"Canadian is a way of thinking, they are white but they think like a white in a way that I don't get - they talk about life. They talk about going to the cottage and Christmas parties. I can't do that."* he said. Abdi was talking about some of the intangible ideas about being Canadian. The experiences he described as 'white' reference activities that middle-class Canadians do – things that he was familiar with and recognised as not part of his way of living.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Mona (April 2012) in the following conversation:

Me (April 2012): *What do you call yourself; if someone asks you where you're from?*

Mona: *Like a Syrian. When I was younger, I'd be like, I'm a Canadian. But now it's like, yeah, you can't really say that.*

Me: *Why not?*

Mona: *Yeah, I'm Canadian, but I'm not 100% Canadian. Before, I was just so white and I blended in.*

Me: *Yeah.*

Mona: *It's like I don't - Well, do I look Canadian?*

Me: *I don't know, what does a Canadian look like?*

Mona: *A white person without a hijab.*

Me: *So, do I look like one?*

Mona: *No, because you're kind of, like, brown.*

Me: *So, to you a Canadian is someone who is basically white?*

Mona: *Yeah.*

Me: *No one else?*

Mona: *No, just white.*

Me: *What about white people who weren't born here?*

Mona: *Then they're not Canadian. I don't know, it's just different.*

Me: *I don't know, just explain it to me. It's not a right or wrong answer.*

Mona: *I don't know, white people always have a way. In their background, there is always a way of being white, you know? Like my friend, she's Scottish, and her dad is Russian or something. Even her grand-ancestor, whatever, they're Canadian. Her roots, there's always just a way to it. Even if they're from somewhere else originally and they are white, they still kind of, they've just got a way.*

Me: *Well, I'm trying to get what you're saying, like, they just have a way. Like a way of...*

Mona: *Of being white/Canadian, American, or whatever.*

Mona expresses similar sentiments as Abdi, who sees Canadians as white. She also thinks that it's not just about being white alone but also a 'white way of thinking' and acting. She feels that those with white ancestry and ethnicity have an understanding and in some ways a sense of entitlement to look, act and call themselves Canadian. Notably, she specifically says that a Canadian is a white person who doesn't wear a hijab. Mona has white skin, blue eyes and wears a hijab and mentions in the interview that when she was younger, before she wore a hijab, that she was 'Canadian'. To Mona, her Muslimness, or her outward performance of it through her hijab makes her unable to call herself a Canadian. To Mona, whiteness isn't enough – her religious identity as a Muslim along with her not 'acting' white are the reasons why she no longer sees herself as Canadian and calls herself Arab instead.

Senior Prom

Ali (aged 19, June 2012) was very excited to go to his Senior Prom. In the weeks leading up to the big day, he would talk about how much he was looked forward to it. It was the first time that he would have attended a prom. He moved to Canada from Kenya when he was ten years old and now, at age 19, he would be at the prom not only as a graduating student but as an honoured guest. He was getting an award and a scholarship for being MVP of the year as he had excelled in all the school sports that he took part in – track and field, basketball and soccer – while maintaining an impressively high average of 89%. He would be sitting at the head table at the front of the hall along with staff and other students being honoured. He went out with his

friends the week before and rented a tuxedo, as is custom for the prom in Canada. His parents bought him a new pair of shoes and he got a haircut from a “*shit hot hairdresser*” (Ali, June 2012) where they served cappuccinos and cookies. He had also saved up and rented a limousine with his friends for the night. He was ready and looking forward to it.

A few hours before he was meant to leave for the prom, he came into NGen in a panic and asked if anybody could teach him how to use a knife and fork. He said he didn’t know how to use them properly as at home he ate with his hands. Obviously, he had used a knife and fork many times before but he was afraid that he didn’t know how to use them properly. He would be sitting at the head table, he said. Everyone would be able to see him. I was at the club that day. A few of the other youths from NGen were going to their proms as well, and we were all taking photos outside. He pulled me aside and told me his problem. I told him not worry about it. “Just be yourself,” I said, not realising what a big deal this was to him. “*No no*”, he persisted. “*They’re going to look at me and see I’m not doing it right’. They’ll think ‘he’s backward’ ...they think we are backward*”, he said to me (June 2012).

Eventually, I said I would show him what I knew, and told him that I was not sure if I even knew what to do. We went into the kitchen at the youth club, grabbed a few slices of Wonder bread and some leftover vegetables from the refrigerator and made up ‘a plate’. A few of the other young people, mostly his friends, came to watch too. There we were, all brown and black people, huddled around a table, everyone talking quietly as if to conceal some secret from the others in the club, not wanting anyone to know, perhaps to protect Ali from embarrassment. People started finding other food items, throwing pieces of cheese and grapes and whatever else they could find onto the plate. A few of his friends dumped a handful of M&Ms onto the mix. This irritated Ali. “*It’s not a joke*” (June 2012), he said and flicked the M&Ms off the

plate. Someone handed me a knife and fork and I moved towards the table and stood in front of the unappetising plate. Abdul started recording it on his phone.

I moved the plate closer to me. I had a fork in my left hand and knife in my right. I grabbed the cheese with the fork and knife and put it on top of the bread. Everyone ‘wooped’ at this as someone yelled “*Cut the cheeeeeeeeseeee!*”. Ali was watching intently and laughing. Everyone loosened up and we were actually having fun. I cut through the cheese and bread with the knife while holding it in place with the fork. Then I took both the knife and fork away from the plate and switched hands, putting the knife into my left hand and the fork into my right hand. Ali was not pleased with this. “*What the hell??*” he said? “*That’s not right*”. “What? Why?” I said. “*Why you switching hands? I never seen that before*” (June 2012). Someone else commented that I was doing it right, and that “*loads of people do that*”. I put the fork into the piece I had cut off, and apprehensively put it in my mouth, while I wondered if the cheese was out of date.

Then I was almost scared to switch hands again as I went to cut the next piece. I was right to be scared because then everyone started kicking off, making comments, some saying I was wrong and others laughing along. “*Are you doing that because you don’t wanna eat with your left hand?*” asked Ali. He was referring to a Muslim custom (also a custom amongst other ethnic and religious groups)of only eating with the right hand. “No”, I said. “That’s not why...other people do it like that too”. He wasn’t convinced. Even the rest of my supporters were starting to doubt me. “*OK, I need a Canadian*”, Ali said. “*Just to be sure*”, he reassured me to not hurt my feelings. “I am Canadian,” I told him, to which he responded, “*You know what I mean...*” Someone went off to find a white staff member and a few minutes later Alice, a youth worker, arrived and stood in my place.

She did the exact same thing that I did (to my relief) but she did it faster which seemed to impress everyone. “See? See?” I said to Ali; he laughed and continued to watch her. Next, she cut the grape in half (which I felt was unnecessary) as she said to everyone, “You seriously don’t know how to use a knife and fork?” (Alice, June 2012). “*Not really so good*”, said Ali. Then it was Ali’s turn to try and she coached him through this with everyone watching and laughing every time he switched hands. “You don’t have to do that”, she said. “Some people don’t – like in England. They don’t do that.” Ali quickly gave me a look which I read as “*You live in England – you should know this.*”

We finished the ‘lesson’ and Ali seemed very happy about it. He thought he could handle it now, he said, and he thanked me for helping. “We did the exact same thing, you know” I joked to him. “*Yeah, I know, I know. She just did it like proper*” to which Abdul joked, “*She did it white...errr...I mean right*” (Abdul, June 2012).

Ali later told me that they served pasta at the prom, and that everyone around him was using only a fork, which was no problem for him. “*You didn’t tell me about putting the napkin on my lap though*”, he told me. “*But I saw everyone doing it so I just did it too*” (Ali, June 2012). I asked how the evening went, if he was nervous about going up on stage, receiving an award and saying a few words. He wasn’t nervous at all he said – once he got dinner over with, he was much more relaxed.

Ali’s story highlighted a few issues. Firstly, despite his exceptional qualities (buffers) that he was being honoured for and his ability to buy new clothes and other things for the prom, to him this did not make him feel like he belonged enough. It felt to me that he was afraid of being

‘found out’ as someone who was uncultured and as he said, ‘backward’. To him, there were something that money could not buy, and that was the idea of respectability. Ali felt that he did not have the cultural capital necessary to sit in front of his peers and eat a meal in the same way that they would. He asked me for help initially but ultimately felt more confident about the instructions he was given by a white person. To him, although he saw me in many ways as a ‘contingent insider’, this was not enough. To learn how to use a fork and knife, he felt that a white person who did the same thing as I did still did it ‘proper’. Although Ali had the financial capital and everything else needed to ensure that he had a great time at the prom, he still felt that he did not possess the cultural capital necessary to get through the evening without learning how to use cutlery the ‘Canadian way’ as done by a white, Canadian person.

Concluding Thoughts

In this research study, I found that young Muslims held on to memories of home or of the past and forged them together with the new realities of everyday life in Canada. This was often painful and difficult for many, especially those coming from traumatic situations. For people like Abdi, their new home of Canada, while not ideal, was more in line with the dream of their homeland and their ideal ‘imagined’ home rather than the places they had left. However, within this transience, there were also moments where collectively the Muslim youths came together to forge their own narratives – at the coming together of their own histories and homes that produced a sense of new belonging in Canada together. This can be seen by the way that Canada Day was celebrated by all of the youths gathered together.

To many, home was no longer a static place, bound and fixed. The nature of diaspora space in particular is one that not only enables there to be multiple ‘belongings’, but also strengthens

the diaspora space too. Either way, these multiple belongings and homes presented a fractured relationship with these young people's home in Canada. Often lost in this conversation are the conditions, times and places that make belonging more likely or feasible. Class, race, gender, age and religious performance also played a crucial role in young Muslims feeling like they belong in Canada. In particular, the participants' proximity to whiteness (in their views), whether it be skin colour or culture, also had an impact on their views about belonging to Canada and Canada belonging to them.

Young Muslims negotiate belonging in Canada in various, layered ways. Race, class, gender and age interact with their own religious identities and ways of expressing them. Many young Muslims assert their belonging in ways specific to their class, in many ways resisting the subordination of marginalised people and the prevailing hierarchies of power.

While work on race and identity is useful in helping us understand these interactions and how racism can affect one's sense of national identity and belonging, what is missed is the religious-based discrimination and labels that young Muslims are given, and then have to negotiate in order to find their place in Canada. The awareness of this often leads to young people tempering their religious expression in light of the situation they are in, sometimes downplaying their religious identity while at other times having to act as representatives for Muslims when asked about Islam, even if they do not necessarily know the answer. This is problematic for young Muslims living their everyday lives because many of them have complained that it is difficult to just be themselves due to their Muslimness, their opinions or dissent about issues concerning Muslims (Rasack, 2007), or belief in Allah (Asad, 2003). This puts them into the realm of not wanting to belong, having allegiances elsewhere and, worse, feeling alienated (Gest, 2010) and

being seen as a suspect (Modood, 2010). They are also often orientalist as ‘other’ (Said, 1978).

The different paths that have led these young Muslims to live in Canada and how their pasts have a part to play in the present and future help us to appreciate that histories do not stop and start but continue. Many youths bring their backgrounds, cultures and memories from ‘home’, whether that be in the country of their birth such as Abdi in Somalia or from within the walls of their family house in the suburbs of Burlington or even their proverbial homes on the web with like-minded people with common histories and interests.

Yet despite this heterogeneity and diversity of ‘journeys’, there were some instances of group solidarity, collective identities and a sense of community among the Muslim youths. These youths – somewhat episodically, ideologically and virtually – had moments where their identities and thoughts about being Canadian came together and others where they did not. This coming together was often specific to certain times and places, and often happened as a result of being seen as ‘the same’ by others. At the same time, these Muslim youths also identified with and shared experiences with other Canadian youths of all colours and backgrounds.

I also found that solidarities based on shared culture are of vital significance. Collectively, these Muslim youths’ culture – however similar or diverse they may be – contributed to a different way of being a Canadian and a Muslim at the same time. The nature of these cultures is also impacted by the specific lived experiences of the young Muslim, such as urban, suburban, religious observant, class, legal status etc.

Moghissi stated that these common cultures are based less on historical commonalities found in the values, religious affiliations and languages of originating countries and more on urgent

contemporary and common causes of grievances that these diasporic communities experience in the 'host' countries in which they now live (Moghissi, 2009). I would also argue that historical commonalities, routes and backgrounds etc. do affect the common cultures of Muslim youths in Canada, as they materialise in a specific way and they are often experienced and negotiated together. Yunus, who was born and raised in Canada and who 'looks white', experienced everyday life differently from Musa, who emigrated from Kenya when he was a child. Both interfaced with their country, Canada, in different ways, often influenced by their different experiences and journeys. But as friends, they also influenced each other in the ways that they saw themselves as Canadian through their own experience. Interactions like these are one way of how the perceptions of being Canadian are produced and reconstituted.

What I have also tried to illustrate is the way that the narratives of Canada are often entrenched in a Eurocentric worldview as well as the close cultural, geographic, political and social ties to the United States. Thus, the young Muslims' views about national belonging often responded to these narratives. Their ideas of home and Canada shifted, sometimes radically, according to how they as Muslim youth were positioned and according to the time, place and situations that they were in. In addition, many youths equated the term 'Canadian' with whiteness, further highlighting the ways in which youth perceive racial hierarchies in Canada, where whiteness and proximity to whiteness are seen as accepted norms of belonging.

The ways in which the participants' identities were fluid and shifted in these situations, and were negotiated to find a sense of belonging (or not), were also discussed. Young Muslims' interpretations of belonging in Canada and of what constituted being Canadian ranged across tangible boundaries of belonging, from the confessional (I am Canadian) to citizenship and residency, which has its own racialised hierarchies, entitlements and nuances. The routes that

the participants took to living in Canada as well as their legal status in Canada, whether *Jus solis*, *Jus sanguinis* to naturalised immigrants and conventional refugees also played a key role in these entitlements. Legal status is not properly addressed when it comes to issues of race. Having one's citizenship taken away was a real and daily worry for many of my participants.

The participants also expressed notions of Canadian-ness in their everyday lives. These everyday expressions of belonging were often focused on the local, banal happenings and rituals in the places that they lived, moved through and the spaces they negotiated for themselves. Everyday expressions of Canadian-ness were often contradictory to their ideas about national belonging. The intersections and overlapping of their responses, despite their diverse backgrounds, highlighted the important role that Muslim identities play in national belonging and the way that Canadian-ness is expressed and performed in everyday life.

CHAPTER FOUR: HANGING OUT

Finding Belonging in Local Spaces

*With **Roze at the mall:** It's my only free time so I wanna do what I want. Like we have stuff to do and stuff ... but you know – whatever [laughs]. I mean it's a long day. It's just chill time, really. Just chillin' with your friends and stuff. Just doing whatever. It's like 'shut up nobody tell me what to do for five seconds', you know what I mean?*

***Me:** Totally.*

***Sana:** It's like, when do I have the chance just to do me? Ok that's lame but you know what I'm saying...stuff my face – sit here like a bum. My fat ass just hangin out [laughs]. Stop and try on stuff that I like. We can check out the cute guys... [laughs]*

(Roze and Sana, September 2012)

*With **Yusuf in his car:** This is basically how I chill. Like we just drive around for hours listening to music and grabbing shit to eat. You know, you have a sick ride. You just want to stay in there, don't you?*

***Me:** Yeah, I get that. I get sick of driving sometimes though.*

***Yusuf:** True. Like I have to always drive people around but I don't mind so much. You can sneak in a blunt here and there too and then it's like perfect. That's a perfect Friday night, don't you think?*

***Me:** If that's what you like. But do you worry about getting caught by the cops?*

Yusuf: Hell yeah. But you know... that's what makes it even funner.

(Yusuf, November 2012)

The previous chapter concentrated on national identity and how young Muslims find belonging and negotiate life in Canada. It highlighted the everyday ways in which these youths encountered notions of national identity and their ideas of home. Thoughts about their place and sense of belonging in Canada were also discussed, as well as the ways in which they performed notions of national belonging. This chapter turns towards the more local spaces where young Muslims spend time in hanging out with their friends during their free time. During my fieldwork, the participants spent most of their time in two spaces: the mall, and the modes of transportation that they used while 'getting around'. These spaces and the ways the young Muslims used them will be the focus of this chapter.

This chapter is divided into two sections, corresponding with the activities that took up much of their leisure time in the mall and the time spent 'getting around'. While they would also hang out in other places, such as each other's houses, clubs, the gym, football and hockey games, the cinema and video arcades, on a typical day, they would normally spend their time either in cars or buses and at the local shopping mall. On weekdays, I usually met the participants after school at the mall, where we would spend some time looking around and shopping, then perhaps moving onto the food court, coffee shops and cinemas. The evenings were often spent driving around in cars, listening to music, eating and talking – a mobile living-room, of sorts.

For these young Muslims, their local spaces were a window to the greater, wider Canadian society where popular culture, national narratives, youth cultures and multiple identities speak

to each other. In Gillian Creese's (2011) work on the experiences of newcomers, namely members of the sub-Saharan African community in Vancouver, she also argues that while many did not feel 'Canadian', they still negotiated a sense of belonging in "neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools, shops and street corners" (Creese, 2011, p9). For my participants, they too negotiated belonging in their malls, cafés, on the streets, bus stops and train rides, interacting with the public along the way while spending time with their friends. Many participants saw their local spaces as more significant to them than the country they lived in because for them, these spaces were more familiar and ones that they could make their own, where they found a tangible sense of belonging with more relevant concerns to them in their everyday life. Although they chose to spend their time in these places, and enjoyed being there, not all of their experiences were positive. Regardless of that, they continued to find ways to get by, negotiating challenges and exclusions along the way, and at times the violence of everyday life, according to their own personal circumstances and what resources they had available to them.

In the same vein, ideas about local identity were expressed more often than a Canadian identity. On one hand, it could be argued that it could be because all of the participants were "Canadian" so it would make sense that they would not refer to it because it was obvious. But as seen in the last chapter, it was not always obvious and many participants expressed that they didn't "feel 'Canadian'". On the other hand, the participants regularly expressed an affinity and a sense of belonging towards the cities they lived in, calling themselves "*Torontonians*" (Hana, January, 2012), commenting that they love "*the Hammer*" [Hamilton] (Tanya, June, 2012) or that they felt proud about being from the "*brown town*" of 'Mrs. Agha' (Hussain, July 2011) – a '*desified*' (ibid.) term for the city of Mississauga. Those from the suburbs of Burlington and Oakville (who were people of colour) also expressed feeling at home there, preferring the

“laid-back” (Sana, August 2011) and less busy pace of affluent, predominately white Oakville to Toronto and Hamilton, which were *“too crazy”* and had *“too many brown people”* as Sana said while we were driving home from Toronto one day (Sana, March 2011).

Furthermore, within these cities, the young Muslims also found particular spaces and activities where they negotiated and performed their own sense of belonging. Not everywhere in the city was a place of safety and belonging, and so spaces within spaces were carved out, negotiated and became their own through their continued presence and that of their friends. The participants sometimes experienced difficulty when they felt excluded in these spaces and either chose to negotiate their presence there, endure the situation or leave. At the same time, they also expressed a feeling of being at home in these environments and situations, and made claims to these spaces as their own, not only belonging there but also belonging to them. For example, Zayn felt this way about his local mall, Jackson’s Square: *“This place is ours, it’s our domain, nothing happens here without us knowing about it”* (December 2011).

Their presence in these spaces often involved making friends with the people who worked there and learning to negotiate their presence around those who would make them feel unwelcome. They shared these spaces with others who did the same, be it peers, friends, staff, security guards and other people they would run into as they went about their business. It was at these times and places where they interacted with others the most, where conviviality was most easily seen and where everyday encounters played a role in their perceptions of self and the spaces that they called their own.

Keeping in mind the theme of entitlements and hierarchies of belonging, and the way young Muslims are positioned according to their age, race, gender and legal status etc., this chapter

will also explore how the participants shifted and moved through spaces, often performing different parts of their multiple identities according to the situation and what would suit them best. Along these lines, this chapter will concentrate on four main themes. Firstly, I will discuss how different forms of belonging are expressed, performed and negotiated through the key spaces that Muslim youth move through in everyday life. Second, I will explore the role of consumerism in young Muslims' performances of belonging and notions of the right to belong. Third, I will examine the different ways that boys and girls use spaces like the mall, and the different ways that they experience surveillance due to their gender, skin colour and ethnicity, and the careful and tentative negotiation of space that takes place. Last, the different ways that the youths travel through the cities and towns they live in, the necessities of travel and the role that race and class play in how they 'get around' the city, will be discussed.

Before discussing some of the activities that the participants took part in while they were *hanging out*, I discuss the factors which structure their experiences of these themes: the demographics of the local spaces being discussed, notions of freedom, consumerism, belonging, and 'having money'.

Local Spaces, Diverse Histories

As Muslim youths are a racialised group, in order to understand their positioning and the reconfiguring and reproductions of their identities, recognising the role that space plays is important (Dwyer and Bressey, 2008; Clayton, 2011). With this in mind, I will discuss the cities that this chapter concentrates on: the outer suburbs of Toronto, Hamilton, Burlington, Mississauga and Oakville. These are the cities and towns where I spent the most time hanging

out with groups of youths outside of the youth club and organised activities, meetings and events.

Towns and cities in Southern Ontario are still predominantly white and middle-class. However, over the last 20 years, there has been a demographic shift as more visible minorities and immigrants, many of who are Muslim, have moved into these areas (Toronto Star, March 2010). It has been projected by Statistics Canada that visible minority populations will more than double in the next 20 years from 2.3 million in 2006 to 5.6 million in 2031 (Statistics Canada, 2010). With its visible minority population surpassing 50% by 2017, by 2031 almost 63% of the region's population will be people of colour (ibid.), making its historically predominant white population the new “visible minority” in the region.

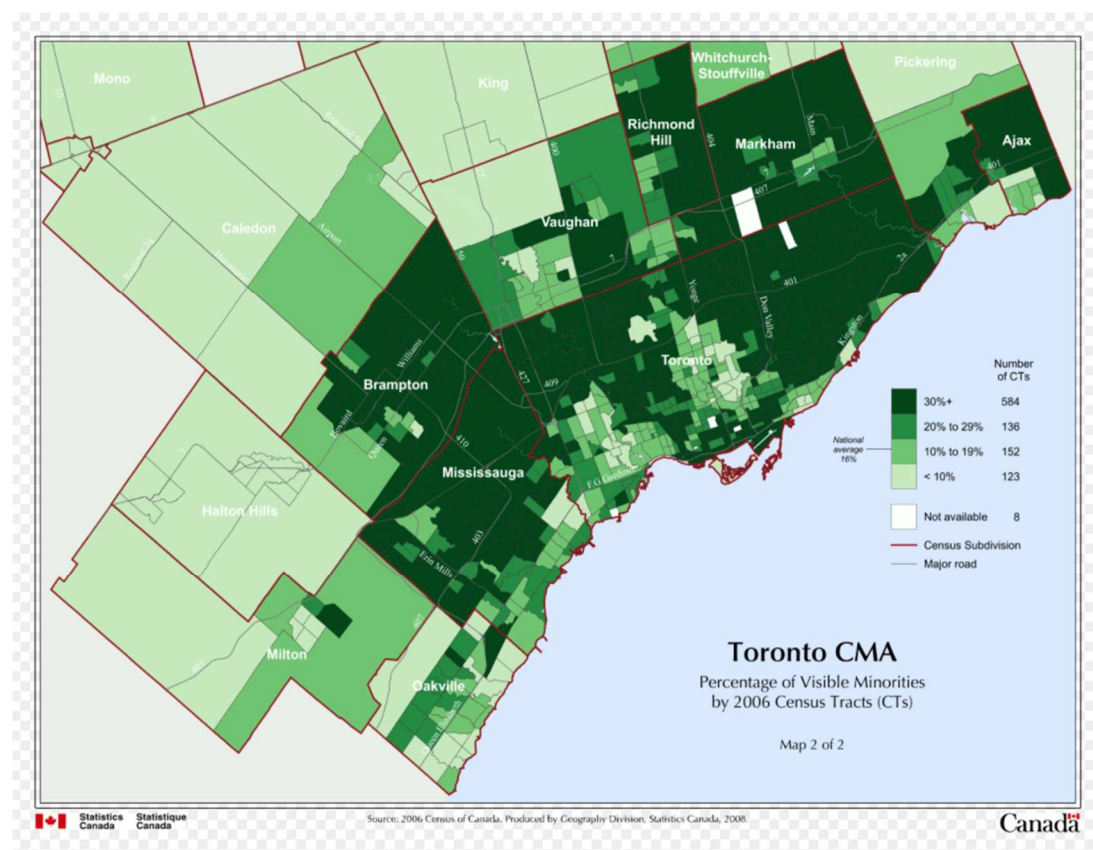


Figure 1 Map of Visible Minorities in Greater Toronto (Census Data, Statistics Canada, 2006)

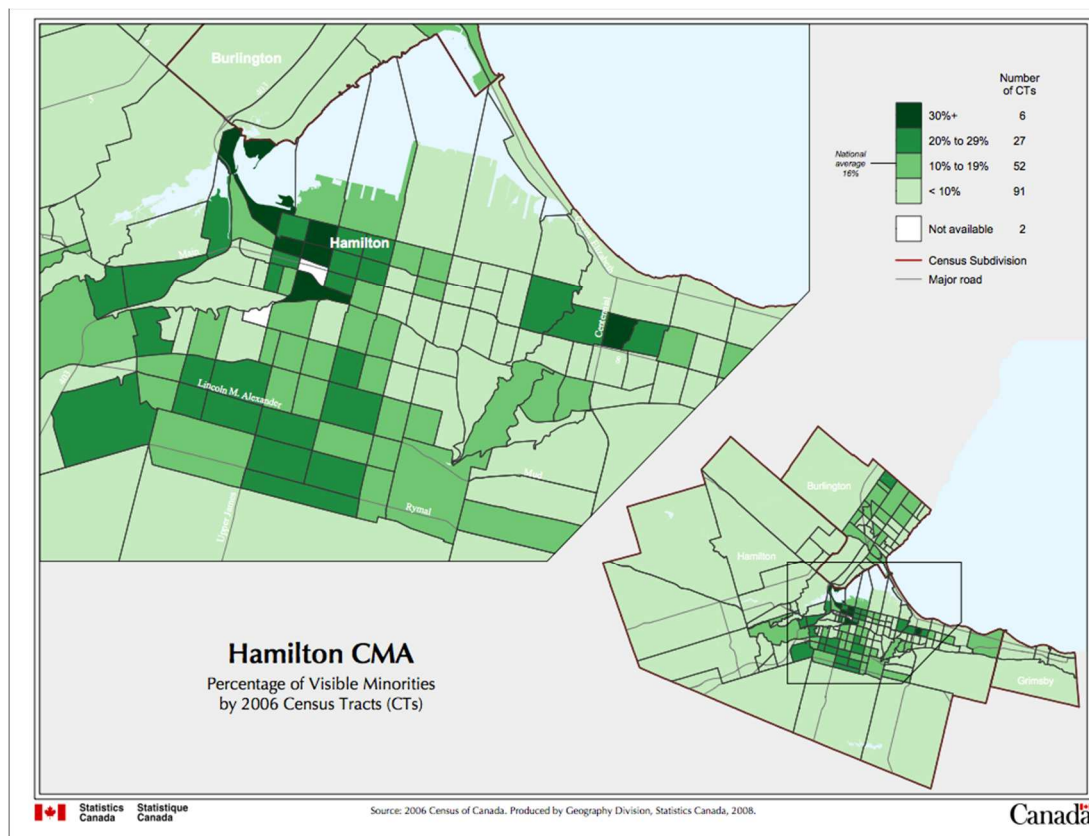


Figure 2 Map of Hamilton surrounding areas (including Burlington) (Census, Statistics Canada, 2006)

More specifically, as can be seen in the maps above, both Mississauga and the downtown core of Hamilton (where most of my participants in Hamilton resided) have a higher percentage of visible minorities compared to the less diverse town of Oakville and the city of Burlington, which had less than 10% visible minorities. Hamilton and Burlington border each other, yet their demographics are vastly different. The two malls discussed in this chapter are located in these cities with Mapleview Mall in the suburban city of Burlington and Jackson's Square in the urban city of Hamilton. These demographics are also changing rapidly and the participants and their families are a part of this new reality.

Their presence in these cities and towns also has the effect of changing the culture of these cities from white middle-class neighbourhoods with little diversity to ones that are increasingly growing more diverse both in their ethnicity and class. These white neighbourhoods,

unsurprisingly, do not always welcome this change, with young Muslims having to tread carefully, often knowingly pushing boundaries as they navigate everyday life within the mall, coffee shops, grocery stores and the public places that they occupy.

Their positioning in their local spaces are indeed symptomatic of the current socio-political climate where Muslims and Muslim youths in particular are seen as suspect. This is conflated with the discrimination and profiling that also exists faced by racialised bodies in public spaces, as stated in a recent report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. This report outlines racial profiling, not only by the police, but also in workplaces, schools, airports, hospitals and shopping malls (Toronto Star, May 3 2017). Indeed, the spotlight continues to grow on Muslims in Canada, whose everyday experiences are in some ways reflected by the current climate and particular ‘conjuncture’ where the concerns of the day are articulated around Muslims, be it the refugee crisis, radicalisation, the war(s) on terror, women’s rights, reasonable accommodation and the growing debate around multi-culturalism.

In 1979, in *The Great Moving Right Show*, Stuart Hall discussed Britain’s conjectural turn to the right and the onset of Thatcherism, and he argued that crises are historically formative and that the new formations that they generate “do not emerge” but rather are constructed. (Hall, 1979, p15). Hall’s words are prescient to understand what has been called the “Muslim question” (Kazemipur, 2014) and the domestic side of the War on Terror (Kundnani, 2014). This problem is also particularly relevant to Muslim youths who are often at the centre of debates around security, radicalism, and extremism (Khalema and Wannas-Jones, 2003; Maira, 2004), which have become more prominent in Canada after the incident of the *Toronto 18* (Toronto Star, June 2 2008). The old formulations around multi-culturalism and the celebration of diversity, while still dominant in the national narratives in Canada, are changing in the face

of policy, security and value-based discussions. They have turned to new formulations placing the management of Muslim communities at the centre. As such, young Muslims negotiate their belonging and identities within these spaces carefully, and are doing so in a growing climate of fear around Muslims as well as their positioning as racialised others (Poynting and Perry, 2007). These larger concerns, both national and global, can also play out in local spaces in mundane and banal ways, and are often recognised by young Muslims and at the same time not viewed as being their concern. As Les Back has noted, it is also important to recognise that local populations do not necessarily absorb discourses of racism and nation uncritically (Back, 1993). Many youths had positive and/or normal commonplace encounters with the people they encountered. By their presence in these spaces and the convivial nature of their interactions, in all of their messy iterations associated with living everyday lives, young Muslims are doing the kind of political and ideological work “that is required to disarticulate old formations, and to rework their elements into new configurations” (Hall, 1979, p15).

My participants did not see themselves as central to these issues or as the issues being significant in their identity construction. They were, however, still reproducing, negotiating and shifting their identities within these racialised realities, and while not necessarily intentional, they were influenced by the multiple intersections of power including race, class, gender and sexuality (Anderson, 1966), and how they played into their everyday lives. An example of this is Malik, age 20, who came to Canada as a refugee from Iraq in 2006 when he was 15. Malik and his family left Iraq when their town was demolished in the war between the US and Saddam Hussain’s forces – a direct result of the post 9/11 war on terror. He knew little about September 11th and said, “*it has nothing to do with my life*” (Malik, October 2011). One day at the youth club, Malik was playing the video game, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*, with his friend, which depicted drone strikes over Iraq. As he played a character in the US Army,

he was operating the drone, dropping bombs over a city in Iraq, scoring more points as the bombs detonated into balls of fire over the target.

In the next scene, his character was ‘on the ground’ and shooting targets on the street. While he continued to play, Malik talked to his friend Tony:

Malik (January 2012): *Look at, this part. Exactly like was near my school, see all those people running away? That was really what it was like. It looked exactly like that.*

Tony: *Nah, for real? That’s fucked up man.*

Malik: *I know, right? Like I’m fucking shooting myself [laughter], “Run, Malik, run!!”*

[He said as he shot a brown looking character on the screen]

The two continued to play for another few hours, with the same scene played repeatedly until they ‘completed the mission’. While Malik had talked about the similarities between the game and the drone strikes over Iraq that he experienced in reality, he did not mention it again that day. While the Iraq war was an issue that he had first-hand experience of, he casually mentioned it while playing, clearly struck by the similarity, but then focused on the task of the ‘mission’. While Malik played the same game and scene with Tony, a non-Muslim who was born in Canada, their experience of it was different. What was depicted in the scene was closer to home for Malik yet he did not talk about it further and continued to play with Tony on that day and in the days that followed. However, the similarity to his own experience clearly crossed his mind when he first watched the scene. This potentially disturbing scene was treated as mundane and even humorous; even though he might still have been thinking about afterwards, he did not talk about it anymore because he was more concerned with reaching the next level of the game. While his experiences were relevant, he referred to them anecdotally, and brought it up only when the scene came up on screen. Though Malik identified as a refugee, at that moment, he

was in many ways just like the other youths there: a kid playing a video game with his friends, even though the way he experienced it may have been different. This is one example shows how young Muslims' personal circumstances, histories and backgrounds can be relevant but not necessarily important to them in certain situations.

Freedom, Belonging, Class and Consumerism.

Throughout my fieldwork, I observed that young Muslims regularly expressed their freedom and performances of freedom through consumerism, and in terms of the freedom of what they could purchase, whether it be in the realms of popular culture (music taste, clothing, new media etc.), modes of transport, where they hung out and where and what they chose to eat. The freedom that money gave them was often a key factor in their feelings of belonging and the way they performed in local spaces.

Paul Gilroy has talked about African Americans' relationship with consumerism in a similar vein, specifically the way they were "interpolated as consumers long before they acquired citizenship rights" (Gilroy, 2010, p9). This perspective rings particularly true for the Muslim youths who were refugees and the new immigrants who do not yet hold Canadian citizenship. In their cases, the acquisition of goods, their 'buying power', and spending money in general often acts as a way into finding and performing belonging in Canada while legally they are not yet 'Canadian'.

This argument is also relevant to class. Class formations are not often spoken about in Canada the way that they are in the United Kingdom, where class hierarchies are still socially recognised and performed. On an everyday level, as was the case with my participants, it takes

on a different, more American form “rooted in money and the lifestyle it can purchase” (Hall and Jefferson, 1993, xvi)” and centring around individual capital and economic power. However, while closer to an American model of class, Canada is still a different country with its own histories, immigration patterns and particularities, and ‘old world’ notions of class still exist and it is not the classless, egalitarian country that the prevailing national narratives hold it to be (Porter, 2015). Rather, it can be seen as a “vertical mosaic”, “a steeply hierarchical patchwork of classes and ethnic groups (Porter, ii) where power is held by mainly white, economic elites and where educational and occupational opportunities are confined to those on the top of the mosaic” (ibid.). Elements of this vertical mosaic were evident in the way that the participants moved within their local spaces as many felt excluded or unwelcome in certain environments. This was often negotiated through buying items even if they weren’t treated as equals, because as consumers, they were able to perform a sense of belonging while the prevailing structures of power were still maintained.

Many of the participants were also migrants from regions such as South Asia, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan and East Africa where class structures are still prevalent and closer to the way that class functions in the UK, no doubt due to the post-colonial legacy of the British Empire (as well as other European colonial legacies) and the local particularities of tribal cultures, caste systems and hierarchies. Their understandings and experiences of class were not primarily fixed on spending power. Many had a sense of their own class position, whether it be working class, upper class or middle class. For example, middle and upper-class migrants, due to their lack of money, new social positioning, and at times their ethnicity, experienced class in the way that people treated them. While they lived middle-class identities, in feeling (Williams, 1977), they were not necessarily living as middle-class people since moving to Canada. What is interesting here is how their ideas of class shifted in Canada, but did not entirely disappear

as the young people found new ways of negotiating both notions of class in their everyday life. Indeed, they created, in some ways, their own shifting diasporic version of class through their own identifications and emotional attachments about who they were (Yuval-Davis, 2011), which were multi-layered, raced and gendered.

No Money, no Problem?

Sheila came from a prominent upper-class family in Pakistan but after moving to Canada, her family experienced financial troubles due to the fact that her parents' medical degrees were not recognised there. Both her parents had trouble finding stable, regular work and her father often worked nights intermittently at gas stations when work was available. While Sheila was very careful with money, she did not talk about not having money and often pretended that she did but preferred not to waste money on frivolous things. Here, she negotiated her own ideas of class with a more 'American' one based on spending power. She maintained her reputation by not exposing her family's financial troubles and at the same time recognised that being perceived as someone with money to spend was an important thing as well. Unable to rest entirely on either notion of class, she performed both. In addition, due to the assistance available through the state for skilled migrants under the points system, which favours those with higher education and professional designations (*Six Selection Factors, Government of Canada*), she and her family lived in a nice house in a good area, keeping her secret of not having money 'safe', so to speak, and she was thus able to maintain elements of being middle class. Sheila's family had been able to access this assistance and although they did not have 'money in the bank' so to speak, they were still able to maintain a fairly large house in a middle-class neighbourhood as an echo of the social status they had in Pakistan. This is indicative of the way that the distinctions of immigration status "become culpable in the creation of

hierarchies of mobility through the immigration structure and inequities among people in terms of their right to belong” (Back et al., 2012, p141). This example, I would argue, is uniquely Canadian in that Sheila was able to perform different notions of class without losing face due to the help that the government had given her family to settle in Canada. This provides another example of how different notions of class (Canadian, British, American) cannot be imposed entirely when looking at Muslim youth in Canada, as the notions of class need to be looked at within the Canadian context, incorporating the hierarchies of belonging that include immigration status. These notions of class are also not static and are shifting. Although Sheila did not have money, she negotiated this and walked the fine line between her previous class positioning and her current one, creating a new hybrid and overlapping idea of class that was unique to her (and her family) in Canada.

Due to her visible racial difference and her accent, Sheila was still marked as a migrant in a way that the other participants in her position from lighter-skinned backgrounds were not. For example, another young woman, Sana (aged 17), who migrated from Lebanon in 2009, had similar family circumstances to Sheila (Sana, October 2012). She came from a prominent and wealthy family in Lebanon yet due to the lack of university education opportunities there, they had migrated to Canada. Her parents also struggled with finances and finding consistent work. While Sana had a slight accent, she had a light skin colour, brown hair and blue eyes and could, as she said, “*pass at white*” (Sana, October 2012). Both Sana and Sheila, who were friends, mentioned that when they went out, people would often ask Sheila when she moved to Canada or would comment on her English being ‘really good’ and would seldom say the same thing to Sana, who had been in Canada for less time and whose English was not as good as Sheila’s.

In terms of her lack of money, Sana said people just assumed she was saving up for university – something that many of their friends were also doing – rather than associating it with anything else, in the way that Sheila’s lack of money was often conflated with being a migrant. Due to her light skin, Sana could fit in more and was positioned less as migrant and through this, she was able to maintain elements of her previous class position, and her identity as being ‘upper class’, because of the way people saw her in a way that they could not see Sheila.

The relationship between notions of freedom, belonging and consumption can also be seen in the examples of Yahya and Belal – two middle-class boys of South Asian heritage – and their visits to the Apple Store at their local mall. In this case, neither boy had any money to spend in the store yet they had different ideas of how free they were to spend time playing on the computers there. Yahya regularly (almost daily) visited the Apple Store and played on the computers, comfortably, for hours. His friend Belal, on the other hand, felt nervous after ten minutes, worried that they would get kicked out if they did not buy something.

Hierarchies of belonging pertaining to immigration also surfaced here. Yahya’s parents immigrated to Canada before he was born, from India. He was born and raised in Canada and has lived there his whole life. In his experience, there was no problem with playing on the computers without buying anything or even pretending to want to buy something. This was a normal practice for him. Belal, who was raised in Pakistan, told me that this type of browsing was not something he was used to (June 2012). To him, a store was primarily a space to buy things – not to look around. Even though he was assured by Yahya many times that it was OK and he was not harassed by the staff to buy anything, he still felt uncomfortable in the space. He was also a very shy person in general and not nearly as outgoing as his friend Yahya. Neither youth had any money to spend at the store yet they had different ways of addressing this. For

them, this sense of freedom was not static and it also had boundaries and buffers. For Yahya, his own background of being born and raised in Canada contributed to his understanding of being able to play around in the store without purchasing anything, which Belal also understood, but still did not feel comfortable doing himself.

Belal perceived not buying anything as a boundary – a way that he was excluded from the space. Thus, he self-policed his own presence in the store. His shyness could also have contributed to his own sense of self while in the store. Boundaries of exclusion are not static and can be interpreted differently according to how young people like Yahya and Belal *perceive* their sense of freedom in the space. Buffers can also help with how entitled youths feel within spaces and are personal to each individual. These entitlements can also change and the feelings young people have about a space, in this case the Apple Store, are also not fixed.

Eventually, after a few visits with friends to the Apple Store, Belal got to know some of the younger members of staff. They were usually very friendly towards him when he went there, often chatting about new games and other mutual interests. The more times he went, the more he felt a sense of belonging there. Unsurprisingly, when the time came for him to buy a laptop for school, he went straight to the Apple Store. What is telling about this is that the participants' sense of freedom and belonging often coincided with the familiarity and comfort they felt in certain spaces, thus making them feel more 'free' or entitled to act in the manner that they wished to. This freedom was invariably linked to consumption practices and their perceptions of its conventions and their experiences of them.

It is important to note that while Belal and Yahya were both Muslim, their Muslimness was not an obvious factor here. This is one of the arguments of this research. Being Muslim does not

always mean that Muslimness is a factor in every encounter or situation. Their religious identities, like their other identities, were fluid and changing, sometimes relevant and at other times not. The situation described above is arguably similar to experiences of Belal's non-Muslim friends and colleagues – particularly other young people of colour.

Although there were no obvious indicators that Yahya and Belal were Muslim, their race, ethnicity and gender were more relevant in this case. The Apple Store was in Burlington – a white middle-class, commuter town. Most people in the store, both staff and customers, were white and mostly male on any given day. When walking into this space, as brown teenage boys, their racial differences from other people in the store were obvious. Yahya was more used to this and thus he felt a sense of entitlement to be there without buying something. For Belal, having been born and raised in Pakistan, initially he felt more out of place than Yahya. His positioning and experiences as a migrant played into his own sense of belonging within the store and shows how BME youths are often required to adapt and negotiate their identities to dominant spaces of whiteness (Nayak, 2016; Back, 2005).

Buffers

A young Muslim's sense of belonging within local spaces can be affected by intersections of race, gender, class, age as seen in the stories of Sheila, Yahya and Belal. Religious identities, as well as ones more personal to individuals such as immigration status, and ethnicity can also help or hinder youths' sense of belonging within the spaces as they move through them in their daily lives. Adding to those intersections, 'exceptional qualities' such as beauty, intelligence, athleticism and other less obvious attributes such as charisma and humour can act as buffers,

tempering would-be-exclusions and giving young Muslims access to things that their friends of similar backgrounds may be excluded from.

This notion was observed by two black youths, Abdul and Musa, when they were watching a compilation of Muhammad Ali's best moments on YouTube. Abdul, who is black, commented that Ali was only accepted by people because he made them money and because he was such a talented boxer, and later on because he became rich. Musa agreed, noting that if Ali was just a good boxer, rather than a great one, he would not have gotten away with refusing to serve in the Vietnam War and that, for any other black or brown boxer, it could have been the end of his career. There were many youths in my research who, like Muhammad Ali, were given access to certain groups and situations because of their own exceptional attributes. Ali, due to his talent and status as a popular culture icon, was seen as a 'good Muslim' (Mamdani, 2004) despite his association with the Nation of Islam, which was seen as problematic at the time (and now). These attributes or buffers can also often have a flip-side to them and come with their own sets of challenges and pressures.

In her work on colour affiliations between mixed children, Suki Ali observed how class, for example, can act as a 'buffer' against racism (Ali, 2003). However, even with class acting as a buffer, she comments that "either way, the discourses of colour had to be managed in a society that recognises them as important" (Ali, 2003, p175). In the same way that Ali talks about class as a buffer, I also argue that class buffers, intersecting with race and gender, can include exceptional traits such as excelling at something or a characteristic that makes a young person stand out. This can be seen as their own individual capital. Yet, in the same way, Ali has talked about the buffer of class against racism – these buffers do not negate exclusions, racism or Islamophobia, for example, but rather help young people to get by and negotiate exclusions in

certain situations. That said, these exceptional traits can also put pressure on young people to perform their ‘talent’ to a high standard lest the privileges it enables them to have are taken away. For example, Hassan was the star of his soccer team and enjoyed certain perks from this such as a group of teammates who, as he said, “*always had his back*” and whom he saw as friends. Hassan was also aware that things could be different, saying “*If I wasn’t good at soccer, I wouldn’t even know all these guys probably*”.

There are also buffers that denote class and ‘being cultured’ – like having ‘good taste’ or being fashionable. Many female participants performed and displayed notions of class through their clothing and consumption practices (Skeggs, 1997, p54) In many ways, this idea of taste is closely aligned with the idea of middle-class whiteness or as Musa called it, “*knowing white ways*”, highlighting the largely “unacknowledged normality of whiteness” (Ray et al., 2007, p6) and of the “the unacknowledged normality of the middle-class” (Savage, 2003, p536). Whiteness and ‘ways of being white’ were regularly recognised by my participants through their own experiences and perceptions, often “gleaned from close scrutiny of whiteness” (Hooks, 1992, p338). Young Muslims who understood these ‘white ways’ often learned how to negotiate their identities and their ‘ways’ according to the ways of middle-class whiteness which could, as Musa said, “*get you in*”. In these cases, such as Yahya at the Apple Store, ‘knowing how things work’ could provide Muslim youths with a degree of social capital and be of value to them as they negotiated their belonging, especially in spaces, cities and suburbs that were predominately white and middle class such as Burlington or Oakville, where ‘knowing how things work’ had connotations of ‘knowing how middle-class whiteness works’, and how it is performed in the shopping mall.

Another buffer I observed among both the male and female participants was attractiveness or beauty. There is the case of Mariam, for example, who was Egyptian and had dark brown skin. Mariam, as many of her friends, acquaintances and passers-by would often comment, was incredibly beautiful. When I was with her, she would often receive a lot of attention. Sometimes she was sent by her friends to negotiate tricky situations as they put forward the best representative of the group. Her friends teased her that she got certain ‘perks’ that other brown girls did not get because she was so attractive. These perks were often as small as getting into a club while not being on the list or getting a free donut with her coffee. Small perks such as these can seem insignificant yet can mean a lot to teenagers who are strapped for cash and are often excluded from spaces.

Mariam’s story is an example of how the buffer of beauty and attractiveness can intersect with race and gender. Parks and Kennedy (2007) studied the relationships between race, gender, and attractiveness and perceived academic and social competence. The results showed that the lowest competency ratings were given to unattractive black boys, indicating the effect that multiple intersections of lower status categories (race, gender and attractiveness) can have on individuals (ibid.). For Mariam, her attractiveness acted as a buffer and alleviated (at times) difficulties in a way that was not open to other girls who were not as beautiful, were dark-skinned and female.

These exceptional traits can also work both ways: the very instrument that gives people a temporary gain in one instance can be the very thing that oppresses them in another. The pressure on Hassan to be an exceptional soccer player became much more vital to his social success and mobility. Mariam’s beauty, while affording her certain ‘perks’ as her friends put it, could also find her in vulnerable situations where she was the object of sexual harassment

or was accused of ‘relying on her looks’. The link between beauty and race has been discussed by Frevert and Walker (2014), who outlined the effects on social status, among others, in areas such as jobs, performance evaluations and crime. They argued that while attractiveness is generally good for people, beauty can also be damaging to individuals in certain situations (Frevert and Walkern, 2014).

The relationship between beauty, race and social status can also be extended to beauty and Muslimness. While Maryam’s example involved race, she also experienced situations where her Muslimness became prominent. An example of this was at the airport, where due to her name and ethnic background, she was often profiled and ‘randomly selected’ for additional screening (Maryam, April 2012). According to Maryam, due to her “looks” she “*got away with it*” (even though she was not doing anything wrong), was asked minimal questions and was usually treated well (Maryam, April 2012). Here, her attractiveness, amongst other things acted as a buffer against her positioning as a Muslim and as a racialised other. However, although the ‘beauty buffer’ gave her momentary gains, it did not equal real mobility and change or a shift in power structures but rather offered short-term access in specific situations.

Like Maryam and Hassan, the participants were often aware of their exceptional traits and what could act as a buffer, what advantages they offered, how they could offer them protection and access as well as how they related to their own understanding of their individual strengths or cultural capital. It was something that they could often invest in and see growth and improvement in, as was the case with sport, or with beauty or even things such as being a good ‘talker’. For individual skills, even at this level, can often be measured as young Muslims learn the benefits of these skills, which they often experience directly in tangible ways. They begin to understand their own individual capital and what they have that is unique and praiseworthy

and they are able, often, to use these buffers to improve their experiences in everyday life. In a wider context, young people can see that those who have an exceptional skill such as being an amazing boxer, using Mohammad Ali's example, can provide an opportunity that they can potentially making a living from, which could lead them to enjoying a greater sense of freedom in everyday life in situations where they may otherwise have been excluded.

Keeping this in mind, the freedom expressed and performed by my participants through their individual capital was precarious, sometimes granted and at other times not. These also did not result in any shifts in terms of the structures of power outside of certain situations.

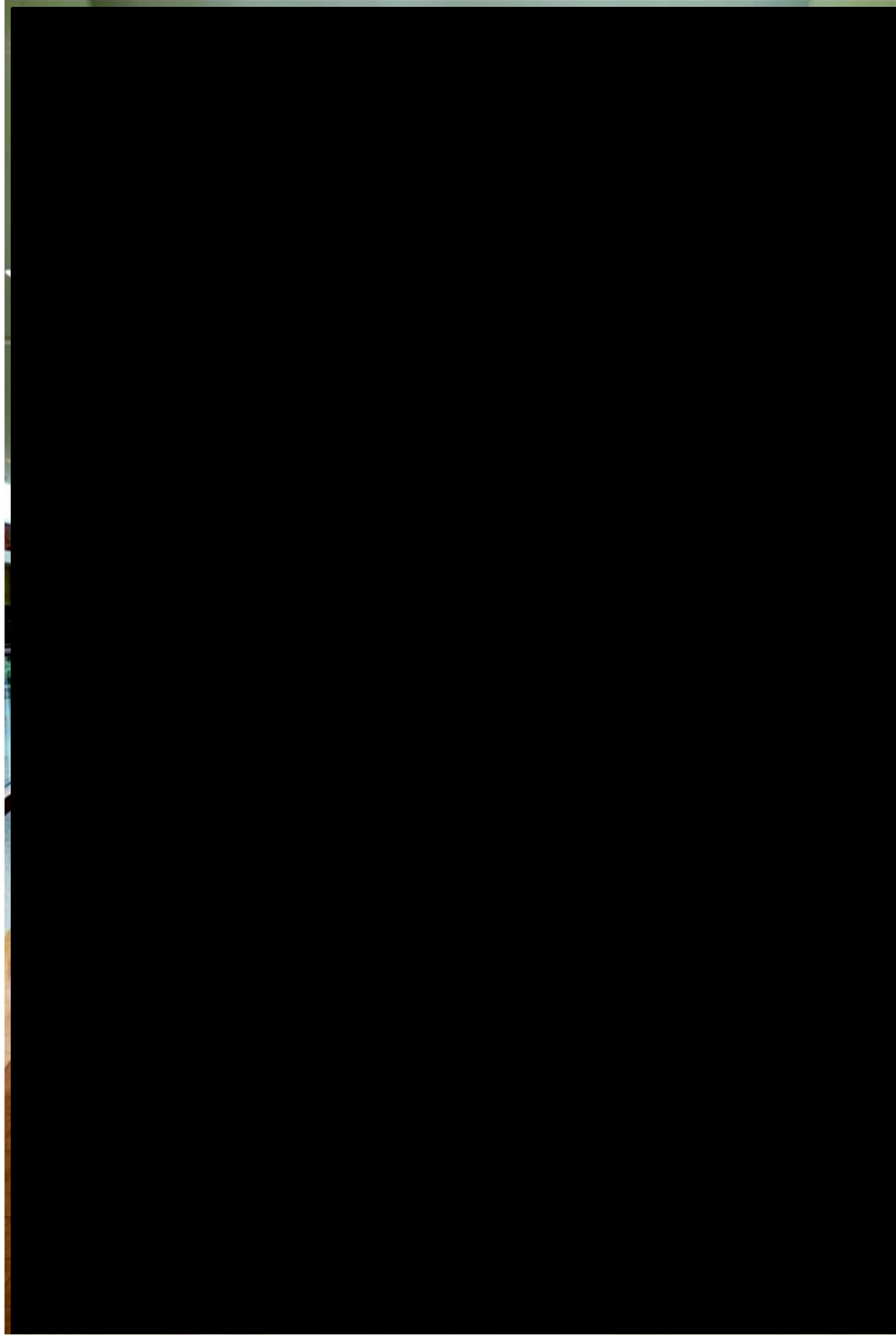
The Mall

The mall provides an important venue for understanding how identities are made and negotiated through local and everyday encounters that are a regular, ordinary part of young Muslims' daily lives. Muslim youths are no different than other teenagers and spend a lot time at the mall with their friends. The participants spent their time at their local mall, not only shopping but talking about shopping, browsing, eating and socialising. The encounters they had there, the people they talked to and what they did there tells us a lot about what it is to be racialised and, at times, seen as a Muslim within this space. Les Back's (1996) work on youth cultures in a housing estate in South London highlights the importance of such spaces and how national narratives are mediated through these everyday understandings of racialised identities that are made through "encounters and in place" (Back, 1996). Crucial here are the routes that the young people took to becoming 'Canadian' where even in everyday spaces like the mall, it became evident that "hierarchies of belonging are marked through the ranking of immigration status that prioritizes mobile citizens in a globalised world" (Back et al., 2012, p143). These

hierarchies are not only related to migrants and heritage Muslims (those born and raised in Canada) but also the categories of migration (economic, refugees), which infused the young Muslims' everyday lives and their sense of belonging in the spaces that they moved through.

Hanging Out at Mapleview Mall

Mapleview Mall. Burlington, Ontario



Excerpt from field notes:

I drive down the Lakeshore Road with Lake Ontario to the left of me. I look out and see the clear blue of the sky and the water melting into one. I turn right onto Maple Boulevard and the roads grow wider, busier and louder as I drive up the hill. You can see Maplevue Mall as soon as you make the turn. It's a long wide building with a tower of clear glass in the middle of it that sits at the top of the hill. The sun reflects down on its clear glass triangular dome and it feels like it almost draws you in. As I get closer, I can see the shiny steely exterior of blue glass reflecting the throngs of cars that drive alongside it. Maplevue Mall 'welcomes all' says the sign as I drive into the expansive concourse. I walk into the entrance and hear soft pop music in the background. The centre of the mall houses the elevator, which reaches high into the dome. The glass arches continue throughout the whole mall, making it almost reminiscent of the inside of a church. But it's bright in here. It looks like it's the middle of the day even when it's not. Wrought iron benches line the middle of the corridor in a way that they must have in the old city squares. The benches don't face each other. They face the shops. Faux streetlights and trees stand tall beside the benches. White porcelain birds drop down from the skylights to make you feel like you might be outside on a bright summer day. But you're not. You're inside the mall. And you're here to shop.

I grew up in the city and remember when Maplevue Mall was built. It was a big deal back then. It meant that we no longer had to drive to Hamilton or Toronto. We could shop right here – minutes away from our schools and homes. We could actually meet our friends in the mall and shop, try things on for fun and shop for things we would actually wear rather than scoff at. It was the place to be with its central steeple rising up to celebrate the adoration of leisure, consumption and social prestige – a veritable “cathedral of consumption” (Fiske, 1989, p13). Now almost 20 years later, it did not feel like that had changed. Looking over the fieldwork

notes that I kept from this time (excerpt above), I have noted the clear emotional resonance that this mall still holds for me as part of my youth and as a safe place (Back, 2007, 2014) that I once went to on a daily basis as I was finding my place and negotiating my identity as a young brown Muslim woman in Canada.

During my fieldwork, I spent a lot of time at the mall almost daily, shopping and hanging around with my participants. Quite early in the process, I began to see the mall from a different perspective. I was no longer a teenager with only ten dollars to spend but rather a middle-class woman in her 30s who did not have the same financial constraints that many of these young people did. In contrast, I also had less money to spend than some of my participants who came from more affluent families. For the first time, I considered how our collective ‘Muslimness’ was internally differentiated by other pressing issues, such as economic status or age. In this case, having some money and more importantly, being older, provided me with buffers in which I felt more of a sense of belonging in the mall than I did when I was younger.

As discussed in detail earlier, the heightened national and international security context that these young Canadian Muslims are living in has also affected their experience of hanging out in the mall. While I am visibly a brown woman (albeit one who does not wear hijab), having grown up in a predominantly white city, I did not have to deal with the levels of suspicion and surveillance that my participants had encountered. I had also learned ways to negotiate my ‘brownness’ and understood what I needed to do to get the service I required. There were many youths who I could see were going through the same process and others, due in part to their racial and class positioning, who were excluded from even that. My experience and age have also given me a sense of entitlement to demand certain levels of service that they do not yet have. I know that if a security guard follows me around, I can complain and hopefully

something will be done about it. While still precarious, my place in the mall is not like my participants who were younger and came from different ethnicities, classes and backgrounds. But in some ways, as I was there with them at the mall, I often experienced things along with them when we were together in a group. If a problem occurred, I chose not to speak up, whereas if I was alone or not with my participants, I might have. Nonetheless, for these young people, it was important for them to be at the mall on a daily basis and they were still learning how to negotiate their sense of belonging in the space. Some spent money there and others spent enough to be able to stay. Some of them bought clothes, wore them and returned them after they were done with them, caring less about ideas of ownership and more about the art of getting by so they could benefit from the social capital of having style, good taste and ‘swag’ at school, with their friends and online. Many found their sartorial performances an outward manifestation of who they were as people – a compilation of their multiple identities, which changed, shifted and evolved as their identities did.

For those who were there for leisure (as opposed to those who worked in the mall), this time is free from the kind of institutional supervision that comes with school, home, work and the youth club. This notion of ‘freedom’ from supervision and the ability to choose and make autonomous choices about who they were with, what they wished to spend their money on, what they did and where they decided to go within the space of the mall was a key part of the mall experience for many of the youths. The idea of not having to ‘follow rules’ and the chance to ‘be yourself’ also made the time at the mall especially valuable while working within the constraints of a place made primarily to serve as a venue for people to spend money. This requirement both excluded many of the youths and included others, or rather, made it easier for those who had money to spend time there. There were also youths who felt entitled to spend time in the mall space without buying very much along with those who spent time there and

could not buy very much but found innovative ways to perform their sense of belonging within the shops, the food courts and the rest of the mall.

All of my participants spent time at the mall. Not only that, but the majority of my participants said it was the place they went to most regularly, with friends or by themselves. Some expressed that they even went when they had nothing to do by themselves just to ‘look around’ out of boredom or if it was too hot or cold outside, and inevitably ended up spending money there even if just for a coffee or a drink. John Fiske’s notion of consumerism as a religion (Fiske, 1990, p13) is a telling one here when considering that the participants in this research all, without exception, stated that they had spent more time in malls than in mosques or places of worship.

The mall was a space where the participants did the things you would expect teenagers to do at malls. They ate, drank coffee, shopped, browsed, ran errands, watched movies, flirted, took photos, walked around and hung out with their friends and colleagues. Along with this, some of the participants moved through the mall and used it in a Muslim way by utilising the space to perform prayer and shopped for clothing that reflected a sense of both modesty and being on trend – a visible signifier of their multiple, fluid and intersecting identities. A great deal of time and money was spent by some of the girls, who would carefully curate their ‘look’ – a look that positioned them according to markers of class, race, age and gender. This look often changed by the next week and the process and look was negotiated, produced and constructed once again. However, it is also important to note that a large number of youths did not express their Muslimness in visible ways and many were ambivalent to notions of religious identity, and thus were resistant to or unconcerned about these issues within the mall space. It was also a space where the participants talked more freely than they did in the other places where we

spent time together, often swearing and talking loudly, making fun of each other and bursting into fits of laughter. This time had the palpable feeling of being ‘off the clock’ as there was often no particular goal or purpose to being at the mall other than to “*hang out and do nothing*” (Yahya, October 2012).

It was in these times spent shopping and ‘doing nothing’, away from family and structures like schools and youth clubs, that important work was also being done on identity construction, making claims of belonging and producing new cultures and importantly, producing new customers for the mall. Wherever they went about their daily lives, the young Muslims I worked with were constantly negotiating spaces for themselves in the consumer world. These youths, who were all Muslim, did many of the same things and had similar feelings about the mall. But the particular ways in which they dealt with shopping or browsing differed according to their social position, and the ways that this was intersected by race, class, gender, religiosity, and age. These youth also had different levels of spending power, which affected the sense of entitlement they felt able to make use of in the space of the mall. They also lived their religious lives differently and had to find multiple ways in which to negotiate that during this moment of free time, leisure and socialisation in the day. Hall’s (1990) notion of identity as unfixed, fluid and changing built on everyday encounters is helpful in order to conceptualise the ways in which these young Muslims played with different expressions of identity while shopping in different contexts in order to negotiate their presence there.

It can be said that while some did not fit into the space, they were ‘making do’, as de Certeau (1984) referred to as the position of subordinated people doing as much as they are able to in order to find small pockets of space which they can claim as theirs. De Certeau also argued that these small, everyday tactics can be seen as forms of resistance to hegemony (1984), which in

the case of these young Muslims, was the context of heightened security and racialisation which positioned them as potentially deviant and a threat – not just as young people but also as Muslims. In the way that de Certeau talks about these everyday tactics being centred in struggles over the use of space (1984), the mall acted as the site where these young Muslims negotiated their presence and interacted with other members of the public. However, as racialised bodies who were often identified or perceived as Muslims, they had to negotiate certain situations regularly, such as those involving surveillance. Gender played a role in the way that the youths were surveilled. Boys sitting and walking around the mall in groups were often followed by ‘mall cops’. The girls were surveilled in different ways. For them, it was the sales staff (predominately older ones) in clothing shops that would keep a watchful eye on them, would be unfriendly towards them, or have the security guards for the store follow them. When this happened, the environment felt very hostile, and many of the female participants would leave the store, but some, usually those with money, stayed and continued shopping regardless.

In making their own way and finding pockets of belonging in stores and malls, young Muslims perform and mediate their sense of belonging through hanging out in spaces where they feel safe and have more freedom. As “racism is a spatial and territorial form of power” (Back, 2007, p51), it also “aims to claim and secure territory, but it also projects associations on to space that in turn invest racial associations and attributions in places” (ibid.). In the mall, these racial associations also intersected with class, religious and gender associations within certain stores/areas in such a way that the participants did not feel safe everywhere inside. There were some stores and spaces in the mall where they felt comfortable and that they could be themselves, even if that freedom had to be negotiated by carefully managing the boundaries that excluded them. Further to that, as the youths in Canadian malls are increasingly surveilled

through private security staff (Manzo, 2004), young Muslims and racialised youth can be surveilled more heavily – a practice recently researched by the Ontario Human Rights Commission Report, *Under Suspicion* (OHRC, 2017). The results of the report were that along with surveillance through policing,

racialised and indigenous peoples may experience unwarranted heightened scrutiny in education, stores, shopping malls, housing and workplaces, on buses, subways and trains, at airports and border crossings, in health care and by private security and child welfare agencies (OHRC, 2017, p4).

This idea of finding pockets of safety is similar to Les Back's *Finding a Way Home* project that also explores young people's identity construction and the ways in which they map their sense of belonging within the cities in which they live (Back, 2007, p53). Back talks about how the young people in his study performed a sense of belonging, and how spaces within the city are marked by racial exclusions and the risks involved when the boundaries of these exclusions are crossed (2007, p51). Due in part to these exclusions, the young people in his study lay claim to certain spaces where they can seek refuge and find spaces where they feel safe, thus 'finding' home within these exclusionary spaces (ibid). While this negotiation of space takes place, alternative stories are told and, in the process, new maps of belonging, safety and risk are drawn (Back, 2007, p51).

In the same way that Back looks at how young people make claims of belonging and make 'cities a home', I now look at how, in many ways, places like the mall – a place where young Muslims go to shop almost every day – function very much as cities do in the way that young Muslims map their sense of belonging, stake claims to belonging and find safety and risk within them, and especially how they perform belonging in situations where they are excluded. More specifically, along with being aware of issues of race, class, gender and their age, young

Muslims also have to carefully manage how their Muslimness can be performed within certain spaces. For example, many young Muslims prayed in changing rooms, pretending to be trying on clothes. Many were careful about expressing their Muslim identities in shops, whereas there were others who did not feel it necessary to perform any sense of Muslimness within the space.

There was, however, often a sense of being ‘outed’ as a Muslim if they paid for something using a debit card or their student discount card, which had their names written on it. This did not cause any issues in my observations and conversations with the youths, other than issues that would come up outside of the mall space such as questions or comments about things in the news relating to Muslims etc. The burden of representation that many young Muslims felt was still present within the mall. However, it was tempered with, as Sana noted, their potential in some stores as customers. She commented that in stores, even if the store assistants knew that she was a Muslim, and even if they did not ‘like Muslims’, they would not have a problem with them if they were making a purchase. This was evident in many cases. It should be noted, however, that not all sales people necessarily believed that my participants were making a purchase and some treated them like other teenagers who are seen to be loiterers, killing time without money to spend.

Often the quick judgments made by staff regarding the young Muslims’ intentions were highly racialised and classed. Most black Muslim youths (both male and female) were routinely treated as loiterers as well as many ‘brown’ migrants and refugee youths (with accents), whereas many of the heritage youth as well as Arabs with light skin and white youths (including migrants) did not generally get treated as if they were not serious customers. When the youths with light skin were visibly Muslim, however, they did regularly experience less inclusion in higher-end stores. This often led to them feeling more pressure to make a purchase, which I

will talk about more in this section. These encounters highlight one of the core issues of young Muslims' shopping experiences, which is the relationship that many youths formed between buying things and feeling like they belong due to this. This was one of the ways that young Muslims adapted in the way they moved within the mall, and where and with whom they felt safe.

Insta-fame

As mentioned earlier, the majority of young people who purchased clothing items were female. This could be due to the lack of options for male participants and could also indicate that shopping, for clothes in particular, was usually a collective activity that female participants took part in as a group. *"I only shop alone when I'm depressed or maybe if I have to pick something up quick"*, said Hiba (March, 2012). *"It's more fun when you go with the girls, plus if anybody sees you walking around alone from school it's like you look like a 'oh there's that Hiba with no friends'"* (Hiba, March 2012). Being within certain spaces in the mall with their friends provided a sense of safety and belonging to many girls, but like Hiba, they also expressed that they didn't feel as comfortable when alone (Sana, July 2012; Sheila; January 2012; Lina; December 2011). This section will focus on these girls and the way they used shopping to make statements about their identities and sense of belonging within the space.

Many girls spent a lot of time at the mall putting together a look, or what is referred to in fashion cultures as 'curating',¹³ (New York Times, October 2, 2009) a personal style that was both fashionable and 'Muslim'. This trend is also known as 'modest fashion', which is a trend in fashion where modesty and less revealing clothing styles are practised and celebrated

¹³ Curating is a term that was predominately used in museums and in art, but is now widely used in fashion circles. For more information, see <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/04/fashion/04curate.html>

(Lewis, 2013) due in part to the popularity of Muslim fashion bloggers in the last five years in a way that has become acceptable and trendy among Muslim fashionistas globally (Lewis, 2013, p19). This does not always mean the wearing of hijab and being fully covered but the trend does tend to involve more coverage of the skin than what is mainstream 'trendy'. For example, some girls did not wear short skirts that revealed their bare legs but felt comfortable wearing short skirts with opaque tights, while others did not. Many of my female participants scoured the mall in search of clothing that was not revealing but that was still trendy and covetable. At times, store preferences came down to a matter of likes and dislikes, but these matters of taste are often complicated and reveal an interaction between taste, class, race, religion and gender. That is, through the simple act of buying and wearing particular clothes, new spaces of culture are being produced and are further negotiated in light of religious identity, racial identity and class.

What shops the girls chose, the amount of money they had and the aesthetic they preferred often made statements about their positioning, their cultural backgrounds and their aspirations to be connected to a certain class or race (Williams, 2011). The young Muslim women I worked with were able to negotiate and balance what might seem to be fraught and fluid identities (Hall, 1990) to gain a sense of belonging based on their social location (Yuval-Davis, 2011) both as individuals and as a group. As Muslim girls, they often shopped with their friends (both Muslim and non-Muslim) and hung out in the mall as a group, which often challenged the boundaries of the mall space where they were not always welcome as such a group. Their regular communal shopping hang-outs can be seen as a collective, place-making practice and a collective performance of belonging (Back, 2007) as "attachments are established through actions and rituals that unfold repeatedly in any given context" (Back 2007, p61; Bell, 2009). At the same time, there were also differences in the ways that they shopped, what stores they

preferred and their personal style. Some girls did prefer ‘modest fashion’ styles, which fell into performances of both mainstream fashion as well as of Muslim practices as they did not wholly conform to mainstream fashion and aesthetics. There were girls who emphatically did not want to be seen dressing as a Muslim, as a resistance to the ideas of modesty and as a way of claiming a more mainstream sense of belonging, while others were ambivalent to either as they did not have the same pressures, concerns or desires.

Yet, many of the youths had neither the money nor the inclination to actually purchase items. One example of this was Nadia. I saw Nadia at the mall almost daily, but I rarely saw her purchase anything that she did not return the same day. But she was very well dressed and had great personal style, not only according to her friends and me, but to her large social media following on the photo-sharing application Instagram. Nadia did not have the money to support her interest in fashion or her social media persona, so she ‘made do’ (de Certeau, 2004) by taking photos in changing rooms and posting them online. Nadia came from a middle-class background but due to circumstances surrounding her parent’s migration to Canada when she was very young, the way class figured in her life had changed. On the one hand, she could be seen as middle class due to her family’s education and social circles, and indeed the school that she attended, but at the same time, she did not have the money to go along with her aspirations. Through migration, she and her family had essentially shifted from a more traditional or British idea of class structure to a more “transatlantic form of class - more rooted in money and the life-style it can purchase” (Hall et al., 1993, xv). But in Nadia’s case, being a middle-class teen without money, she negotiated this using the means that were available to her. Since she could not ‘purchase’ the lifestyle she wanted, she found other ways to take part in it. The key idea here is that the perception and performance that she had these clothes and the style to pull them off was more important than the reality of what was actually in her closet.

This notion is somewhat of a departure from the conventions of shopping and consumerism that we have come to understand in everyday life, where generally items are purchased and kept. This performance of belonging moves away from the idea of ownership, which arguably is a fundamental feature of capitalism connected to the idea of personal material wealth (Fiske, 1989). Nadia was also aware of this departure from convention and was very careful when taking photos to not make it obvious to salespeople, unless she had developed a friendship with them through being a frequent ‘customer’, in which case the salesperson often helped her find items and even took the photos for her. But Nadia’s strategy of buying and returning, or in most cases not buying at all, was no secret to her close friends. Bushra’s opinion on the matter was that everyone did it, including herself. *“I don’t have the money to buy a nice outfit for going out and neither do my friends – so we buy shit and wear them with the tags on and pray nothing gets spilled on it.”* For Bushra, who is of Pakistani descent, the fact that Nadia (with her online following and reputation for being stylish) did the same thing made Nadia even cooler because she had found a way to get around the rules and in some ways, as Bushra put it, *“made it nothing to feel embarrassed about”*. *“She is only 17 after all”*, Bushra said. *“Where would she have the money to do all that unless she was stealing clothes? A lot of people at school you know, they steal clothes. She’s not doing that.”*

Instead, Nadia had found a strategy to get around the system. She also commented that her parents had indicated that they had more important things to spend the money on. They were not happy about Nadia spending so much time and effort on her outward appearance and Instagram posts. They wanted her to spend more time on her studies. In Nadia’s world and to her friends around her, these things were not out of the ordinary. The idea of parents telling their teens that they should be concentrating more on their studies rather than the way they look

is not a novel one, but again to Nadia, her look meant a lot to her and made her feel like she was not only good at something but also belonged. More than that, in order for Nadia, who was mixed-race Pakistani and Moroccan, to keep up with the ‘blonde-haired, blue-eyed white girl’ Instagrammers at school who posted photos in bikinis holding cocktails, she felt that she had to work harder establishing herself as someone with style and good taste in order to belong.

In the wider convivial culture of Instagram, which Nadia was a part of, users not only post content but also interact with other users where ethnic differences are not as important. She also had many followers from the Middle East and around the world. What made her different and stand out amongst the crowd of her school friends was her modest style and ability to put together a good outfit. She negotiated around the problem of not having much money by taking photos at the mall and dealt with the issue of not being a ‘white girl’ (and how this was performed online by her classmates) by concentrating on curating a look and an online identity as someone with great personal style. Here, as Gilroy has stated, “instead of adding to the premium of race as political ontology and economic fate, people discover that the things that really divide them are much more profound: taste, lifestyle, leisure preferences” (Gilroy, 2006, p40).

Nadia was aware of the racial hierarchies that existed, as were her friends. Due to the way that she chose to outwardly express her Muslim identity, though she did not wear hijab, she dressed more modestly than the “*blonde white girls*” she referred to. She felt that she could get around posting photos that showed “*more skin*” and drinking alcohol, which she also did not partake in, by being different, making her ‘difference’ almost banal and secondary, and bringing the issue of style to the forefront, which was also something that she shared with “*blonde white girls*” but expressed in a different way. In doing so, she had gained followers online, especially

from the Middle East, due to her modest take on fashion and her ethnic background as an Arab and presumably her status as someone from North America, which she said also held a degree of social capital in the Middle East in the middle and upper classes.

Nadia's and Bushra's stories still worked within the confines of a consumer, capitalist-driven system and their actions did not challenge these forces significantly. Although Nadia tried to avoid purchasing clothes, this was not a rejection of consumer capitalism – rather she did it out of circumstance. However, this is not to say that on a personal level, the young women did not have any agency in these situations or that they were unable to make meaning in such spaces which enable, as Paul Willis calls it, 'symbolic creativity' in everyday life (Willis, 1990). For example, the identity negotiation through the acts of buying and returning still entailed curating a 'look' - that is, the outward manifestation of the way they saw themselves. This occurred frequently, was layered and complex and often was the way young Muslims marked ways of belonging and exclusion and experienced a sense of autonomy over their environments, however big or small.

As stated earlier, there is no doubt that gender played a significant role here. Although the boys in this research did purchase clothes and other items to wear, this was generally not done as a group and was not something I observed or heard about. This could also be due to the fact that as a woman who is 'into fashion', it was easier for me to participate in the shopping trips with the girls as they often invited me to come along. Along with this, it is clear that there is immense pressure for young girls to look good. This is not a new discovery by any means. But in addition to this pressure, girls like Nadia and Bushra had the additional challenge of looking good within certain boundaries – namely a lack of money and looking good while dressing modestly and the intersections and racial constraints of being mixed-race and brown in predominantly white

spaces (Nayak, 1997). According to Nadia, her ‘look’ was “*less about being sexy*” and more about being “*in style*”. At the same time, she did not wear a hijab and was not ‘covered’ in an overtly Muslim way but yet she herself believed her Muslimness had everything to do with the way she dressed modestly. Sometimes, in matters of personal appearance with the participants who were girls, the nuances of ‘dressing Muslim’ were as subtle as differences of sleeve length, trouser/skirt length, exposed cleavage and the tightness of clothing – all of which varied significantly between my female participants.

This idea of modest dressing brings us back to the performances of religious and cultural identities and how they link to consumer culture. Nadia’s expression of her modest style was connected to a growing Islamic cultural industry that commoditises Muslim cultural practices such as fashion (Lewis, 2013; Tarlo, 2010; Heryanto, 2011). In a general sense, it can be argued that Islamic teachings are anti-capitalist and anti-materialist in nature, which is argued by those who oppose the commodification of Islamic practices that are seen as reducing the wearing of the hijab, for example, from “an act of worship - into something as simple as a fashion statement” (BBC, May 4, 2017). While Nadia might, through her Instagram ‘self’, align herself with the Islamic culture industry, she was ultimately someone who did not really buy anything or accumulate more material belongings. Rather, she was ‘borrowing them’.

Nadia also often talked about the main reasons why she worked so much on her Instagram. She hoped to get a big following and gain some ‘insta-fame’ in the process. She said that she also wanted people to know that you can be stylish, modest and Muslim. At the same time, she also said that if she got a big enough following, she could make money out of it and buy anything she wanted and not have to worry about money anymore. While circumventing the system in terms of not purchasing items, her ultimate goals still connected with the Canadian dream of

aspiration. Her goals also brought together neoliberal ideas of individual wealth and consumer culture with expressions of religious belonging. This is an example of the way in which Muslim identities and expressions of them can be constructed through commodities and consumption practices (Abu Lughod 1995, 2005; Saktanber, 1997).

This, in many ways, brought a communal aspect to Nadia's consumption practices. While her goals for Instagram included growing her own personal wealth and influence, at the same time, she became part of something else – an online community that contributes to collective expressions of cultural, Muslim identities. Though teenage girls like Nadia, due to her age and lack of money, cannot take part in the Islamic culture industry as customers, by buying clothes that are made by designers for the modest clothing market, for example, she still contributed to the production of the 'modest fashion' industry and ideals from the periphery. According to her social location (Yuval-Davis, 2011), she was using the tactics that she had available to 'make do' (de Certeau, 2004). While Nadia's story and desires were individualistic, they did also bring in more communal aspects of identity and made a contribution to a wider representation of Muslim and 'modest fashion'.

There were also youths like Sheila who did not find ways to negotiate performances of identity and belonging through consumption practices. With two jobs, Sheila did not have time to spend on 'her look'. She also said that she would not have the guts to do what Nadia did. Her sense of belonging within the spaces she frequented can tell us about her sense of entitlement and highlights the additional exclusions presented through consumer practices for those who are unable to take part in them. Sheila, along with some of the other participants, said that spending money on clothes was a waste of time and money, which was not an 'Islamic' thing to do. This also highlights the messy relationship between consumer capitalism and Islam. Young women

like Nadia express their religious identity and belonging through clothing and find that “consumption becomes a crucial means to fashion one’s identity” (McLaren, p5). These new ways of performing their Muslim identities through clothing also, through their collective expression both ‘in person’ and online, present new ways of being a part of trans-national ‘Muslim networks’, bringing together both ideas of individualism and communitarianism. Crucially, the unpalatable, such as the unfashionable and the poor, are excluded, furthering marginalisation based on class, gender, immigration and race. Essentially, this in-road to belonging works for some and not for others, and works particularly well for participants who are ‘contingent insiders’ (Back, 1996) and have a greater sense of entitlement and belonging within the space.

“That’s Ghetto”

Looking further into the connection between shopping, race and class is the story of Sana and Layla. One day we were shopping together at Mapleview Mall. Sana would often shop at both H&M and Forever 21, while Layla avoided Forever 21 and said it was too ‘cheap’ and the quality was poor. Layla shopped at H&M frequently. One could argue that the prices at H&M were just as ‘cheap’ and that the items were of the same quality. On one occasion, Sana saw a dress in the Forever 21 window and wanted to go in.

Layla pulled her by the hand and swerved Sana away from the store:

***Layla:** Come on...I hate that store. It’s so ghetto.*

***Sana:** I want to try on that dress!!! I’m ghetto [laughing].*

***Me:** Why is it ‘ghetto’??*

***Layla:** It’s for black people.*

Sana: You're black. You're Egyptian... that's Africa.

Layla: Noooo, you know what I mean.

I had heard Layla make comments on her lighter skin colour before and how she could “*pass as white*” whereas Sana would often tease Layla about not knowing Arabic songs because she was a “*white girl*”. Layla connected Forever 21 to an idea of blackness, connecting the brand to a racial identity and “*being ghetto*”, and did not want to be associated with that. Williams’ study of young people and store loyalty talks about this type of association and how racialised youth often choose the stores they shop in according to the way they wish to be positioned by others (Williams, 2011).

One other day, Layla made the comment that “*Only poor people shop in Forever 21*” and that a girl in her school was so poor that she “*literally only wears Forever 21*”. She now not only associated the store with blackness but also with class and having less money. She also admitted that she liked a lot of the clothes from there but would never buy anything from that store.

For Layla, her understanding of the perceived image associated with Forever 21 was more important than her direct experience of shopping there (Williams, 2011). In the suburban Maplevue mall, store loyalty not only signified personal taste and style but also who Layla was and how much money she had. Layla also made a connection between blackness and ‘being poor’ – both things she indicated that she did not want to be associated with. As Hall states, “class is lived through race and race is lived through class” (Hall and Back, 2009, p676) and this interdependency between the two was evident in Layla’s perception of Forever 21. Her distinctions between class and race became blurred, messy and complicated. Through the everyday activity of shopping, Layla found a space to negotiate her identity and assert her place in racialised hierarchies through ideas about shade and colour, attempting to distance herself

from those whom she saw as the other. In this case, Layla saw herself as closer to whiteness, although this was not necessarily how she was perceived by other mall-goers as she was still a Muslim girl in a headscarf with ‘olive-toned’ skin. By making a stand about not going into a store for ‘black people’ or ‘poor people’, she associated poorness with blackness and distanced herself from both, asserting her own sense of identity through who she is ‘not’ (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p202). By voicing her sense of ‘un-belonging’ to the store, she projected her own identity as someone closer to whiteness and ‘having money’. To Layla, colour and class became one through the banal act of walking into a particular store and in doing so, re-inscribing racial and class boundaries, creating distance between ‘her’ and ‘them’. These were key ways in which Layla, as an Arab Muslim with light skin, was able to tactically mobilise unstable racial hierarchies in order to negotiate the entitlements and privilege that come with whiteness.

Layla’s comments reflected her own reading of what constituted middle class, whiteness and what constituted black and poor people’s behaviours, which she essentially saw as the same in this case. Claire Alexander talks about similar views about white and black spaces in her discussion of black youths’ attitudes towards black clubs and white clubs (1996). She discusses how the “individual is able to select leisure options in accordance with the lifestyle and image he wishes to reflect at any given time” (Alexander, 1996, p123). The reference to ‘any given time’ is an important one as it highlights the changing and often transient nature of the particular identity that a young person may wish to express at a certain time.

For example, Layla also hung out at the mall with Aisha and Sheila who were of Pakistani descent. Aisha and Sheila did not have a lot of money to spend on clothing as finances were tight in their household. They were very careful about their purchases, mostly because as Aisha stated, “*we have to be*”. Both Aisha and Sheila worked in the mall and often went there with

Layla after school before they started work. When Layla was with the two sisters, the conversations were different from the ones she had with Sana. For example, Layla often referred to herself as Arab and Egyptian when with them. Her racial identity as an Arab was articulated during this encounter to present herself as more Arab, rather than white. This could perhaps be seen as an effort to be closer to Aisha and Sheila's brownness and Muslimness, while at the same time, acknowledging her own difference. It was a minor shift – a negotiation in how she articulated her identity that meant something in this situation. Layla asserted different dimensions of her identity, specifically her Arab identity, according to who she was with and the relationship or proximity Sheila and Aisha had to ideas of whiteness.

Layla asserting herself as an Arab highlighted her 'honorary whiteness' within the group she was in as well as her positioning as an Arab Muslim. Presenting herself as 'white' would not do her any favours as Sheila and Aisha were brown Pakistani girls who often talked about being teased by "*white girls*". This is an example of the complicated nature of racial difference within Muslim communities, as being Arab is often seen as praiseworthy due to their proximity to whiteness as well as being an ethnic group that speaks Arabic, the language of the Quran (Suhair-Majaj, 1999, p324). It was interesting although not entirely unsurprising that when I was alone with Layla, she sometimes shopped at Forever 21. I asked her about this and she shrugged it off and said she just felt like it because there were a few things she liked there (Layla, July 11, 2012).

For Layla, the difference between her, Sheila and Aisha was more pronounced due to the intersections of race, class and culture. She did not feel the need to distinguish herself in terms of skin-colour as the difference was already obvious. She would make light of the fact that Sheila's skin was darker as they tried on clothes and said things like "*I'm too pale for this*

shirt” or “*It’s good for brown people*”. When they were together, she saw Sheila and Aisha as brown people and as an Arab was positioned as ‘white’ (Layla, December 2012). She did not say these things in a nasty way but more as a matter of fact. In doing so, she made a clear point about her whiteness and her identity as a middle-class, light-skinned Arab in relation to the racial positions of Sheila and Aisha as brown, darker Pakistanis (Suhair-Majaj, 1999). In the earlier example with Sana, this was more difficult to do as they were both Egyptian, so in order to position herself away from the idea of blackness and being poor, she had to do it in different ways, primarily through asserting her class. This shifting and re-articulation of identity (Hall, 1990) was enabled by what Lisa Suhair Majaj describes as an ambiguous state of “honorary whiteness” (Suhair-Majaj, 1999, p320).

In these mundane interactions at the shopping mall, Layla shifted within this unstable racial space to establish who she was and what relative power she held within her friendship groups. Her power was relative to her proximity to whiteness and economic status, and her desire to position herself away from being black, brown or poor. This connection has been talked about by Hall when he stated that “race, in that sense, is a discursive system which has ‘real’ social, economic and political conditions of existence and ‘real’ symbolic and material effects” (Hall, 2002, 453). Many of my participants from Arab and/or Middle Eastern backgrounds shifted their identities and positioning in and out of white spaces in a similar manner. However, as seen in Chapter Two, at school, when around ‘Canadians’ or what they called “*real white people*”, this tentative entry into Canadian white society was tenuous, on borrowed time and could be “readily stripped away at moments of crisis” (Suhair-Majaj, p 321).

Rose-coloured watches

In another part of the mall, shoppers of high-end, luxury goods were spoilt for choice. Lena (aged 18), Mariam (aged 18) and Noor (aged 19) had all immigrated to Canada from Dubai and Saudi Arabia (August 2012). They went to American schools and their accents reflected that. Their families had moved to Canada so that their children could attend high schools in Canada with the hope that they would also be accepted into Canadian universities. Noor and Mariam wore the hijab, Lena did not, but all three described themselves as religious. They didn't take the bus to the mall as they all had cars. They drove fairly new, expensive cars which they loved and were very proud of. In fact, they were shocked and felt sorry for me when they saw my 1996 Honda. Noor assured me that I still "*have mad style*" so I do not think it hurt my credibility with them, because in this group these things mattered. All three young women carried designer handbags and bejewelled iPhones and Blackberries which they used constantly. The three of them together were quite a sight – a flurry of bling, beauty and shopping bags. They were always impeccably turned out with full-faces of expertly done make-up, freshly manicured nails and often in designer, on-trend clothing translated into their own versions of 'modest fashion' (Lewis, 2010).

We walked into Michael Kors together and looked at the watches. Noor had her eye on a particular one and she peered at it through the glass display box. "Can I help you?" asked the salesman in a somewhat hesitant tone (Noor, August 2012). She looked up but then ignored him – an act that showed a certain level of confidence and entitlement to the space. She was looking at a photo on her phone as the rest of the girls huddled around the glass box. The salesman, who was a white man and looked to be in his 20s, stood outside their huddle for a few moments and asked again, "Can I help you ladies?"

(Noor, Stephanie, Lena, Mariam in Michael Kors, August 2012):

Noor: Yeah just one sec.

On her phone was an Instagram photo of Dina Tokio, a popular ‘hijabi’ blogger from the UK.

Noor: That’s the one, yeah? [Looking at me]

Me: Looks like it.

Stephanie: I think the gold looks tacky.

Noor looked displeased with this comment and said, “*I want the rose gold one*”. She asked the salesman if they had it in rose gold and he says they might. He continued to stand there.

Noor: Can you check?

Salesman: We don’t have a lot left. Are you going to buy it?

Noor said something to the effect of “*if I like it*” and he eventually went to get the watch from the back. The girls, wide-eyed and surprised, exchanged looks and had a discussion about the salesman being “*so rude*”.

Stephanie: Whatever, let’s just leave.

Noor: No. Why should we leave? [She continues to compare Tokio’s Instagram photo to the watch in question].

The salesman came back and Noor tried on the watch. She held her hand up to the sky and looked at it admiringly. She said “*I loooove it*”.

Lena: *Yeah but it doesn't go with your jewellery. You're going to have to get rose gold jewellery.*

Noor: *No – mixing metallics is in. You don't have to always be matchy-matchy. Look.*
[scrolls through Tokio's Instagram photos].

The salesman was getting impatient. But Noor, un-wavered, continued to look at the watch.

Salesman: *Can you girls not move the bags around... They are all supposed to stay in the same place...?*

Noor continued to look at the watch and the salesman held his hand out, signalling that she should put the watch back in his hand. She did. He walked away, taking the watch with him.

It seemed clear to me he did not think Noor would buy the watch and she stood there in the same place with her face slightly flushed, looking visibly annoyed.

Noor: *What the hell!?* [talking to me]

I shrugged my shoulders. I wasn't really sure what to say to her. The other girls started to walk out of the store. I did the same but Noor stayed back, still peering into the glass box. We stopped near the doors to wait for her.

Noor: *Hellooooo. Excuse me??*

Salesman: *Yes?*

Noor: *I'm getting that watch. Can you go get it?*

There are many things this encounter can tell us about Noor's sense of belonging in the store and how it cut through age/gender/class and religion. First, it is possible that the closeness in age between Noor and her friends with the salesman gave them more room to manoeuvre. Secondly, he was also a white male who worked in a store that sold women's clothing and accessories and, from the onset, was not helpful to them and did not try to 'sell' Noor the item. The way he dismissed her was patronising and insulting. Being a white male who was managing the space, the hierarchies of power (in the context of sales) were in some ways flipped. As a consumer, Noor was not being wooed to buy the item, and was no longer in control of making the decision of buying the item or not. The salesman's actions put him in control of the situation and in order for Noor to stay there, she had to fight for it. She did this by flexing her financial power as a consumer and making a statement about her class and position by purchasing the watch. Fourth, it is important to look at how race and religion are a factor here. Noor said that she did not have to deal with this sort of thing in Dubai. What she was saying was that with all things considered, the only points of difference were her race and religion. She was aware of how her hijab potentially changed her positioning in terms of class and relation to whiteness, or the typical customer in this store. Even though she had very light, white skin, her hijab complicated her racial position compared to what it was in Dubai.

In Dubai, where most shoppers are Muslim and hijab is commonplace (even for non-Muslims), difference is often signified through race, shade and class (Lewis, 2010). In Dubai, Noor did not have these types of problems with getting good customer service. At Mapleview Mall in Canada, she was trying to resist the way the salesman saw her, potentially as an immigrant, a person of colour (racialised by her hijab) and who did not have money or, indeed, taste. Bev Skeggs (2001) talks about these identifications of class in her work about working-class women

and representations about class and how inclusion in the middle classes can be signified through upscale, classy clothes and items (Skeggs, 2001, p74).

Noor was making a statement that she understood the cultural, aesthetic, pop culture value of the watch, could afford it, and also that she was of a class that belonged in the shop, regardless of her age, ethnicity and gender. But in Michael Kors, these identifications of class fell short and did not necessarily help 'buffer' (Ali, 2003) the salesman's perception of Noor. Her white skin and fashionable clothing did not negotiate more agency for her in this situation and her subordinate position was clear. She was seen primarily as a Muslim, with Muslimness being her 'master' identity (Hall, 1990), and through that she became racialised and seen as an ethnicity that could not afford the watch, breaking down the idea that upscale clothes and taste are markers of class. In this case, her racial position complicated her class and possibly negated it. Ultimately, Noor defied and resisted his reading of her when she told him she would buy the watch. This can be seen as a way of tricking the system or using the world of consumerism to 'buy' belonging, without, as Gilroy discusses, getting the full benefits of rights and respect (Gilroy, 2010). Noor, even though she was the consumer in this situation, was positioned as a subordinate and found ways to 'make do' within this space (de Certeau, 1984). She performed a very strong statement about her sense of belonging within the space; her buying the watch was an indication to the salesman and the rest of us that 'I bought this, and I belong here'.

Noor's encounter also highlights the complicated nature between structure and agency that Fiske (1990) talks about. Fiske also argues that the act of buying can be seen as an 'empowering moment' for those who are subordinate who have little power in the larger structures of power (1990). However, was Noor's moment of buying the watch an empowering moment for her? While she felt like the act of buying had enabled her to be a part of the space and to be seen as

someone who belonged there, was this victory one that was merely bought and that's it? In other words, was this a victory over racism or Islamophobia or "its refinement" (Gilroy, 2010, p27), only solidifying Noor's position as a subordinate, on the outskirts of belonging where the only way she can find belonging was through the act of 'buying it'? This type of situation is one that I encountered on multiple occasions during my fieldwork with the various participants, in different stores, various malls and cities. If it was an isolated incident, there are many things that could explain the encounter. However, taken cumulatively, one has to consider what was going on here. Noor's act of purchasing the item despite the negative encounter was a response mirrored by many of the girls in my research who were in similar situations, signalling a type of resistance and performance of belonging through the act of buying. Identities are negotiated in this space, in this case through consumerism, as they cut through race, religion, age, class and gender and shift according to the situation in order to remain in the space of the mall. But at what cost?

Young Muslims engaged in shopping in varied and unique ways according to their multiple identities and intersections of class, race, age, religion and gender. While many girls faced discrimination, surveillance and practices that excluded them from spaces in the mall (or from which they excluded themselves), they faced them in different ways and negotiated them according to their social positioning, race and the amount of money that they were able to spend. Muslim girls in Mapleview found small pockets of belonging within the mall and often negotiated access and a sense of belonging to these spaces by buying things. These girls also used the mall and the shops within it to make visible statements about their racial identities, their Muslimness and their class in relation to mainstream middle-classed whiteness. They also often resisted the conventions of shopping and the mall space by using it for other reasons than those for which it was intended, in the way that Mariam did. In doing so, they tested the

boundaries of their belonging within the space and produced new ways of belonging and performing their identities while doing so.

Although the hierarchies of power still existed and the structures of capitalism and consumerism that pervade shopping and shopping malls remained unchallenged, young Muslims attempted in many ways to transgress and negotiate their belonging within the constraints and hierarchies of power that existed within the malls. In this space, Muslim girls found ways to do what they wanted, to have what they desired as much as they could or at times, as much as they wanted to even if they did not have the power, means or money to do so. In order to make the space ‘their own’, they found their own ways to make claims on the space, defined their identities and performed acts of belonging, finding pockets of safety and making “maps of belonging” (Back, 2007).

Hanging out in the Food Court, Jackson's Square

Jackson's Square, Hamilton, Ontario.



Excerpt from field notes:

Jackson's Square is less than a 15-minute drive (on a good day) from Mapleview Mall. It is located in the centre of the City of Hamilton, an old 'steel town' that retains some of its 'blue collar' reputation. I spent quite a lot of time in Jackson's Square during my undergraduate years almost 15 years ago. It was close to my university. I used to go there at least once a week with friends to get a bite to eat and later to catch a movie or to indulge ourselves in the fashionable, trendy shops du jour. Walking into the building this time around, a lot of it looked the same. The red brick walls and narrow corridors take me past the Canadian coffee mecca, Tim Hortons, and the line-up was as enormous as I remembered it. The similarities end there. Gone were the high-street fashion chains that would lure us there fifteen years ago. In their

place were multiple dollar stores, charity shops and discount shopping chains. There were stores with names that you'd never heard of before, and probably wouldn't ever again. Many shops were shut down, the death of steel companies had hit the city hard - and it showed as you walked through the mall's once vibrant corridors. There was a cold feeling to the place. None of the so-called seating areas were well kept. The seats were uncomfortable as the garden-furniture metal chairs were hard and unforgiving. The MDF tables were scratched and had been vandalised with swear words and drawings of penises, happy faces and graffiti. Many of the lights were burnt out and it often was weeks before they were changed. A few even ominously flickered at the entrance.

Despite the less-than-welcoming environment, there was no shortage of people. There were people everywhere. One of the good things about the space in my time there was that it well heated during the brutally cold winter months, and cool and air conditioned in the summers. I know that many of my participants would sometimes go there for a few hours of relief from the cold or the heat. There were other reasons to be there too: passport services, legal aid offices and other government services such as health cards etc. were housed there and not locally accessible to them otherwise. People had many reasons to go there but young people in particular were visibly a presence, particularly in the food court. Many lived far away and this was an opportunity to do homework and to see friends before going home for dinner, to evening jobs and other activities. Some hung out there until the mall closed.

Throughout my fieldwork, I spent a lot of time eating, drinking and hanging out with participants and their friends in the food court. The food courts offered plenty of options to choose from and judging from the packed seats after school, it seemed *de rigueur* for teens to hang out there. At Mapleview Mall, youths, both boys and girls, would go to the food court

before and/or after they went shopping and browsing. At Mapleview Mall, the ‘mall cops’ also kept an eye on the youths in the food court; however, the food court at Mapleview was predominately filled with white patrons, of all ages, with very few people of colour. I did not observe or hear about any harassment by security towards the Muslim youths who were sitting in the food court, though Yahya (March 2012) mentioned that he felt they were still being “*watched more*” than others.

At Jackson’s Square, however, Muslim boys experienced surveillance by mall security on a regular and daily basis. This mall had less to offer youths, and my participants who went there also had very little money. Instead of shopping, they spent most of their time in the food court. Girls also spent time in the food court and both genders normally sat with each other, however the mall security paid most of their attention to the teenage boys, particularly those of colour. Out of that group, more encounters took place between the mall security and the black boys. When a group of boys were sitting at a table without girls, I also noticed more attention being paid to them. For them, it was often their presence as a group that was problematic. Much like the girls hanging out at Mapleview did, they too dealt with these situations by utilising strategies and negotiating their belonging in their own ways.

Many youths did not have anywhere to go between the time of school ending and when the youth clubs opened. As a group of racialised boys, if they hung out outside the mall, then they were liable to be stopped and searched by the police, as happened on many occasions during the research study. Jackson’s Square Mall was a space where they could legitimately spend time and socialise without being seen as suspect or dangerous by other people on the street. In this way, it created a genuine safe space (Back, 2007). This does not mean that the boys were not treated as suspect by the mall’s security personnel, but their determination to be with each

other and spend time together as friends made these mall-based tensions worthwhile. Muslim boys negotiated these structures of control in creative, convivial and humorous ways, expressing a multitude of tricks and tactics. As many lived far away, this was an opportunity not only to grab a bite to eat but to do homework and see friends at the same time. The way they used the space of the food court shows the work and negotiating they had to do to be there as they adapted to consumer pressures, surveillance, obligations and constraints.

While in no way a challenge to existing paradigms of power, in order to remain in the space, Muslim boys in Jackson's Square learned ways of getting by and doing just enough to remain in the space while at the same time trying to express their own freedom, wants and needs as much as they could. There were also regularly practised acts of resistance, or 'tricks' and 'tactical raids' on the system (de Certeau, 1984). When it came to hanging out at Jackson's Square, it was often as simple as being there, using the space without spending any money and without buying any food – both things that are implicitly expected by mall goers at some point. They were also aware that in order to stay there, they would have to appease the mall staff at times and buy food there, highlighting the ambiguous and contradictory tensions around young people's experiences within the space. Tricks were used sometimes, as part of play and others as rejections of the system and challenges to and invasion of the social order of the place. But in doing so, the young people had to be strategic. They often had to negotiate their identities (Hall, 1990), be subtle and most importantly, be cognisant of their positioning as young people and the consistent, daily surveillance being imposed upon them for their tricks and ways of getting by only went as far as what they could get away with. For most participants, the intention was, after all, to remain in the space and to be in some way 'a part of it'. These acts informed the ways in which young Muslim boys performed their sense of self, their claims to

belonging and simultaneous un-belonging to the mall by moving within spaces of inclusion and exclusion.

In Jackson's Square, the participants usually congregated on two tables in the corner of the food court in the basement. Youths would come and go at different times but every day after school, I would find a few of the boys there. There would sometimes be food on the table or someone working on their homework. They would often try to 'trick the system' where they were meant to consume by not buying anything and sit there, often bringing food in from elsewhere or not at all, just to make use of the space, to have a place to meet friends and be 'a part of it' (Fiske, 1990, p30) and what was happening at the mall. These youths knew what they could get away with too and they tried not to bring attention to the fact that they were sometimes bringing in 'outside food' and would often take turns going up to McDonalds to buy a drink so they could display it on the table, making an unspoken claim of belonging (Back, 2007) that said because they had bought something, they could stay there.

They would congregate at the tables and talk about their day, movies, music, sports, relationships and everything in between. They were extremely open with each other. Many of them shared the same experiences, as most of them were new migrants and/or refugees so there was a shared experience they could all relate to. I witnessed a lot of emotional conversations between the young people as they sat and ate together. One day I saw Amir very upset about his mother's poor health while Abdi and Zayn were hugging him and offering support. Conversations like this as well as seemingly banal talk all happened around this makeshift dinner table. The time spent at the food court was significant to them, as it was a place not only to eat and drink but to hang out with friends where they could feel 'free' to talk. This was a place where belonging was expressed, affirmed, challenged and felt. The two tables that they

called ‘their’ tables operated like a mini-home, a small tiled square in the mall that they called their own. They felt safe there and they knew they would find friends in this space (Back, 2007). Yet during their times in this ‘safe space’, they would often look up and see the mall security guards watching them, not to keep them safe, Amir would comment, but rather for the safety of others.

Zayn, one of the more vocal boys of the group, would often give them a salute, a wave or a wink, often while muttering a curse word under his breath. “Are they always here watching you guys?” I asked Zayn one day.

***Zayn (Zayn, November 2011):** Yeah I mean they’re pretty much here all the time. They’re always watching us.*

***Me:** Are they like that with your other friends?*

***Zayn:** Umm. Yeah but... you know... our friends. They don’t like us.*

***Me:** What about your other friends from school?*

***Zayn:** Like who? The Canadian ones?*

***Me:** What do you mean by Canadian?*

***Zayn:** You know. The white ones. You know those white guys with the big holes in their ears. Yeah well it depends on who they’re with. But they mostly follow the Somalis around. It’s not even that bad for me (Moroccan). But you know – we gotta be careful and stuff.*

Zayn’s cheeky wave at the security guards is an example of how resistances were utilised when dealing with mall security. Zayn’s response to the security presence was almost a knowing, satirical acknowledgment of their roles and their own positioning as a group of racialised boys.

He understood that if he used humour and established some rapport with the guards, this could possibly help them stay in ‘the good books’ and not annoy the guards too much. At the same time, by audibly muttering under his breath about the situation, he was also presenting his dislike of the situation to his peers and maintaining his role within the group. Performances like these were used sometimes to challenge and also to maintain the social order of the place. Zayn was also making a claim about his belonging and ownership of the space. His wave to the guards can be seen as an acknowledgment that although they pushed the boundaries, he was aware of the ‘rules’. But it was almost done in a way that can be seen as a challenge to the order – a pushing back that said ‘I know the rules, and I will decide whether I get kicked out or not’.

Zayn was a pro at shifting seamlessly between identities at different moments of encounters in the way that Hall has described in his work (1990). His gift, his own buffer that he often used, was his charming demeanour and humorous personality. At one moment, he would be a jovial joker in his friendship group and at others, the serious one, telling people to keep it down, taking on responsibility for the group while waving to the mall security, reassuring them that the situation was under control. Some days I would see him having a cigarette with the mall security, having a laugh and exchanging stories with them. There were also times where he would intercede for his friends who were getting in trouble, trying to disarm the staff. If a fight broke out with other patrons, Zayn would always go over to help out, as other youths in particular were more likely to listen to him rather than the mall security. The mall staff knew this as well and treated Zayn with more respect than the other youths. They let him get away with more as well. Through this relationship that he negotiated with the mall staff, Zayn felt a sense of ownership over the spaces, and secured a safe place there not only for him but for the whole group. While at the food court, the youths all played with the ‘rules’ but usually only

went as far as what they thought they could get away with. Zayn and the rest of the group knew the boundaries that could not be played with and aimed to stay within them as much as they could. For most of the participants, the intention was after all to remain in the space and to be in some way ‘a part of it’ (Fiske, 1990). Ultimately, getting kicked out would mean not being included in daily hanging out with their friends.

Other youths such as Amir, Mustafa and Hassan were also particularly good at this, but youths such as Abdi, Abdul and Yusuf – all Somali and black – were never able to establish the same kind of understanding with the guards, though they often tried. The guards did not ‘trust’ them, said Yusuf: “*They treats us different because they think Somali means gangs*” (December 2012).

On another afternoon, the youths were at their usual spot talking and sharing a plate of French fries. Four other boys were seated with Abdi and Amir. They were talking in Arabic to each other. They were laughing about something and Zayn again peeked his head outside the circle and looked at the two security guards who were watching them. He gave them a salute and said “*Hey yeah, everything is fine.*” After a while, they got louder and a few (white) people stared at them.

The youths continued talking and laughing while Amir was standing up, animatedly talking. The two security guards came over and told them to calm down.

(Jackson’s Square, December 2012)

Abdi: Why you not saying anything to those guys? [points to a group of mainly white youth seated a few tables away].

Guard: They aren’t making so much racket.

Abdi: Awww. Come on man. You're always buggin' us.

Guard2: Yeah well, we already banned your buddy. Your friend has already been banned from here.

Abdi: Fine, fine. We'll be quiet.

Knowing their precariousness, like Zayn did, Abdi tried to negotiate with the security guard. At first, he was on the offensive, pointing out the unfair treatment they were getting compared to the other group of youths. When the guard pointedly warned him that his friend had been banned from the mall, Abdi backed down, and agreed to be quiet, fearing he would get kicked out too. Evading 'capture' is one of the key 'foundations of resistance' (Fiske, 1990, p9) and thus, Abdi avoided his capture, being banned from the Mall and getting into further trouble so that he could continue to remain in the space. At this moment, he negotiated his identity and his actions, aware of how he was perceived by the guard. Abdi, as mentioned in Chapter Three, was Somali, had a Somali accent, was black and by this association was probably known as being Muslim. Abdi was aware of all of this and had learned "when it is useful to resist and when it is not" (Fiske, 1990).

"*You gotta play the game*", Abdi told me later. 'Playing the game', like Abdi did, was often a strategy – a way of getting by and negotiating around the 'system' that he and his other Somali friends used. All together they represented a racialised and gendered group often seen as nuisances, threatening, untrustworthy and troublesome (Alexander, 2000; Ali, 2014; Moghissi, 2009; Daulatzai, 2012). The tougher treatment that the Somali boys encountered from mall staff was, according to Abdi and Abdul, worse due to the alleged gang shooting that took place in a Toronto mall months earlier between rival Somali gangs, Sic Thugz and Halal (Toronto Star, June 9, 2012). "*They think we gonna do the same thing here, cos we all together it must*

be a gang”, said Abdul. *“Like all Somali know each other. I don’t know anybody in Toronto or that,”* added Abdi. In this environment and without having money to spend there, he too tried to establish a convivial relationship with the mall security which, for him, was sometimes pleasant, and other times menacing and threatening. Much like the youths in Back’s study, “These young men positioned themselves against the ways in which the places they lived were racially stigmatized” (Back, 2007, p58). Young Somalis were not only racially stigmatised in Ontario but, according to the guards I spoke to, Jackson’s Square was also racially stigmatised as a place where gang activity was practised (Guard 3, November 2012).

Abdi was aware of what the guards thought of Somalis and him, often calling him “Al-Shabaab”, associating him with the terrorist group or as Abdi said a “*gang person*” (Abdi, January 2013). With this in mind, as well as his own disposition as a friendly, happy guy, Abdi generally positioned himself to the mall guards as someone who wants to keep the peace. The intersections of his gender, race, ethnicity, age, class and his religious identity all put Abdi at a disadvantage with the mall staff. Understandably, if an incident occurred, he did often push the boundaries but then would give in much more quickly than Zayn did, who was not threatened with getting kicked out the way Abdi often was. Abdi, like the other Somali boys in the group, had an awareness that his place there was not as secure as Zayn’s, so he often did not push the boundaries at all. Despite this, he still felt a sense of belonging in the food court and loved spending time there. The difference was he had to work a lot harder to negotiate his place there.

Within this small pocket of home, these two tables in the food court, the Muslim boys had to actively and at times pre-emptively negotiate with the mall guards on a daily basis to remain in the space and to eat with their friends. Even with these constant negotiations, they still

enjoyed spending time there. Getting by, was as Abdul said, “*part of the fun*”. They often enjoyed their encounters with the mall security guards and would often play pranks on them. They used the space in a playful way that was uniquely their own, and they felt comfortable and safe there. For them, belonging in the food court was found through their company of friends, the tables that they marked, through their consistent presence there as their own, their convivial experiences with the mall staff and other patrons and less so with spending money. While the young people did not feel comfortable sitting at the tables without buying any food, they got by, buying the least amount possible. This invariably was also affected by the fact that Jackson’s Square was in the predominately working-class urban city of Hamilton – a very different place from Mapleview in the affluent suburb of Burlington. Even though it was minutes away from Mapleview and its luxury goods, most of the people who used Jackson’s Square, including adults, did not have a lot of money and the boys there had to ‘make do’ and negotiate their belonging in order to hang out with their friends.

Getting Around



In this section, I will concentrate on the young Muslim participants travelling from place to place in cars, trains and buses. The mode of transportation chosen is often telling in terms of their class positioning and, more importantly, its impact on how many people they interact with daily. This is something I have talked about in the previous chapter and will continue in the next.

As seen in the map above, southern Ontario is quite a large geographical space. It is the second largest province in Canada with a total area of 1,076,395 km², including land and water. My research was conducted with young people who resided in Southern Ontario (see map above),

which is a primary region of Ontario and the most densely populated and southernmost region in Canada, bordering on the United States. It covers between 14% and 15% of the province and is home to one-third of Canada's population and the most ethnically diverse region in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2010). To get around its cities, town and suburbs, a great deal of time is spent travelling. My participants, like other Ontarians, spent a lot of time in cars, buses, trains and bicycles to get from place to place.

Many conversations were had during our long drives together going wherever we were going. Living in Southern Ontario, long drives are common as things are often far away from each other. It was not uncommon for me to be in the car with participants for an hour at a time (often talking in the car once we got to the destination as well). These drives created an intimate space – a sort of a mini-living room on wheels where we had music, conversation and, quite often, food and drinks, which we often stopped to buy if the traffic was unusually horrible.

Some of the cities where I conducted my fieldwork such as Toronto and Hamilton had good public transportation networks, while the suburbs such as Oakville, Mississauga and Burlington did not have great transport links. Along with this, the winter months made travel even more difficult and at times, dangerous. In these places, cars were almost a necessity. If participants did not own a car, they often borrowed them from family when they needed to or got a ride from their friends. Sana, who did not have a car, often complained that she could not go out with friends because it was too difficult to get around Burlington without a car. She could not afford a car and her mother did not have the money to buy her one. She said that in her last year of high school, not having a car was ‘social disaster’ since she wasn’t as mobile as her other friends were and was unable go out as much. Another issue with her not having a car, which I will elaborate on later in this section, is that since most of her friends had cars, she

felt embarrassed that it made her look ‘poor’ in comparison to her friends. Her sense of belonging to her group of friends in this regard was compromised because she could not access this way of being a teenager at her school. Others went out after school in their cars and Sana often had to wait for the school bus to take her home.

There were many youths like Sana who relied on school buses, the city bus and public transportation on a daily basis. There were also just as many youths, primarily those who lived in the suburbs, who had their own cars. The mode of transport used by participants had implications for how much contact they had with ‘the public’ and the amount of privacy that they were able to have. Typically, those using public transportation had more encounters with strangers and authority figures as they spent more time around other people. Those who drove around in cars did not have as many run-ins with other people, had fewer negative experiences with the ‘public’ and therefore had more positive views about the places they lived in. This is just one example of how class, socio-economic status, and geography can impact the way young Muslims see the places they live, and their place within them. This is not to suggest that those who used cars did not have negative experiences; however, the frequency of those negative experiences as well as their nature were often very different and dealt with in different ways.

Public Transport

In Hamilton, there are no subway networks and many youths travel by bus. In fact, the NGen youth centre, where I conducted a great deal of my field work, is in the Hamilton bus station. A few of the youths had access to cars infrequently, or at the weekends. For those living in Toronto, regardless of class, race or gender, using public transportation is a necessity as it is

both convenient and a cheaper way to travel. Parking is extremely expensive in Toronto compared to the suburbs, including parking spaces at universities, high schools and colleges. Although most of my participants had a driver's licence, they rarely drove. I often travelled with them on the subway and on the bus in an effort to immerse myself in the ethnographic aspects of my fieldwork. This worked earlier on in the process and in Toronto where cars were not the primary mode of transport. However, once the participants started to realise that I had a car, they inevitably asked me if they could "*bum a ride*" (Sana, June 2011).

This was not always the case. Sheila and her three sisters lived in Burlington and relied on the city buses to get around. Only Sheila was old enough to have a driver's licence and at this point in the research, she was still learning. Their family had one car which her parents needed to get to and from work. The sisters travelled by bus, rode their bikes and walked everywhere. I usually offered to give them a ride home after we were together but they normally still took the bus. Once in a while, during the winter months, they would take me up on my offer. I asked Sheila about it once and she said that she had to teach her sisters how to get around by bus so they could become more independent. She felt that it was a lot of work for her parents to drive them around. Her sister, Aisha, she said "*is lazy*" and if it was left to her, she would get a ride everywhere. I told her that I was not her parent and she did not live far from me so it was not the same thing but she said that it was better not to be an imposition on people and to take favours that you can never pay back.

There were a few others who took buses in Burlington, most of whom were always asking me or their other friends for rides. Mona felt that it was unfair and not safe to take the bus. She often told her friends about strange people she saw on the bus and the way they looked at her and her hijab. One day, she told us that a few women on the bus told her that she didn't have

to wear hijab and that she had such a pretty face. She said that she just felt embarrassed and didn't say anything but later on she wished that she had said that nobody was making her wear it. *"They always think my dad or my brother is making me wear it"*, she said. *"But actually my dad didn't really think it was a good idea because you know... there's days, it is weird. People don't like to see it (hijab)"*.

Many of the boys in Burlington also felt that the buses were not safe. Abdul-Basith, aged 18, lived a few streets away from Sheila but was not allowed to take the bus and relied on his parents and siblings for rides. His parents did not think that the buses were safe and believed that there were bad people on the bus. One day they were all talking about this while we were at the food court in the mall, and Sheila and her friend Mariam, who also relied on the bus, started laughing at Abdul-Basith. Yahya came to his defence and said that he was not allowed to either because he heard they sell drugs on buses and they stink of weed. This made Sheila and Mariam laugh harder and they poked fun at the two boys even more. I started to laugh as well (although I tried not to), because the thought of buses in middle-class Burlington being places where weed was regularly sold seemed ridiculous to me. Sana agreed and told the boys that they were *"fucking mama's boys"*, and that they were spoiled. She told them that she took the bus all the time and she never saw anybody with drugs. They insisted it was in the newspaper (which I could not find when I looked into it) and that everyone knew this. After the boys left, Sana told me that Abdul-Basith was okay, but Yahya was stuck up and sheltered. She said that he was too sheltered by his parents who thought he was too precious to be around *"regular people"*. She also thought that he would probably get lost because he didn't know how to do anything for himself, unlike her, who took care of herself, her siblings and her mother. *"I'm not being mean"*, she said, *"but all you guys that were born here (in Canada), you have no idea what the world is like"*.

Buses are essentially public spaces, though some of the youths found pockets of privacy on buses when they were with friends. Those who were alone could not carve out that type of space and were left more exposed. Sometimes this was a good thing, and there were many stories of nice things that happened on the bus and great conversations that were had with strangers.

Some of the participants had also experienced very personal moments on the bus. The most striking example was Gina, who was on the way home from high school when her bus was stopped by the police. They were there to take her into their custody for protection after her mother had been murdered by Gina's stepfather while she was at school. They gave her the news, literally, while she was sitting on the bus surrounded by a few friends and a bus full of strangers. Another youth, Saqib, said that his girlfriend broke up with him on the bus. She told mutual friends that she had planned to do it on the bus so there wouldn't be a scene. On the other hand, Bilqees said that she fell in love on the bus when she saw her boyfriend on it for the first time.

Others like Mumtaz used the bus to spend quality time with their friends. The group of six or seven boys would occupy the back section on the bus and if anybody came there, they would be very loud until the person became uncomfortable and moved. Sometimes the bus driver reprimanded them but most of the time they were able to enjoy 'their space' on the bus. Within this very public space, they tried to carve out some sense of private space as they huddled over their phones looking at YouTube clips and social network sites together, with the sound playing through the speakers for all to hear. For them, this was not only the way to get somewhere, but a place to hang out in and of itself. Mumtaz said that he would look forward to it, and if

something funny happened during his day, he would wait to tell his friends on the bus when they were all together for “*maximum laughs*”. In some ways, their presence was a claim to this very public space, a performance that they belonged there, that they felt comfortable there, and that they found a way to make a space that was not necessarily meant for them, their own.

Then there was Yusuf and his friend, who got in a fight on the bus when “*two white boys*” made fun of their accents. Hiba also had her scarf pulled off by a stranger. Many of the youths talked about people staring at them when they got on the bus – stares which made them feel awkward and on edge. These types of encounters were not uncommon, especially in Hamilton. Most of the youths there said that people would say racist and Islamophobic things to them on the bus on a regular basis. “*You get used to it*”, said Amir. “*It’s just [a] normal thing, you get on the bus, you look to see who isn’t looking at you funny and you go sit beside them.*” These negotiations of space were everyday occurrences, decided and acted upon quickly.

This is not to say that there were no positive convivial acts on public transport. Many made friends on buses with other people, as well as with bus drivers. Mohammed was often dropped off in front of his house by his favourite bus driver when it was cold outside. I also saw my participants on multiple occasions give up their seats for others with smiles and pleasantries exchanged. Mustafa gave up his seat to a middle-aged woman with a hijab once when I was with him and told me “*It’s like me sitting down and someone like my mom has to stand*”. Convivial acts were frequent, however, they noticeably occurred more with elderly people, children, and predominantly people of colour and less so towards other youths and white men.

Cars

In *Darker than Blue* (2010), Paul Gilroy explores the political and economic history of the automobile in America. In it, he talks about ‘automotivity’ and the idea of the freedom as well as constraints that cars have brought to the lives of African Americans. This idea of inclusion as well as exclusion is also one that Muslim youths also experience in their everyday lives as they grapple with the relationship between money, freedom and belonging. The freedom of having a car is something that those without access to cars aspire to have.

Sheila, Amir and Saima all talked about the fact that they had part-time jobs to save up for a car. They felt it would make life easier, not only for them but for their friends and family as well. Sana was not usually allowed to be out late if she was taking public transportation. Her mother did not think it was safe. Along with that, she said that her mother did all the grocery shopping and had to drive her brother to karate; with a car, Sana could help her mom out as well as gain some independence for herself. This is an example of how Sana’s role in her house at times was one of an adult with responsibilities since her father was not around, as well as a teenager who wanted to go out and do things with her friends at night. Gilroy’s notion of freedom is relevant here, because having one’s own car represents more than just a better way to travel – it opens up the possibility of going to different places and having some agency over where one goes.

A few months into my fieldwork, Sana did get a car of her own. She often talked about how she could now go wherever she wanted to, even clubs, which her mother would not approve of. Her mother would not find out because she would not know where she was since she was not dropping her off or picking her up. The combination of a car and a cellphone together enabled Sana to go where she pleases while being able to speak to her mom on the phone, so

her mother knew she was safe and at the same time, she could lie about where she was (or evade telling her).

In addition, before Sana had a car, she would tell me about the racist things that happened to her on the bus and on the train. After she got a car, there were significantly fewer stories. I asked her about it. Sana said that having a car gave her some safety and made her less accessible to other people – she therefore experienced less racism. She did not say, however, that she did not think racism was a problem for her. There were other youths who had cars who also felt that they did not experience very much racism and/or Islamophobia. A few of them who were driven around by their parents before they had cars said that they had rarely experienced racism, and that they did not think racism or Islamophobia was a problem where they live. These youths were, in many ways, literally and figuratively, segregated from other people while they were in cars. Their friends who lived in the same city believed that racism and Islamophobia were a major problem where they lived. Those who had cars tended to be middle or upper class; they not only experienced less racism but also perceived racism in general to be less prevalent than their public transport-taking peers. At times, this even led to heated arguments between friends where those who did not have money, or therefore a car, felt that their experiences with racism and Islamophobia were being denied by middle-class car owners. The way they saw the cities they lived in, in terms of safety, the amount of freedom they had in them, and constraints and exclusions were markedly different.

The Convenience of Cars

I spent a lot of time in cars with my participants even though I tried to also travel with the youths who were using public transportation. However, when the participants realised I had a

car, they almost always wanted to travel by car. I spent a lot of time driving during my fieldwork, sometime alone and other times with my participants, particularly in the suburbs of Burlington, Oakville and Mississauga. In these suburbs, access to cars was almost a necessity as public transportation was not well developed, nor was it convenient. There were many places and times where the only viable option was to drive or get a ride from someone. In Hamilton, although public transportation was available, it was not convenient or economical to travel outside of the city to neighbouring cities or to downtown Toronto. Sometimes this placed the youths in precarious situations as they decided to accept rides from friends even when they were aware of potential problems.

Sweet Sixteen

In *Darker than Blue*, Paul Gilroy discusses how car ownership signalled a form of arrival for African-Americans in middle-class America. There are elements of this argument that ring true for many of my participants. There were young people like Aisha who dreamed of the day when they would be able to drive their own car into their high school parking lot. For the more affluent and middle-class youth, not just any car would do. It had to be a nice car, and one that they could ‘show off’.

On her 16th birthday, I met Michelle and her friends at the cinema as it was their weekly ritual to go on ‘cheap Tuesdays’. As we waited outside for her, we saw her drive into the parking lot in what looked to be a brand new green Range Rover SUV. All of her friends screamed excitedly and ran up to her in disbelief that this was her car. Surprisingly, Michelle was livid. Her eyes were red and puffy. It looked like she had been crying. It turned out that she was furious with her parents because she had specifically asked for a white Range Rover, not green, because a friend at school had a green one. She said her parents were “fucking stupid” and now

she would look silly at school, as if she was copying her friend, Jen. The others (boys and girls) tried to console her saying that it sucked but it was still an amazing car that they would 'die for' if they could get one. She seemed unconvinced at the time but after the movie, she took some of us for a ride in the new car. She was really enjoying driving it and seeing all the added things her parents got in the car (upgraded sound system, heated leather seats, etc.) lightened her mood. "*I'm such a fucking bitch*", she told us, laughing and commenting on what a great gift the car was. She then called her parents on speakerphone and told them that she didn't know what was wrong with her when they gave it to her and that were "*so dope*" for getting her heated seats.

Michelle's upper-class upbringing, the school she went to, the area she lived in, as well as her friendship group, all made not only getting a car important but also the type of car, the colour and the specifics crucially important.

The Fasting and the Furious

It was the month of Ramadan. My phone rang in the middle of the night. I checked the time and it was almost 3 am. I picked it up and it was Abdul on the other end. He apologised for waking me up and said he didn't know who else to call. I asked him if everything was ok and he said no, it wasn't. He was in jail and being held there. His friend had been drinking and driving and Abdul was one of the passengers in the car. They had been coming back from a club out of town. Apparently he was driving very fast, and a police car started to follow them. Eventually, the police car put its lights and sirens on to signal them to pull over but his friend was scared, he kept driving and tried to lose the police car. According to Abdul, he told his friend to pull over but he didn't listen. He said his friend was a refugee from Iraq and had said

that if they caught him, they would send them back. This thought scared Abdul. He was a few months away from ‘getting his papers’ (citizenship).

Eventually, his friend pulled over and all four people in the car were taken into police custody. Abdul had not yet been charged with anything, but the police had said that he could be charged for being an accessory and not stopping the driver. He had not been drinking at all as he did not drink, but when he told the police they said that was more proof that he was of sound body and mind to know that his friend shouldn’t have been drinking. Abdul had called me because he wanted me to come to the police station and talk to the police. Before I got off the phone, I asked him why he had got in the car when he knew his friend had been drinking. He said he didn’t think his friend was over the limit and if he didn’t get a ride with him, he would have had no way to get back home.

When I arrived at the station, I was taken to a room where Abdul was seated with two police officers. I introduced myself as someone who knew Abdul from the youth club. On the way to the station, I had spoken to a friend who was a lawyer, who had given me advice on what to say. I followed this advice and answered their questions accordingly. I made it clear that Abdul was a good, hardworking kid, that he didn’t drink and that he didn’t really have an awareness of when a person is too drunk to drive. “*He seemed fine to me, he was ok*”, Abdul chimed in. The officer informed me that the fact that Abdul was in a car that was trying to outrun the police could land him in jail for quite some time if he was not “deported (to Somalia) immediately”. The conversation went on like this for a while.

Eventually, I asked the officer if we needed a lawyer present as it seemed to me that it might be necessary at this point. He replied that Abdul had not been charged with anything, so why

would he need a lawyer? Abdul agreed and said that he didn't need a lawyer and that it was OK. I then insisted that it might be a good idea because I felt that it would be the best thing for Abdul at this point. I told the officer that I was going to call a lawyer and ask him to come to the station. The officer then made a joke and asked if I had a lawyer on speed dial? I laughed back, mostly out of nervousness and not entirely sure what he was trying to say by this. As I felt the mood had lightened a little, I reiterated that Abdul didn't really know what was going on, that he had tried to stop his friend and that I'd known him for a year and he was a hard worker and never got into trouble.

The officer seemed to be listening and asked me to speak to him outside. He said that it could go both ways and how was he to know that Abdul would stay out of trouble? I assured him that from what I knew about Abdul, he tried his best to stay out of trouble. I said that I grew up nearby and I knew very well how to tell if someone was too drunk to drive but Abdul just did not have that experience and that I was sure he would not make the same mistake again.

Eventually (after six hours), they let Abdul go. He got into my car and we sat there for a few minutes. He leaned over and burrowed his face in his hands and mumbled sorry and could I please drop him off at school because he could still catch his afternoon class. I took him through the Tim Horton's drive-through first to get some coffee and food for both of us, as we were both stunned, tired and, truth be told, worried. I was also a little angry and I think Abdul that sensed that, because as we were waiting for our order, he talked in more detail about what happened.

He said he had a feeling his friend was too drunk to drive but he wasn't sure. He thought that maybe it was better for him to go in the car with him so that he could help him "*drive safely*".

I tried not to be angry, although I am not sure I was successful. I reminded him that he could have died and that I was surprised the police let him go. He said he wasn't surprised because I (Nabila) know how to talk to these people in their language, and that when he said the same thing, they didn't listen but when I said it they listened. He said he thought he might need a lawyer but didn't want to say because they might get pissed off and then might really think he was guilty. He said "*you know how to talk girl, you know how to talk*". He tried to joke around but I could tell that he was still quite shaken up. He then told me he was cutting all those people off. He was angry now, telling me "*this is what happens when you hang around refugees*" because they think this is Somalia and they could do whatever they want. I did not respond to that and we both stayed quiet for the remaining few minutes of the drive.

Later he sent me a text message and said "*Yo, I know it's not supposed to be good or anything but that car chase was sick! You shudda seen it. It was just like Paul Walker!*" (The actor from the film *The Fast and the Furious*). Sadly, Paul Walker died in a car accident a few years after Abdul's incident. The text that Abdul sent me reminded me of his age. He was 21 years old at the time and, in many ways, he seemed younger than that as he was new to the country and just beginning to get his bearings. Nevertheless, although he was aware of the seriousness of the situation for him, after things were cleared up and he was free to go, it did seem like he thought there was something cool about what had happened. He only spoke about it once more with me and at that time, he happily reminded me about how "*he got away with it*". His friend that was driving the car did not come away from the incident very well. He served time in jail and was deported immediately after he was released. He was one of two youths I met at the youth club who were deported during my fieldwork – both from sub-Saharan African countries from which they had migrated with their families. Both young men were deported to Africa while

their families remained in Canada. Although Abdul later made light of the situation, there was no doubt that at the police station he was in danger of facing the same fate as his friend.

At that time, it seemed to me that Abdul made a stupid and careless mistake getting into that car. Truthfully, I had been in the same situation when I was in high school except that my friend who was driving did not get followed by the police as he was a white man in a nice car. I always wondered why the police were following Abdul's friend's car in the first place. From what I heard from Abdul and the other passenger in the car, he was driving normally and within the speed limit before 'the chase'. Abdul also told me he didn't realise what he was getting into because his friend seemed fine and under the limit, that he didn't think it through and he "*just needed a ride*".

As they were coming back from a club outside of town, he did not have a lot of options at that time of night. The trains were not running at that time and the only options he had was get in the car with his friends or pay almost a hundred dollars by taxi (my estimation of how much the journey would have cost). He could have shared a taxi with his other friend, but he said he would have looked "*like a pussy*". With this, both his masculinity and his solidarity with his group of friends were both called into question and to preserve them both, he went along with it. I would also argue that Abdul, perhaps due to his age, felt like many teenaged boys do in this situation – invincible and like nothing could happen to them. But I do not even think that was the case with Abdul. From my understanding of the situation, it looked like he knew something was not right, but he didn't think his friend was really drunk so he got in the car. The truth is, nobody – not even the police – ever really found out if his friend was over the limit. By the time they tested him, he was showing that he was under the limit. In the end, he served time because he tried to outrun the police and not for drunk driving. He tried to outrun

the police because he was afraid that if they saw that he was drinking, they would put him in jail and then he might get deported. He could have very well been under the limit but was too scared of the police so he did something extremely stupid and tried to 'lose' them.

Neither Abdul nor his friends seemed to truly understand the law about drinking limits or the way that the system worked. Abdul said that in Somalia, people didn't trust the police as they were all corrupt and people ran from them all the time. At the same time, everyone in the car was a refugee, and a run-in with the police could compromise their status in the county. During the incident, the main thing that they were all worried about was getting deported. I told Abdul later that I didn't think he could have gone to jail for his role in the incident, since his friend had said that Abdul told him to stop the car. He didn't agree with me. He still believed that without help (from myself and the lawyer), he would have had the same fate. *"You don't understand,"* he told me again and again. *"You never gonna know what it's like to be a refugee. We are like nobodies here. We don't have what you call, that thing? We don't have that thing of human rights."* For Abdul and his friends, their status, their race as young black African men, their lack of funds and their naivety about 'how things work' had turned what was to be a fun summer night into the last night that the three friends would hang out together.

Class and Gender

There was clearly a deep contrast between Michelle and Abdul's relationship to cars. For Abdul, it was more about the necessity of getting from point A to B. But both youths were also affected by peer pressure and concerned with what their friends thought of them. Both also felt the social necessity of having a car. In Michelle's case, having the Range Rover in the colour that she wanted was absolutely crucial to her sense of belonging in her school and with her friends. For Abdul, when he went along with his friends, it put him in a very precarious

situation. These examples, while vastly different, both highlight the importance and value that cars held for the young Muslims in my research. Michelle's and Abdul's stories also show us how cars are valued according to the realities of people's everyday lives and the role that gender, class, race and their backgrounds and legal status play in their relationships towards cars and automotivity.

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has attempted to explore the important role that local spaces play in Muslim youths' sense of belonging and the way they negotiate social positions and locations (Yuval-Davis, 2011) within routine interactions in their everyday lives. This chapter concentrated mainly on malls, buses and cars as spaces where Muslim youths hang out and socialise. It also involved looking at how racialised and Muslim youths are positioned in both the urban, working class city of Hamilton and the suburban city of Burlington, and the spaces they hang out in with their friends. The ways in which these spaces are used are often performed according to their socio-economic positioning, racial and ethnic identities, the buffers and 'tactics' that they employ, and gender as well as what they wish to do in their free time.

In the first part, I discussed the sense that Muslim youths have of belonging to their local spaces, which they see as more relevant to their lives than national narratives. As Canadian discourse moves from the old formations of multi-culturalism towards this new conjuncture and new configurations (Hall, 1979) focusing on the 'Muslim question' (Kazemipur, 2014) and the role of Muslims and Islam in Canada, the young Muslims' presence and interactions in public spaces plays an important role in understanding the links between national narratives, local identities and everyday life. However, Muslim youths often do not consider these larger debates as key in their lives although they are living under scrutiny and certain constraints. The

youths' personal histories and backgrounds were also key in the way that they saw themselves and how they performed belonging within local spaces, and at the same time, were not always significant features in their day-to-day lives.

In the second part of the chapter, I discussed the relationship between notions of freedom, class, consumerism and belonging and the ways in which Muslim youths have reconfigured their identities, both 'new' and 'old', alongside the ambiguous yet present 'vertical mosaic' (Porter, 2015) of class in Canada, where class positioning is complicated by having money, and not having it, as well as by race, religion and 'exceptional qualities', which at times act as buffers and temper exclusions temporarily. In this section, I also discussed that consumerism plays a key role in the Muslim youths' performances of belonging.

In the third part of the chapter, I focused on the ways in which Muslim youths use shopping malls to hang out as well as how they are surveilled in specific ways according to their gender, class and race. Muslim girls used malls to hang out with their friends, performing belonging through buying items and through their regular and repeated presence in the mall. I have also highlighted how some of the youths felt safe and others excluded from certain spaces of the mall, while others excluded themselves from stores in the mall which were racialised and classed. Many used the mall to shop in while hanging out with their friends and expressing their identities through sartorial style, performing belonging through the act of buying while others who were unable partake in shopping 'made do' (de Certeau, 2004) using tactics, and others, due to their social locations (Yuval-Davis, 2011), were excluded. I also discussed the way that Muslim boys at Jackson's Square faced surveillance differently than the girls at Mapleview did. They were consistently and regularly surveilled by the mall security in the food court. Some, through convivial acts, were able to negotiate the space and find a sense of

belonging. Others, due to their racial and religious identities as black Muslim boys, were not as successful in negotiating these relationships, due in part to the way they were perceived and positioned within wider discourses of criminality, radicalisation and gang activity.

In the last section, I discussed the necessity of travel by public transport and cars for Muslim youths living in Southern Ontario. Those who used public transportation tended to have more interactions with ‘the public’. Alternatively, those using public transport were more exposed to the ‘outside world’ as they encountered and shared more convivial experiences with ‘the public, and had both positive and negative experiences. They encountered more racism compared to those in cars. Those with cars had more agency about where they went and the freedom to travel safely, and the car provided some shelter from racist and Islamophobic encounters. Driving in cars rather than using public transportation also affected their understanding of racism in the cities and towns where they lived.

The youths experienced similar things as they moved through their local spaces. However, the ways that they experienced them and the risks involved varied significantly. Intersections of race, class, gender, age and religious identity became relevant in different ways for the youths with varied backgrounds. While many of the youths did the same things as each other and their non-Muslim peers, the way they did them and the challenges they faced varied significantly, most notably complicated by issues of class, spending power and their status as either immigrants, refugees or heritage Muslims.

CHAPTER FIVE: “MORE THAN A FEELING”

The Role of Spirituality in Everyday Life

Me: *So what does it mean to you then? To be Muslim?*

Saqib: *I guess in the end, it's what I feel in my heart.*

Saqib then talks about a song that he loves about The Prophet Muhammad, and the city he lived in called Medina. He recites the song in Urdu:

Qismat mein meri chain se jeena likh de

Doobe naa kabhi mera safeena likh de

Jannat bhi gawaarah hai magar mere liye

Ay kaatib-e-taqdeer Medina likh de

Tajdar-e haram

Translation:

Let a life of peace and contentment be my fate

May my ship never sink even in troubled waters

Let this be my fate

It's not that heaven would not be acceptable to me, but

O Writer of Destinies, let Medina be my fate

O king of the holy sanctuary

“Tajdar-e-haram”,¹⁴ written and performed by the Sabri Brothers, 1990.

¹⁴ The song, a *Qawalli* by the Sabri Brothers, can be found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6Y1P0S6DhY>. It has also been covered quite recently by Atif Aslam and Coke Studios which has brought a renewed interest and audience for the song. This version can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a18py61_F_w.

Me: *That's so beautiful, Saqib! I mean - you have it memorised and I'm also never speaking Urdu in front of you. [laughter] Does it mean something to you? Or is it just a song?*

Saqib: *Um hmm. It does. It's a song mama loves. I just have heard it so much I just know it now. But yeah, I do think about it, sing it too, when I'm going through stuff... OK. It's like this. Medina is a place right? But the song isn't about the place. It's about what that place represents. It's like we long to reach that sort of place, but not necessarily actually Medina. Just long to be in a place of love and that is comfort. Because it's near the Prophet and it's near to God. I always thought of it like a state in your heart that you try to get to.*

Me: *Whoa. That's deep. Do you strive for that? To reach that place of comfort?*

Saqib: *I'm a romantic at heart. [laughter] It's about the longing for something real. It's all about the longing in your heart. Like no matter what bad things I do I can always come back. To me this is the struggle to be Muslim. I can't be perfect, but I have to try to be a better Muslim, and like a better like just human you know? Deep down inside.*

Me: *Deep down inside?*

Saqib: *Yes. Well - and God knows. That is where I struggle with it (Islam). If you act perfect but your heart is rotten, it doesn't mean a thing. It's just for show. For me, I just try to be better inside but that's so hard. So so hard. But that's the only way I could ever be my true self and what I'm here for.*

Me: *So you struggle to be better in your heart.*

Saqib: *I don't know. I mean it's not ever easy. But it also feels right. You're finally able to be your true self and you don't have to hide anything. It's a total feeling of goodness like everything is the way it should be – even if things are shit. Like this is the right thing you are doing. It feels, I don't know – almost safe? Like you're home. Like finally*

coming home. Like I was somewhere else and somebody else and then – I’m coming back to who I should be. And you just feel it. You feel like you’re home.

(Saqib, age 20. September 2013)

Near the end of my fieldwork, I conducted interviews with 42 of my participants, primarily the youths whom I had gotten to know better during participant observation. One of the questions that I asked was “What does being Muslim mean to you?” The exchange above is a conversation I had with Saqib, aged 20, about this question. Although the conversation could seem to an outsider as a more general one about spirituality or being a good person, Saqib sees this as the very essence of his Muslimness.

When pared down to its essential components, what Saqib talks about is having good intentions and trying to be his better ‘self’ – two things that are part of the traditional and everyday understanding of Islam to Muslims (Keller, 1994). This is an example of the more spiritual element of being Muslim where he was concerned with the state of his heart and “*being a better person inside*” – a value associated with Islam that is not always visible through performance or praxis.

Saqib, aged 20, was a *hafiz*, which is the title given to someone who has memorised the Quran in Arabic. He became a *hafiz* when he was 14. He was well respected within his local Muslim circles from a young age. He often led men and women who were much older than him in prayer, especially during the month of Ramadan. Saqib did not speak or understand Arabic, other than a few commonly used words and, according to him, he had memorised the Quran but did not understand its teachings. Although he was also engaging in the performative aspects of being Muslim, in terms of praying and having memorised the Quran, he felt like there was

something missing on the “*inside*” which was key to the way that he saw himself as a person. In this case, the way he thought about spirituality was influenced by a well-known Muslim song with popular music acting as a point of access in understanding what spirituality meant to him rather than a religious text or scripture.

As will be discussed in this chapter, this does not suggest that religion or even spirituality is always central to Muslim youth, and the ‘essence’ of who they are. But rather, that Muslim youths often have different points of access to their Muslimness: “moments of suture” (Hall, 1996) that articulate their religious and spiritual values, which together with the intersections of their experiences, backgrounds and subject positions can inform the ongoing processes of identity construction. Many do not have the access or inclination to learn from Islamic texts or teachers, so they learn from their friends, popular culture, music, social networks, YouTube, and through ideas that they have constructed as they go through everyday activities, family life, normal encounters and experiences. While other people’s perceptions of them, from their family to larger narratives around Muslims, may imbue their religious and spiritual identities, they can also be ambivalent about them when it comes to spiritual matters. It is in these matters where Muslim youths often articulate the idea and the feeling that it is not only the outside but the inside too that counts.

Saqib’s story is an example of one of the many ways in which my participants engaged with matters of spirituality – ways that informed their identities as well as highlighting the importance of looking beyond praxis and performance “to understand religious practice in terms of larger goals to which it is teleologically oriented” (Mahmood, 2011, p56). Not all of the participants were necessarily engaged in aspects of religious praxis the way that Saqib was, but they still articulated an awareness of spiritual values and beliefs which on a physical,

internal level was key to understanding what being and becoming Muslim meant to them. This chapter discusses these themes, which can help us to understand the ways in which young Muslims see spiritual values as, while not autonomous, a way of giving them some sense of belonging and agency in living their lives.

This impacts the way that these young people aspire to their goals, according to their outlooks, and within the constraints and exclusions of how they are socially located (Yuval-Davis, 2011) in everyday life and within the broader discourses around Muslim peoples. This chapter aims to broaden not only our understanding of Muslimness, and what it means to Muslim youths, but also to explore the ways in which living with a difference can be negotiated and informed by the Muslim youths' spiritual values and ideals.

The previous chapters talked about the nature of being a young Muslim and everyday life for Muslim youths in Canada and as they move through their local spaces and communities. This chapter turns inward to the spiritual aspect of being Muslim as an attempt to look at these questions through the lens of Muslim youths, spotlighting how they themselves articulate their Muslimness and the idea of what being Muslim means to them.

For some, connecting to spiritual ideals provided agency in a world where they were marginalised and subordinate. It gave them something 'higher' – as Hiba said, *“we may have it hard here but in God’s eyes if we are doing the right and being good people, you know what I mean, like good things even when it sucks. The point is this thing this life isn’t everything and it’s a test so we got to be, like, good people”* (Hiba, age 19, August 2012).

Furthermore, this chapter will consider the role of feelings of spirituality, spiritual identities and how ethics played into my participants' lives and in the way that they saw their Muslim identities. These connections tell us about how Muslimness can animate other identities and aspects of everyday life, and is often used as a "survival strategy" (Hall et al., 1978, pp327-397) and as a moral base to engage with. This chapter will also consider the role, if any, that these spiritual matters played in the often fraught yet banal realities of everyday life and feelings of belonging and home. These feelings and connections to spirituality were, like their other identities, also fluid, moving and subjective. My argument in this thesis, and specifically in this chapter, is that if we are to look at racial identities as being complex and messy, then we also have to look at religious, Muslim identities too as complicated, multiple ones that overlap with other identities and are, above all, personal.

The spiritual beliefs, nature and motivations of young Muslims are often ignored and under-researched. In its place, discussions tend to concentrate on radicalism, integration, and ritual aspects of Islam such as prayer, hijab, and fasting. Not all young Muslims practise Islam the same way or link their identities to these rituals and forms of religious practices. It is important to explore the more internal aspects of their spiritual beliefs and motivation. In this chapter, through my research, four themes emerged.

They are:

- Matters of the heart
- A connection to the Divine
- Duty to parents community
- Fate and finding home.

Positioning Spiritualities

Drawing on Hall's conception, if we are to understand the present within this specific conjecture, given the salience and prominence of issues around Muslims and Islam in the world today, it is important that spiritual Muslim identities are discussed in their context within the realities of everyday life. Hall talks about the experience of identity as well as the salience of identity and how it "feels" (Hall, 1996). This is something that my participants often talked about when articulating what being Muslim meant to them. These feelings also contributed to a spiritual, psychic lens through which young Muslims could see the worlds they move through, similar to the way that Brah describes diaspora as "an interpretive frame" (Brah, 1996). Moreover, Muslim identities describe both the psychic and the social (ibid.) and crucially, "the interplay between what is said and what is not said" (Hall, 2012, p33). There were some things, such as spiritual matters and beliefs, that the youths did not speak about in their everyday lives but did, in fact, feel. Here we can see a multiplicity of lenses, incorporating not only the psychic and the social but multitudes of diasporic experiences that Muslim identities intersect with along with their 'home-grown' Canadian identities, each of which intersect with their different genders, ethnicities, classes and ages.

To bring out the varied iterations of religious expression and belief that move beyond the normative understandings of Muslimness, there needs to be a discussion on the relationship between the ways that young people feel about Islam and how they engage with their own religious identities, and the process of religious self-making (Khabeer, 2016). In doing so, some Muslim youths stay within the boundaries of what is seen as normative Islamic practices (belief in God and the Prophet Muhammad, prayer, fasting etc.). At other times, they transgress, interpret, and negotiate theological concepts and Islamic beliefs in a way that makes sense to them, producing new ways of 'living' Islam according to their own needs, realities, and

outlooks. This approach gives special consideration to the more spiritual aspects of the youths' Islamic beliefs and the way they think about them, feel about them and the role that spirituality plays in the construction and negotiation of their identities, religious and otherwise. While my role as a researcher is not to analyse their actions and experiences in any way other than what can be observed and gleaned from interviews, it is also necessary to consider the feelings and beliefs that are held which sometimes have performative implications and at other times do not.

Some participants were not 'practising', but had certain moral codes and values loosely associated with Islam that they considered to be part of their religious identity. These ideas of the sacred and spiritual are not ones that are necessarily performed in a normative or even recognised form, especially when it comes to Islam. Islam is a religion that in Western societies is still often seen as having strange and otherworldly traditions (Said, 1994). In contrast, in Muslim-majority countries such as Jordan, for example, being Muslim is ordinary and Islamic ideals, spirituality and practices are the norm (Al-Khatahtbeh, 2017), although their meanings and performances are also contested. In Canada, however, there is a general lack of understanding of Islam and, at times, Islamophobic and/or racialised discourse around basic and normative Islamic practices such as prayer, fasting, halal meat, and hijab. As such, more nuanced understandings of Muslim spiritual ideals that are, so to speak, 'under the surface' are essential, especially because they are rarely part of the conversation around Muslims and Islam in popular, everyday discourse.

There is a tendency in discussions of the post-secular (Taylor, 2007), and with the conjectural turn towards Muslims in discussions of multi-culturalism in research and academia, not to engage with the spiritual aspects of Islam and how they relate to Muslims in their lives.

Although they are crucial to consider when researching ‘Muslim lives’, they also cause a degree of discomfort in secular, liberal-democratic Western circles. This discomfort perhaps arises from the view that Islam and secularism cannot coexist, which, as discussed in the introductory chapter, is not the case. This can be seen in the way that Islam and secularism have for some time lived alongside each other and how secularism often affords Muslim people the right to practise Islam in a way that they choose to rather than the one that is prescribed by the state. Examples of these can be found in the early histories of Pakistan (Devji, 2013), Turkey and Egypt (De Bellaigue, 2017) as well as modern-day Indonesia (Intan, 2006).

There are many reasons for these misinterpretations, which I have discussed in the previous chapters. One major issue with the way that Muslimness has been perceived is the de-contextualised interpretation of Quranic texts, which is commonplace in academia and the media (Asad, 2003). I have also noticed this in the interactions that my participants encounter every day in their schools, youth clubs and workplaces. Quotations from the Quran are often taken out of context and translations that are not accepted in Muslim circles are often used to justify claims about Islam (Asad, 2003).

One of my participants, Hanna (aged 17), who was vocal in her school on feminist issues, illustrates this problem. She often complained about one of her teachers who would talk about the poor treatment of Muslim women in Middle Eastern countries in her world history class as an argument for the model of a Western, secular democratic nation-state that promotes the separation of church and state (Hanna, June 2012). As Asad argues, accusations that the Quran opposes secularism in practice is false (Asad, 2003, p10) as are those notions that all ‘Muslim countries’ treat women badly and that this is a part of the Quran and Islamic teachings. It is not.

However, the argument that all Muslim countries only value sacred law and customs is routinely used in the discussion around Muslims and the state and reinforces a pre-existing notion that Muslims do not fit into a multi-cultural state. Work like Asad's (2003) provides historical, theological, and anthropological arguments against the notion that Islam and secularism cannot co-exist, and therefore Muslims in 'secular' countries cannot properly integrate into society. However, in this discussion of the sacred and the spiritual, the role of spirituality and the 'positive ethics' of Muslims in secular countries is not discussed in the same way that Taylor does for the Christian population as having the potential to be of benefit to the state and multi-culturalism.

Spiritual Identities

There is a lack of theory to help us understand my participants' negotiations of spirituality rooted in faith without talking about theology and praxis. What is being referred to here is not only the idea of spirituality as a process but also as a resource on which Muslim youths can draw, at times, in their everyday lives. This research develops the concept of 'spiritual identity', which can be seen as being rooted in both faith, background and, in this case, whatever the young people believe about Islam and its moral teachings. In psychology, this type of connection has been described as '*holding the space*' – ideas that are not necessarily concerned with the doctrine, but are, rather loosely, rooted in them (Sells, 2003). The argument presented here is that understanding these spiritual matters can be important in expanding the ways in which we view Muslim youths and how they interact with others and how they see themselves and produce unique, personal spiritual identities that can infuse their everyday lives and are 'felt', imagined and mediated.

This research also makes the distinction here between spiritual identity and religious identity, because they do not mean the same thing. At times, these identities overlap, and at other times, they do not. Although the young Muslims' spiritual beliefs may stem from or be influenced by religious doctrine, they may not consciously or unconsciously see it in the same way as it is defined in religious doctrine. Thus, the way that they perform their spiritual identities may differ according to their experiences and circumstances and also shift according to time and place. There are also times where notions of virtues and beliefs, such as 'community', for example, overlap within groups of Muslim youths, producing collective beliefs, albeit collective beliefs that are temporary and focused on a specific shared goal (such as the formation of the NGen Youth Club).

These moments of spiritual feelings can be looked at in the way that Stuart Hall sees identities as temporary attachments (Hall, 1995), unfixed and as "moments of suture" (Hall, 1996, p19). While this chapter draws on Hall's work, seeing identities as always being in process, when looking at spiritual identity these concepts can be further developed to extend to the understanding of religious identities. In this case, it is useful to consider the notions of spiritual ideas and their connections to Muslimness. While spiritual identities can also be seen as being impossible to fix and always in motion, the young Muslims in this research articulated their different iterations and views about spirituality, which they performed, and which, at times, informed the way that they saw their everyday lives. These various iterations and attachments of spirituality also shifted, were sometimes absent or ambivalent, and at other times were relevant and drawn from.

To develop this concept further, the work of Saba Mahmood on the politics of piety and “positive ethics” is important (Mahmood, 2011). Although Hall and Mahmood have disagreed strongly on the issue of “closed versions of culture” (Hall, 1996; Mahmood, 1996) regarding Islamic fundamentalism, in exploring the possibility of a more ‘open’ version of Muslim culture and identities, the work of both are useful. This is not a discussion of fundamentalism or radicalism, or by any means ‘closed’ cultures, but rather is one that seeks to break into the essentialism of Muslimness. To understand how Muslim youths live with differences in their everyday lives, ‘opening up’ the diverse roles that spiritual identities play in Muslim youths’ lives is crucial. Mahmood’s work, while useful in doing this, at times presupposes the prevalence of the idea that Muslims are defined by Islamic traditions – an idea that suggests that Muslim youths are ‘Muslim first’ and are so at all times. This idea did not come through or to the fore among my research participants, and is not a position taken by this research study. Rather, this study’s view of Muslimness and Muslim identity still falls very much in line with Hall’s treatment of identity and its intersections as being unstable and always in process (Hall, 1996). Yet it seeks to expand on the idea of spiritual identity further, and its relationship to feelings, belonging, and diaspora space by drawing upon the work of Raymond Williams, Nira Yuval-Davis and Avtar Brah (Williams, 1977; Davis; 2011; Brah, 1996, 1999).

The way Raymond Williams has talked about feelings in his work – “structures of feeling” – is of particular use here. Williams, like many other race theorists (Hall, 1996; Gilroy, 2000; Brah, 1996) argued against looking at the process of social formations as fixed forms and “finished products” (Williams, 1977, p129). He has also talked about the role that feelings, both conscious and subconscious, play (ibid.). Williams outlines a “kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and defined exchange” (Williams, 1977, p132). Crucially, he refers to these feelings

as more of a “presence” than a “world-view” or “ideology” (ibid.). This is an extremely relevant distinction to make, especially when considering Muslims and how Islam is lived. Islam can (for the sake of argument) be seen as an ideology here – an all-encompassing and grand world-view of facts and rituals that are active forces, dictating the way that Muslim youths live their lives and practise Islam. This is not the position taken in this research. Rather, using Williams’ terms, Muslimness can be seen as a “*presence*” – ‘feelings’ that connect the young people to their religion but also to other things or, as one participant stated, a presence that gives her “*a take*” on things that she encounters in her life. This is different from more formal, theological, historical and political understandings of Islam and refers to more informally accepted beliefs such as Saqib’s example of “*trying to be better*” or having a good heart, which are both broad and nuanced readings of Islamic teachings.

This research uses Williams’ notion of feelings and extends it to matters of the sacred, or feelings of spirituality, which Saba Mahmood’s (2004) ethnographic work on the women’s piety movement in the mosques of Cairo addresses. Mahmood uses the term ‘positive ethics’ to talk about ethical practices, spiritual exercises and ways of being that are ‘positive’ in the sense that they are manifest in everyday life (Mahmood, 2004, p29). These are important not because of the “meanings they signify to their practitioners, but in the work they do in constituting the individual”, where the body is “not a medium of signification but the substance and the necessary tool through which the embodied subject is formed” (Mahmood, 2004, p29).

Mahmood brings out the distinction between liberal-secular understandings of Islamic beliefs/praxis and the key role that moral and ethical ideas, or positive ethics, can play in the lives of Muslims (Mahmood, 2004). In other words, she differentiates between the ritual performances of religious expression and the Islamic ideals that they are derived from (i.e.

modesty relates to hijab). This chapter explores the notions linked to the positive ethics that Mahmood outlines, which include ideas such as connections to God and community, and the feelings that Muslim youths have about them, and how they were drawn on when constructing spiritual identities in the participants' everyday lives. The distinction made here between religious identities and spiritual identities views these as identities that can overlap, shift, and interact with each other.

There were many youths who did not outwardly perform their religious identities in obvious ways. Rather, they had outlooks – more spiritual ways of engaging with Islam that they accessed at certain times or used as moral compasses. In the same way, there were some youths who were not particularly concerned or engaged with their spiritual identities and were instead more engaged with the performative aspects of Muslimness. There were those who were concerned with both.

As spiritual identities are a process, the participants articulated that it was a process that was ultimately felt on a private level, and which could inform them of their notions of self. This brings us back to Hall's work. While Hall did not talk about religious or spiritual identities specifically, the way that he sees identity across his work (Hall, 1990, 1996) is useful here in that it helps use this idea of 'feeling' and the multiplicity of spiritual identities to underline another way that Muslim identities cannot be seen as a sort of collective, essential 'one true identity', hiding inside the many other more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves' or identities, sharing experiences, practices and beliefs (Hall, 1990). In this way, there can be no one true 'Islam' or concept of 'Muslimness' or even, as I will discuss later on in the chapter, one essential way of believing or connecting to the Divine or other Islamic values.

Cultural Identity and Spirituality

The argument presented in this chapter is not that young Muslims' experiences are not meaningful on their own but rather that their actions do not always neatly correspond with their beliefs, experiences or spiritual identities. This reflects the way that Brah talks about the interaction between the psychic and the social (Brah, 1996). It also adds recognition of the discrepancies between them.

This opens up an important space from which to discuss spirituality and its relationship to identity, as well the language used by young Muslims about the role of spirituality and Muslimness in their own lives, for it is their articulation and understandings of these matters that are relevant here. Not considering young Muslims' thoughts about their spirituality and how it imbues (or does not) their everyday life would be equivalent to saying that young Muslims do not have an understanding of their own reality – an act of 'epistemic violence' (Spivak, 1998) and possibly ignoring performative acts of Muslimness that are not seen as the norm.

In her work on mosque activists in Egypt, Mahmood talks about the relationship between Islamic conceptions of modesty and the wearing of the veil (Mahmood, 2011). The majority of the women she contacted expressed that wearing the hijab is a necessary part of the Islamic ideal of modesty (Mahmood, 23). Mahmood goes on to argue that these women made ineffective relationships between the virtue of modesty and the hijab as necessary requirement to both create and perform modesty (ibid.). However, another way of looking at the concept of modesty, as Mahmood points out, is that the Islamic ideal of modesty is no different to other ideas such as humility, which is "a facet of character but does not commit one to any particular repertoire such as donning the veil" (ibid.). This is a view that many secular scholars also argue

(ibid.). Adding to Mahmood's argument about the relationship between an Islamic virtue and its performance, one can look at how these expressions of spirituality can be lived in radically different ways by Muslim youths – ways that to the outsider might appear nonsensical but made sense to my participants. Here it is important to look at the relationship between embodied behaviour and the virtues of modesty. This research also looks at how Muslim youths articulate their own spirituality and how it relates to their everyday lives, not necessarily always about how it is performed. This diverts slightly from Mahmood's argument about embodied behaviour and Islamic virtues as I argue that not all Islamic virtues are embodied by these youths and yet they can exist within the self as a 'presence' which is 'felt' (Williams, 1977).

For example, the idea of 'being good' can take many forms, some of which are internal, psychological and emotional processes that can affect the ways in which young people see the world and see themselves. Some of these ways are not performed but are rather felt. This feeling can bring young people a sense of relief, peace and safety as well as guilt, unease and depression, which has a profound effect on the way that they see themselves and the world around them. But this is not to argue that all my participants' Muslimness or feelings about their spirituality informed all aspects of their lives, their likes, dislikes, their happiness and pain. Rather, it is to argue that when their spiritual identities were present, so to speak, this could play an important role not only in their overall religious identity (which spiritual identity is linked to) but in their identities and identifications in general.

These spiritual identities, I argue, come to the fore for some at certain times and places, and when the situation calls for it, for some rarely ever and for others, most of the time. In this chapter, I argue for taking a closer look at the relationship between moral, Islamic ideals, the ethics that guide young Muslims and the effect they have on their feelings about the worlds

that they live in. These ideas can only be explored by considering the specific ways and expressions through which spiritual identities, ideals and feelings are lived. In this research, the specific ways include the varied ways in which the participants expressed their spiritual identities – through their words, actions, performances and bodily practices.

Furthermore, looking at the links between embodied practices and spirituality, as Mahmood has also highlighted, the work of Pierre Hadot is useful here (Hadot, 1995; Mahmood, 2011). When talking about the relationship between life and ethics, Hadot uses the term “spiritual exercise” (Hadot, 1995, p105).¹⁵ Hadot describes spiritual exercise as: “Practices which could be physical, as in dietary regimes, or discursive, as in dialogue and meditation, or intuitive, as in contemplation, but which were all intended to effect modification and transformation in the subject who practices them” (Hadot, 1996, p6).

Here, Hadot’s term ‘spiritual exercise’ can help us to see the many ways that spirituality can manifest in an individual as well as its symbiotic relationship with the self. This way of looking at spirituality is useful in expanding the way we look at the process of spiritual identity construction and negotiation as having a relationship with the Muslim youths’ ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ ways of being. My participants’ spiritual identities, as described by them, encapsulated the themes that Hadot described as well. But these were, of course, not fixed ways of seeing their spirituality, in line with the way that we see identities, and the ways that my participants expressed them were both different and sometimes similar. This view brings together Mahmood’s concept of positive ethics while using Hall’s conception of cultural

¹⁵ “Spiritual exercise” builds on the conception of ethics in ancient Greek philosophy, which also influenced Foucault’s formulation of “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1997c; Mahmood, 2005).

identity and the idea of cultural ‘uniqueness’ that argues against a sense of ‘oneness’ or “a collective *one true self*” (Hall, 1996, p705).

Hall talks about Caribbean cultural identity but spiritual identities can be looked at in a similar way:

We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about ‘one experience, one identity’, without acknowledging its other side – the ruptures and discontinuities which constitute, precisely, the Caribbean’s ‘uniqueness’. Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past (Hall, 1990, p205).

Moments of Connection

The youths in this research had different understandings of Islam, varied religious backgrounds and a plethora of ideas regarding what being a Muslim meant to them which, even during the course of my field work, shifted, with Muslimness at times being central and sometimes seen as irrelevant in their lives. For example, when I first met Amir (aged 19), he said that he barely ever thought about being Muslim and that he did not think it said much about who he was as a person except for the fact that he was Palestinian and his ethnic identity overlapped with his Muslim identity (Amir, December 2011). At the end of that year, I noticed the way that he spoke about himself had shifted a little as he referred to himself as Muslim more often and less often as Palestinian in the way that he used to. I asked him about this, and he said that the

Palestinian youths he knew were mostly Christians and “*They should know that we (Muslims) also suffer like them! And everyone blames all the bad stuff on us too*”. Amir went from saying that he did not really think about being Muslim to articulating himself as Muslim more often because when he was in a group of Palestinian Christians he became more aware of his difference and thus felt more of a connection with it.

Amir’s shift in the way that he perceived Muslimness in his life adds to the notion that religious identities cannot be seen as a ‘master identity’ (McGrew et al., 1992) which always take precedence over other identities. Rather, it was at particular moments that these beliefs surfaced and became highly relevant to the way that my participants moved and reacted to situations and how they negotiated everyday life.

At the beginning of this chapter, Saqib talked about how there were times and ‘moments’ where he lost his way and forgot who he was. At these moments, he looked to his spirituality – a part of his Muslimness to remind him who he really was, or as he called it, ‘his true self’. For Abdi, who I spoke about in previous chapters, his ‘moment’ was being a refugee and fleeing from Somalia. Abdi credited his Muslimness and belief in Islam as the only constant through the trauma of migration and the hopefulness of settlement and, at times, the only thing that brought him peace. During the time I spent with Abdi, other than occasionally taking part in Friday prayers and fasting during Ramadan, I rarely observed these ideas of faith manifest outwardly nor did he really talk about being Muslim when I was around him. But this does not necessarily mean that his faith was not a key part of his identity or that there were not other spaces in which he felt it was more appropriate to express his ideas of faithfulness.

For Sana (aged 19), her spiritual beliefs reminded her to be honest and to do ‘the right thing’. Not just the right thing in a moral sense, but the right thing according to her understanding and interpretation of Islam. She also expressed many times that she was aware that through her actions, to those who knew she was a Muslim, she was representing Islam and if she did not do ‘the right thing’, then it would reflect badly on Muslims in general. Sana said that this awareness was both a blessing and a curse. On one hand, she felt an enormous pressure to be a ‘good Muslim’ (Mamdani, 2002), which stressed her out, and which she found constricting and confusing. Yet at the same, her moral outlooks and spiritual values also helped her make decisions and feel good about them, giving her, in her word, the “*sabr*” (patience through God) to deal with the challenges that she faced in life (Sana, August 2012). While Abdi’s and Sana’s spiritual beliefs were not expressed through overt performances of religious practices,¹⁶ the role that their spiritual beliefs and values played in their everyday lives and identities as Muslims is a key argument of this research.

Matters of the Heart

Spirituality, as Saqib refers to it, is a ‘matter of the heart’ and is a part of Islam that has been in Islamic tradition since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. On this matter, Nazim Baksh has argued that those who hold on to traditional values, in some circles, have come to signify “old fashioned customs, archaic practices, ossified ideas handed down from the past and articulated to the letter by naïve, simple minded neo-luddites” (Baksh, 2011). This perspective can also be seen in the way that Taylor (2007), in his discussion of religion, singles out Islamic tradition as perhaps being *too different*, with customs and traditions that do not comfortably fall into line with the modern, secular, liberal state, representing “a distinct historical period from which

¹⁶ These often tend to be limited to essentialised understandings of Islamic practices and what they look like.

modernity saved the world by liberating itself from the shackles of tradition” (Baksh, 2011, p1). In Taylor’s view, Islamic tradition is unchanging, essentialised and old-worldly, no longer useful and dead, and as Baksh goes on to say, “thus, anyone who consciously clings to the profound and perennial ‘Truths’ or ‘Virtues’ if you wish, embodied in all sacred traditions, is regarded as ‘backward looking’, anti-progress or worst, hopeless romantics” (ibid.). For my participants, however, Islamic traditional thinking and, more importantly, their readings and interpretations of them were very much alive and useful in negotiating life in modern, liberal and ‘secular’ Canada.

To some of my participants, when it came to matters of love, they were indeed, ‘hopeless romantics’ but when it came to spirituality, many of them had somewhat more pragmatic ways of looking at issues around faith. They often turned towards their spiritual selves and to virtues of ‘positive ethics’ – to matters of the heart and the feelings that they had about them, to help them negotiate and come to terms with the ups and downs of everyday life. Notions such as belief in God and virtues such as patience, honesty, and fate came up in mundane and everyday situations, whether it was about cramming for exams or dealing with the heartache that comes with young love.

These notions were a part of their lives but more importantly, it was the way that these beliefs were felt and interpreted by the Muslim youths and the forms that they took that are particularly relevant. For example, many of my participants linked their actions to the ideals and conduct of the Prophet Muhammad. It would be easy to reduce these actions to following “Muslim folklore” (Mahmood), as the teachings and tales of morality are seen as essential truths. But in doing so, what can be lost is a greater understanding of the moral principles they often hold dear, such as the ideals of *muhabba* (love), community, patience and kindness.

They also looked to other Muslim figures in Muslim history who were religious, popular, political and so on. Malcolm X is one such figure who was mentioned regularly by youths in all three sites throughout the fieldwork as someone who had affected the youths' sense of spiritual identity. Another was Khadija, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad. Stories and lessons about scholars, the companions of the Prophet and other Muslims in history were often recalled as reminders when discussing hardships, as real-life examples of people overcoming adversity through spiritual strength.

Issues around spirituality, spiritual virtues and feelings both negative and positive affected the way that my participants perceived, performed and negotiated the larger questions of identity and belonging, and especially regarding what was right and wrong. Guilt was often a very strong force, and feelings of guilt were often linked to not feeling fulfilled or being heedless of spiritual beliefs such as honesty and community.

Mohsin (aged 19, July 2013) was from a Moroccan background. We were driving to the cinema and listening to the news on the radio that discussed the atrocities which at that time were beginning to heighten in Syria. At first, we talked about how horrible it all was, and as we had both been to Syria, we reminisced about how beautiful it was and how kind the people there are. After talking about it for a while, he said:

(Mohsin, July 2013) *I know I should care. And I do. But then I also don't, because like, what can I do about it? I know it's bad and I should care more but the only time I think [about it] is if I see it on the news.*

Here, Mohsin articulated feelings of attachment to the Syrians' plight and also a recognition that it did not really make a difference to his life, which he momentarily felt guilty about. But then we arrived at the mall and met his friends. The moment had passed and although he had thought about it, his thoughts soon turned towards whether he would get popcorn or nachos to eat. But he did *feel* something about it, and it was not a meaningless feeling but rather an empathetic one – a matter of the spirit linked to the idea of empathy with those who are suffering, which he felt some guilt for not caring about more. Mohsin's story is an example of the way that guilt could sometimes bring the youths in my study to think about things that were happening to Muslims in other parts of the world. This guilt, however, did not move Mohsin to action or lead him to care *more*, but it did make him consider the issue. In his response, he was still going through a dynamic process of identity construction and learning on his own what it meant to him, who he was as a Muslim and the relevance it had in his life.

Many were also ambivalent towards matters of spirituality and the role that being Muslim played in their lives and did not express any feelings towards either issue. I asked Anna (aged 19) about what it meant to her to be Muslim in a family where her mother was Muslim and her father, who was out of the picture, was Christian. Initially, she shrugged her shoulders and did not answer. I then asked her directly, "Anna, what does being Muslim feel like to you?"

Anna: *Nothing really. Really. It's just a thing I am.*

Me: *So the whole Islam thing, do you ever think you'll get into it? Like do you think it ever gives you a sense of peace or anything like that?*

Anna: *No.*

Me: *What about Christianity?*

Anna: *You know what? I don't really care what it says on the paper. It says Muslim, it says Christian, and I just know who I am and what I believe. Maybe in the future, who*

knows? I'll fall in love with this Arabic guy or really Christian guy who his family won't let him marry if I'm not Christian. I'll say I'm Christian, I'll get baptized if they want. I don't care because it's not like a big deal...

Me: *You'll do the same thing you're doing now?*

Anna: *Yeah, I wouldn't care, I wouldn't care. Of course, you [she] would know, but the people, yeah, okay, I'm Christian, whatever you want. I don't really have a problem with people like, I want to be accepted or something, but it's not going to be a big problem for me. Religion is not what I think about before I go to sleep or something.*

Me: *What do you think about?*

Anna: *When I go to sleep? Sheeps [sic]? [laughter]*

Me: *Sheeps?*

Anna: *I count the sheeps [sic].*

Feelings like Anna's were also 'part of the story' of Muslimness, which were important and not uncommon amongst my participants. Even with ethnographic research like this, where the focus is not only on praxis but experience and spiritual matters, there were Muslim youths who did not express their Muslimness in those ways and perhaps not in any way at all. Anna clearly expressed that being Muslim did not affect the things that she had on her mind, such as how to be happy or what she was going to do the next day. Anna's view at that time was similar to that of another participant called Adam (aged 19), who when I asked him what being Muslim meant to him, said "*it's really not that deep*" (January 2012).

Another consideration here is that both Anna and Adam came from mixed European backgrounds, look white, and did not have overtly Muslim-sounding names. In many ways, due to the intersections of religion and ethnicity and being able to 'pass as white', they also

were not necessarily seen as different or as Muslim by others. In some ways, they both had more agency about associating or not with being Muslim, whereas others, such as Saqib who was brown-skinned and had a beard, were often identified as Muslim, and at the very least seen as ‘other’. Nevertheless, feelings about Muslimness like Anna’s and Adam’s are a reminder that while trying to break free of essentialisms, we as researchers should be cautious about not creating new ones (Brah, 1996) and, more specifically, that Muslim youths’ religious identities can not only be misunderstood and misinterpreted but can also be over-stated and given too much importance.

Connection to the Divine

La Illaha Illala Muhammad ur Rasullahallah

– *There is no God but God and Muhammad is his messenger (Nawawi, 2002, p7).*

Belief in God, along with belief in the Prophet Muhammad as the messenger of God, are the most basic principles of the Islamic faith. The idea that many Muslim youths saw a connection to God as a vital element of their Muslimness is not a new idea. Although most participants expressed that they did believe in God, there were a few Muslim youths who said that they did not, but they still considered themselves Muslims. In terms of belief in God, what we hear less about, however, are stories of Muslim youths negotiating their feelings about the Divine or what believing in God looks like and means to young Muslims as they go through their everyday life. This section concentrates on the young Muslims’ connections to the Divine and what it meant to their sense of Muslimness.

During my fieldwork, unless we were in a religious setting such as the mosque, an event or during the MIST tournaments, the young Muslims did not talk about their feelings about the

Divine very much. When I talked to Hina (aged 18) about it, she said “*Nobody walks into a room and says ‘Hey everyone!! I love God, God is awesome!!’*” (Hina, August 2011). Rather, she said, it was something she thought about on her own as she went through everyday life, even if it was just fleeting thoughts. “*Like one day I was walking through the snow and I thought ‘How beautiful God made this world for us’ You know? It could have all been so ugly*” (Hina, August 2011).

Asia (aged 18) also expressed the same sentiment – that her relationship or belief in God was not something she often talked about. “*If you’re one of those God talkers, people think you’re just weird. Not even Christians do that*”, she said. “It was like ‘*Why do I really even believe this?*’ *I didn’t see the point* (Asia, August 2011)”. She questioned her beliefs for a long time, especially when at the age of 16, she started fighting a lot with her parents - “*They always used God as an excuse. Like for not being able to do stuff*”. She then started to explore her connection to God on her own, and at that time, she did not feel like she believed. Then, she said she “*started getting more and more away from God*”. During this time in her life, she was also having problems at her new school, and not having very much luck finding friends or fitting in. She became more and more isolated but said that she also got used to it and didn’t care about being alone.

(Asia, August 2011): “*But then when I was alone a lot, even though it was cool and everything like, I started thinking about God again. I couldn’t really get it out of my mind*”.

Asia said that she started to think about it more and after a while.

“Just like that I started to believe again. I couldn’t deny that I always felt a ‘presence’. Even in the beginning when it felt shitty here (her new school), I didn’t feel lonely. I think maybe because I started thinking about Allah? It gave me peace like. I don’t know.”

Asia’s story highlights the temporality of not only her spiritual identity but also the shifting nature of her core beliefs and what she associated with being Muslim. Even when she did not believe in God, she said that she still saw herself as Muslim and that being Muslim was part of her culture. Asia’s story and her changing feelings about God is an example of how even the most basic core beliefs that Islam rests on cannot be taken for granted as being a part of all young Muslims’ identities. Belief in God can be seen as a necessary belief in order to be Muslim, as it is indeed a core principle of Islamic belief. However, Asia did not see her ‘disbelief’ as something that ‘dis-identified’ her as Muslim. This belief could be seen of as a necessity of Muslimness but in this case, Hall’s notion of the impossibility of identities is relevant (Hall, 1996, p16), for even the most basic understanding of Islam cannot be taken for granted and relied upon as an indicator of Muslimness.

That being said, there were many youths who viewed a connection to God as one of the integral parts of their spirituality and as core to what being Muslim meant to them:

Sana (July 2011): *I believe that that is a connection to God, and that's the most important thing. You know that story of the prostitute? You know it?*

Me: *Who gave the dog water?*

Sana: *Yeah, and so she was a prostitute and people said bad things about her after she died. And the Prophet, he didn’t like that. He said um that...you know it?*

Me: *He said she’s going to heaven.*

Sana: *Yeah, she is going to heaven and you don't know what's in her heart.*

Me: *So she had a good heart.*

Sana: *Yeah she took care of that dog when nobody else did. They thought she was bad, but Allah saw her goodness.*

Me: *I guess we sometimes just see what is on the outside.*

As Sana talks about the story of the prostitute, she illustrates what she means by a ‘connection to God’ and what lesson she takes from it. While there are many spiritual ideals that can be gleaned from this story, such as God’s mercy or the value of taking care of animals, Sana concentrates on the dichotomy between the internal and external, placing the internal as more important.

Sana: *You don't know what's in anyone's heart, you can't judge anybody. You can't. A person can look good on the outside, they can look like a freaking angel, and they're probably one of the worst people on the inside. You could have like, a devil on the outside, who's actually an angel on the inside. I don't care if I look like the devil on the outside, God knows what I'm like inside and what I try to be. Allah knows my mistakes because I talk to him about them and I say 'You know what... I'm really trying to be better but it's hard'. Allah knows though.*

In this account, Sana talks about her connection to God in the way that she would talk about a friend – as an entity that she can talk to about her own internal struggles and who understands how hard she tries. This connection also helps her negotiate who she is inside.

This importance of the relationship between God and one's internal self was also expressed by Asad (August 2012). Even though he did not see himself as a good Muslim, he still looked to God for support. During my fieldwork, Asad graduated from high school and began a course in business administration at a community college. He did not have many friends there, he felt out of place and, although he had good grades, he was not enjoying the course. During high school, he was at the youth club every day after school, where he would see his friends and take part in activities. He had been a part of the youth club since he moved to Canada from Jordan when he was 16. After he started his course, he had less time to spend at the youth club and he also started working at a fast food chain, which also left him with little time in general to see his friends. He began to worry about what he was going to do with his life and if he should even be in college – although he had worked very hard to get a place there. This started to affect his state of mind, and even when I saw him, I could tell that he was not his usual bubbly, humorous self:

Asad (aged 19, August 2012): *This type of stuff about God and stuff. It kind of relates to what I'm trying to say here is, I'm not the perfect Muslim over here, and I've done so many wrong stuff in my life. I was, until last week, it was just recent, before we talk. I was just to this kind of level that I just don't want to— I just hate life. I'm really depressed. I don't do anything. I don't even know what I want to study. What's business administration? I just want to drop out of school. I just don't do nothing; I just, basically, lost my faith. I just feel that I don't relate, and I feel that I've done so many mistakes that I can't fix anything. I just felt really depressed, I was really internally depressed, for real.*

Me: *Yeah, you said last week you weren't doing so well.*

Asad: *It was true, this. Internally it was too much. My dad had to come. I know it's funny, but my dad had to come and talk to me. And then my dad, he's like, "Listen, you're old enough, you're 19 now, you can make your own decisions". He's like, "I know we're not a very religious family", but he told me, "faith - if you lose faith, if you forget that God exists, you're always not going to be going forward, because if you really just have faith, if you believe in God, you will always try to figure out what's going to happen tomorrow. If you lost that, then you just feel that your life has no purpose. You don't have something to accomplish".*

As Asad struggled and felt 'internally depressed', he thought about his father's advice and opinion on the matter.

Asad (August 2012): *So that made me just kind of sit back, and actually, for I would say, one day, I was just thinking about what he (his father) said. It is so true, you can just go forward, but I was just thinking, what it's like to be an atheist? For example. But I just came to the conclusion that it's just not going to ever happen to me because, even though I like to deny it sometimes because I'm too lazy, I know that God does exist, and I know that faith is important. And I know that it's the only element that would just make me feel, I'm peaceful, that I just don't feel I'm in crap. Or, I'm just feeling crappy.*

Asad did not listen to his father's advice immediately – but mediated it through his own thoughts and feelings to decide if it was relevant to him and if it was a view that he shared. Through this thinking and feeling about his connection to God, he began to realise that that was what he was missing, and perhaps what part of his 'internal' depression was. He then considered that his connection to God was what was missing at other times in his life:

Asad (August 2012): *Even when I was with Amber, to tell you the truth, I felt I was happy, but all of these kind of feelings, they wouldn't last for more than minutes, not even hours. They would just last for couple of hours, maybe, and then the whole feeling that I'm happy, that I'm on top of the world, would just disappear. So, really the whole thing is like, yes, live your life happily, try to make out of it, try to be active, but always remember that God does exist and you have a purpose. If you were born, you have a purpose in your life, so you better keep working hard, and basically, find what your purpose in this life is.*

In this conversation, Asad discusses the interplay between the physic and the social (Brah, 2005). He talks about how neither difficult nor happy moments produced long-term meaningful happiness because he sees that this can only be reached through belief in God and finding his purpose. The feelings that he had could be likened to the presence that Williams talks about – a feeling that he did not articulate but felt. However, this was a feeling that he began to access after a period of difficulty in his life. It was not something that he continually drew upon but rather he was reminded of it through his father and through the situation that he was in, illustrating how spiritual identities can also be influenced by familial relationships. After reflection and after some time had passed, he shifted his understanding of his relationship with God, which at this time he viewed as part of his own ‘internal’ happiness.

Another youth, Hassan (aged 19, September 2012) drew upon his belief in God to help him negotiate times in his life where he felt discriminated against and alone. Hassan, who was of Afro-Canadian descent and was born and raised in Canada, had expressed more than a few times that “*the world is racist*” (Hassan, September 2012). I sometimes asked him if anything

in particular had happened, and he would tell me about something that happened to him, or to a friend or something he saw on the news. *“It’s nothing big”*, he told me once, when talking about an incident at the mosque when donation money went missing. He was just sitting in the corner in the prayer room by himself as he often liked to sit for an hour or so, in solitude, after Friday prayer as he did not have to be at school at that time:

Hassan (September 2012): *The guy comes up to me and says “What are you doing here now?” So I said “Just sitting”. Then he says “How come I’ve never seen you here before”? So I was like, I dunno. I’m here pretty much every week.*

Me: *Who was he?*

Hassan: *I don’t know. Some mosque guy, maybe on the board or something. Like I’ve seen him loads of times.*

(Hassan went on to tell me the rest of the story)

Hassan: *He says “Do you know we are missing one of the donation boxes”? And I was like “Yeah I heard people talking about that. That’s like, really bad”. Then he asks me you know what?? You won’t believe me. He says “Why do you have your backpack here?” I said to him “What? I came from school”. Then he’s just looking at me and then looking at the bag and I just said “Go ahead and look uncle, if you want”.*

Me: *You said that? Why? Did he?*

Hassan: *It was just – let’s get this over with.*

Me: *Did he?*

Hassan: *Nah. He just walked away.*

Me: *What did you do then? Did you leave?*

Hassan: *Nope. I stayed probably for one more hour. You would have left you think?*

Me: *Yeah, I would have been really pissed off.*

Hassan: *I didn't like it but I wasn't going to leave. It's not his house. Anyways, it wasn't even a big deal. I'm just telling you because I don't know. I just wanted to tell you. Things like this always happen and you know what? I never stole anything ever anytime. I know you don't believe me but not even one time.*

Me: *Don't say that. I believe you. Why wouldn't I believe you?*

Hassan: (shrugs his shoulders) *It's like. This is always the thing.*

Me: *These kinds of things, have they happened in the mosque before?*

Hassan: *Yeah. Sometimes. Not the stealing thing but like other stuff. Rude stuff. Black things.*

Hassan went on to describe 'black things' and told me about what he called "*the little things*" that happened to him and his black friends. Little, racist, ordinary things. In this particular racist incident, he was basically accused of stealing money by a man who Hassan thought was South Asian. Even though he was there in the mosque, sitting after prayer, he was, according to Hassan, the first person they asked about the missing money. Here, being Muslim didn't matter. Here, Hassan's blackness made him different, suspect and in many ways, an outsider. Though he had been there before, he was invisible then, only becoming visible in a moment when money was missing. It was only then that he was noticed. His race and most probably his age made him feel like his belonging in the space was not the same as others. But he didn't care. He continued to sit in prayer and reflection. He went on to tell me why. He told me the story of when the Prophet Muhammad and his followers migrated from Mecca to Abyssinia because of the persecution they faced by the ruling Meccan tribe of the Quraysh in 613 CE (Lings, 1983).¹⁷

¹⁷ This was also known as the *First Hijra*, or migration.

As the story goes, they left injured and bloodied as they fled Mecca:

Hassan: *So he (the Prophet Muhammad) went over there (Abyssinia), and how they started towards the sun, and he just kept walking, because he was bleeding and he didn't stop, he kept going. So what happened in the story? I don't remember. And then he [a long pause. Hassan snuffles here a little] - so basically, yeah. How he was determined, even with all the hardships, he's still going. He didn't turn back? Though?*

Me: *I don't think so.*

Hassan: *No, he didn't. I don't remember, I don't think so. No.*

Me: *No, he didn't.*

Hassan: *It's so like. Can you imagine? So basically, how he was determined, how he kept going.*

Me: *Yeah, he didn't let it stop him.*

Hassan: *Yes, and even when they threw stones at him, he just kept going. But if the Prophet kept going and he didn't do nothing about it, so – Anyway, he kept going. And I mean, back then, no one really had his back. Over here, there's governments. There's people who could kill your people, but, he really was by himself. God was his only protector. This is why it kind of shows you discrimination, yeah, racism, yeah? And the other thing it shows you is that, it just could show you that - I mean, that if you give up, God has your back, so, you're never alone. Even though you think that you're alone, and no one cares about you, but always know that there's someone that got your back. Make sense?*

In this episode, Hassan finds parallels between the racism that he regularly faced and the persecution – some would call it early Islamophobia – faced by the Prophet Muhammad and

the Muslims in Mecca. Hassan also didn't 'fight back'¹⁸ when the man at the mosque accused him. He kept doing what he was doing. He mentions how God was Muhammad's only protector and that "*God had his back*" and relates it to the racism and discrimination he talks about and what he thinks about God. Here, Hassan describes one of the values he has – a part of his spiritual identity which is a belief in God and describes what it means to him. To him, it means that no matter what he faces, God will be there for him and will take care of him. Adding to that, he also draws on the example of Muhammad, another value and 'positive ethic' which could be seen as 'following the Sunnah or Prophetic example'. What he draws from Muhammad's story is the lesson and motivation to persevere in the face of oppression and difficulty, and to 'keep going'.

There could be many interpretations of the story of the First Hijra. But here, it is the way that Hassan tells it and the lessons he takes from it that are relevant. As Mahmood used an example of the ethic of modesty and the performance of the virtue of modesty by wearing hijab (2011), Hassan takes the ethic of 'belief in God' and sees an interpretation – a lived example of this virtue as Muhammad's perseverance to 'keep going' as well as in Hassan's own life to persevere when faced with discrimination with the knowledge that God "*has his back*".

Hassan also raised the idea of racial prejudice within the Muslim community in which he, as a black male, was treated as a "*criminal*" (Hassan, September 2012). This was a recurrent theme voiced by the black and brown participants. Naaz Rashid also discussed this in her work on Muslim women in the UK, and how members of Muslim communities often adopted negative stereotypes that exist in mainstream media and discourse (Rashid, 2016). In this research, this

¹⁸ Hassan pointed this out a few times. I think he was possibly referring to the way Muslims are often portrayed as violent. This was around the time when there was outcry and some violence that erupted about the Danish cartoon portraying Muhammad as a terrorist.

was particularly relevant to black Muslim boys, and of those boys, the Somali migrants and refugees who from their social positioning as refugees were often perceived as ‘poor’, and through their blackness, associated with criminality. This is illustrated in Hassan’s encounter; even in the mosque, he is not immune from it. To negotiate this racism and discriminatory treatment in the mosque, he draws on his spiritual values and identity.

Duty to Parents

And your God has decreed that you worship none but God. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour.” (Quran 17:23)

The Prophet Muhammad also stressed people’s duty to their parents:

A companion of the Prophet once asked him which good deeds are the most loved by God. Prophet Muhammad answered him by saying, “To offer the prayer in its proper time”. The companion then asked, “And what is next?” to which Prophet Muhammad replied, “To be good and dutiful to your parents...” (Sahih-al-Bukhari, Book 73 Hadith 1).

In this narration or *hadith* of a teaching of the Prophet Muhammad, the duty to be ‘good’ to one’s parents comes right after one of the core practices of Islam – prayer. However, to Ahmad (aged 21, October 2012), the ‘positive ethic’ of duty to parents is the most important part of being Muslim. He feels that his mission in life is to take care of his family because of his belief that it is what the Prophet Muhammad used to do. He sees this duty not only as a Prophetic example but also as a virtue that is felt, and as he said “*runs through his veins*” (Ahmad, October 2012). He uses this positive ethic to help motivate himself, and give himself a moral rationale to work hard at both his full-time job and part-time job as well as when he’s studying

part-time at college. When he takes care of his family, he says that he feels like he is a good Muslim and that it makes him feel “*at peace inside*” (Ahmad, January 2013).

This belief, one that Ahmad saw as the essence of his Muslimness, that working hard for your family is the responsibility of a Muslim, could also have been influenced by his own experiences. Two years before I met Ahmad and before he migrated to Canada from Saudi Arabia, his mother, two sisters and brothers had died in a car accident on the way to Mecca in the month of Ramadan. His two remaining siblings survived, along with his father who lost the use of his legs due to the accident. Ahmad was not in the car. He said he made an excuse not to go because he wanted to hang out with his friends by the seaside. It was a devastating blow to the family and Ahmad mentioned that he used to feel guilty that he was not in the car. He was saved, he believed, for a reason and for a purpose.

Before the accident, the whole family had planned to migrate to Canada and had made arrangements to do so after Ramadan. Ahmad, his siblings and father decided to continue with those plans as they felt that they had nothing left in Saudi Arabia. In addition, due to the strict visa regulations in Saudi Arabia, they had no choice as they no longer had visas to stay there, even though they had spent their whole lives there. So, one cold November day in 2009, they moved to Canada and settled in Toronto, Ontario. As his father was not mobile due to his injuries and spoke very little English, most of the responsibility to take care of the family was left to Ahmad. He also became the main breadwinner.

“*The Prophet used to provide for his family right?*” Ahmad told me. “*He used to work hard. Being Muslim is about work. I can’t do everything good but I can take care of my family.*” Ahmed worked two jobs – one at a convenience shop and one at a grocery store. His ideas

about what being a Muslim meant were closely linked with his own situation and life experiences, and he looked to the example of Muhammad for motivation and as a spiritual connection to his everyday struggles. Life was not always easy for him, and he had suffered the enormous loss of the death of his mother and siblings at the young age of 16. On top of that, he had added difficulties related to migration and the responsibility for his family that came with it.

In Ahmad's story, there are also some issues around class to consider. While Ahmad's father had a good job in Saudi Arabia, it was a construction job that required physical labour. When they moved to Canada, due to the injury that his father suffered in the car accident, he could no longer work in a job that required physical labour. He did not have the training for any other type of job, nor did he have a degree, and they did not have the money that would be required for him to retrain. Had his father had a 'desk job', perhaps he would have been able to work. Since this wasn't the case, Ahmad took on the responsibility to earn money for his family and although they received assistance from the government, it was not enough. Although Ahmad was working two jobs, he was also committed to getting a college diploma because as he said *"I don't want this life forever. I want to give my family more"*. He also wanted to make enough money so that his younger sister could go to university. While his father took care of the day to day household duties, in many ways, Ahmad had taken on both the financial and emotional responsibility of his family – this he said was his duty as a Muslim.

Ahmad's story is an example of how circumstances and experiences can help shape spiritual identities, and which identities Muslim youths consider to be important to their Muslimness. In his case, Ahmad's 'duty to parents' and family can be seen as social and familial responsibilities, borne out of the reality of his situation. Yet Ahmad sees this as a 'positive

ethic', which he draws upon to motivate him and to imbue a higher meaning and spiritual feeling in his hard work.

There were other youths like Ahmad who had taken on quite adult responsibilities within their families. These situations generally occurred with participants who were new immigrants or refugees, and within those groups, particularly in single-parent families. Both the boys and the girls had responsibilities in the home that were financial, emotional and administrative etc. Maria (aged 16) and Amir (aged 17) expressed similar sentiments to Ahmad, believing that this was part of their *khidmah* (service), or a duty to their parents to help them take care of their family.

At the same time, I also observed Maria (aged 16, July 2012) fighting with her parents about not being able to stay out late. Maria lived in the affluent suburb of Oakville and both her parents had professional jobs. We would often be out and her mother or father would call on her cell phone asking her to come home. Maria would tell them that she hated them and was never coming home. She would sometimes put her hand over the phone and roll her eyes or tell us what is happening on the other end like "*Oh, now mom is crying*", with little remorse. The fights were so regular and public that when we went out, all of us would expect one of these arguments to take place at some point. In many ways, Maria had taken on more adult responsibilities, such as taking care of her siblings, doing the household's groceries and managing the family's finances. She felt helping her parents with these things was her duty as a Muslim. She also said that she felt good 'inside' when she was helping. However as she often had heated arguments with her parents, it can be argued that in other ways she was not fulfilling her 'duty' to them as she was rude and did not follow their rules. Maria, while still a teenager, was negotiating between very adult responsibilities and her wants and needs as a child. Even

though she felt like being a dutiful daughter was one of the ways she was a ‘good Muslim’, she also resisted listening to her parents at times when she didn’t want to. This highlights the messiness of her identity as a young person and as an adult, indicative of her age and also her social positioning. This example also illustrates the difference between her intentions to perform the positive ethic of caring for her parents and how she did not always fulfil this in her everyday life, or see it as relevant to every situation relating to her parents.

Like Maria, Sana (aged 19, May 2012), who migrated from Egypt after her father passed away when she was 10, also had a lot of responsibility in her family but for her it was less financial and more taking care of the house and her younger siblings when her mother was at work.

Sana said that her friends did not understand why she did all the things that she did at home, and why she could seldom hang out after school:

Sana (May 2012): *These guys don’t understand, I have to make sure my sisters are raised right, the way I was. White kids are just... ugh... you know. My mom can only do what she can do. She doesn’t understand life here and she doesn’t know how to live without Dad. So I kind of have to be like Dad here, in a weird way. I mean what I can remember of him. Like she tells me what happens at work and when things suck and sometimes I’m kind of ‘whoaa. This is too grown up for me’. I just want to sit in my room and watch crap and eat Doritos, ya know?*

Sana does all this because it’s what her father would have wanted and she believes that that is her duty as a daughter. She tries to fulfil an emotional duty to her mother and her late father, but as a young person, this can cause her undue stress because she is in many ways not emotionally capable of fulfilling this role as she is not an adult and not her father. At times,

this has made her feel bad, or guilty to a point that she doesn't believe that she is a good Muslim because her mother was going through a tough time, and she couldn't – as she said – 'make it better'.

Community

“Humanity was a single community (ummah), and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings...” [Sūrah al-Baqarah: 213]

“I get why people hate us. I would hate us too. We are so stupid and so many idiots that do things are Muslim” (Musa, July 2013).

This section concentrates on the notion of community and the ways that ideas of community were significant to the participants in a spiritual sense. Socialisation, the Muslim *Ummah*, solidarity, representation, racism and Islamophobia were a few concepts that the Muslim youths considered relevant to their spiritual ideas of community. The feelings they attached to multiple ideas of community, as well as their experiences, helped them to negotiate different iterations of community and what it means to them in everyday life. Representations of Muslims and a 'Muslim community' are also relevant here as these perceptions, as seen above, can also affect the way that young people see their own Muslimness as well as their ideas of community. This is important in Nira Yuval-Davis's discussion of belonging: how, although people can have a self-perception according to the way they see themselves, they are also affected at times by the 'outside', not by self-identification, but by others' identifications and perceptions (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Ideas of community can also be a unifying factor – a feeling of togetherness and solidarity which loosely aligns with ideas of the Muslim Ummah.

The idea of a Muslim community is also known in Islam as the Ummah. In Arabic, the literal meaning of the word *ummah* is “people, community” (Hans Wehr, 1979). Going beyond its literal meaning, the term in Islamic circles has come to mean a transnational community of Muslims who share a belief in God and the Prophet Muhammad. It is an idea that is not only related to beliefs but extends to ideas of loyalty and community. A hadith or saying of the Prophet Muhammad says that, “the parable of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body. When any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever” (Sahih al Bukhari 5665, Sahih Muslim 2588). This idea of unity and compassion for other Muslims is one that is prevalent in Islamic theology and is also one that could be found in my participants’ conceptions of community, or in this case, the Muslim community for them. However, their notions of what constitutes community, though derived from the notion of “ummah”, has come to mean different things for different individuals.

At the micro-level, the idea of an Ummah, or a transnational Islamic identity, is often defined in specific ways and is significant in varying ways. To Musa, the idea of a community is more aligned with solidarity when Muslims are victims of pain and suffering around the world, most notably the wars that have been fought in the Middle East through the war on terror. His idea of Ummah, while based on belief, is not confined to the idea of practice but rather to those who identify as Muslim.

Though participants’ relationships to community overlap with the idea of Ummah, it is only one version of the notion of Muslim community or the Ummah (the people). This can also be extended to ideas of loyalty and love for others – in this case, Muslims. However, for these youths, they produced their own narratives, loosely defined by the idea of Ummah, but also bringing to it their own experiences and feelings about who and what their community was –

both globally and locally. The idea of the Muslim Ummah being one unified identity is one that exists in theology as well as popular discourse about Muslims and the Muslim world. But how do young people express the spiritual ideas of community in everyday life?

The idea of an Ummah – an international solidarity of Muslims, or the ‘Muslim International’ (Daulatzai, 2012) – and the perceptions of it also creates problems as to how to govern Muslim communities, whose loyalties can be perceived as questionable. The idea is often seen as a threat to national cohesion and security, with policies therefore driven by the fear of the Muslim Ummah (Kundnani, 2007). Academics (e.g. Gest, 2010) and policy-makers have either tended to overlook the idea of the Ummah or have given little consideration to how the ideas of community can provide Muslims with a sense of identity not defined by praxis and beliefs. In other words, there are Muslim youths who do not practise or believe in all of the tenets of Islam yet still align themselves with the community. At the same time, too often the ideal of Ummah has been oversimplified, assuming that all those who use the term or have a notion of loyalty or solidarity define it in the same way. Musa’s example illustrates this. Musa, while considering himself part of the Muslim community and Ummah, distances himself from some Muslims’ actions and sees Muslims through others’ perceptions of them. Thus, it is important to consider what young Muslims actually say, and how they perform the notions of community and belonging to the Muslim community.

Adam said that he became Muslim primarily due to feelings about community. *“I felt loved when I was around them and now when I’m around other Muslims, I feel safe”* (aged 19, March 2012). He said that he converted because he wanted what ‘they’ have: *“They have each other, you can count on them”*. Tara (aged 18, July 2011), who was not Muslim, called herself an honorary Muslim and would fast in Ramadan because she wanted to be a part of it.

One night in Ramadan, we were all sitting outside on the steps of Jackson's Square Mall. Abdi, Zayn, Omar were all there – there were both Muslims and non-Muslims sitting outside, as they usually did in the summer evenings. Everybody was looking at their watches and phones waiting for the time to break their fast. We had all brought our own contributions to share with one another. Tara was there too, and she was anxiously looking at her watch waiting for the time to come; she said, *"I don't know how you guys do this every day."*

Aliza (July 2011): *You get used to it.*

Me to Tara: *So what does it feel like?*

Tara: *Well, right now I'm really hungry because it's almost 9 o'clock (pm) but I guess during the day it made me think of other things like all the things that are going on in the world and how much I waste my time and I still can't believe how you can do this every day.*

Adam, who was also present said, *"That's the whole reason I became Muslim; everyone just understanding each other and doing things together"* (Adam, July 2011). Here, Adam's understanding of community has less to do with ideas of the Ummah and more to do with the idea of a sisterhood and brotherhood. This has origins in Islamic teachings, culture and at the same time is a relatable concept for young people in general when it comes to ideas of friendship and loyalty. Adam had a positive view of community, and he experienced feelings of belonging when he was around groups of Muslims in his peer group. There were other youths, however, like Sheila (aged 17) whose notions of community surfaced only during difficult and fraught encounters.

September 11, 2011

It was the ten-year anniversary of the World Trade Centre attacks, and Sheila was seated with her friends, all non-Muslim and white, in a mandatory memorial assembly (Sheila, September 2011). Sheila wore hijab and was quite a popular girl at school. She was captain of the girls' senior basketball team and was involved in student politics. I went to see her basketball games a few times, where hundreds of people would chant her name when she got the ball, cheering her on to score. She was also involved in student activism and was on the student council. She used to love going to school, Sheila told me, but for her, things were different after that day.

Sheila was living in Pakistan and was six years old on 9/11. When we talked about it, she had no understanding at that young age about what was happening halfway across the world: *"I don't remember a single thing about it. I only learned about it when I started high school, then I went and asked my parents about it and they told me a little bit – like apparently it was al-Qaeda or something."* Her comprehension of those events was very much anchored on other peoples' memories, interpretations and opinions. As they sat in the auditorium, the lights dimmed and, in the spotlight, were three (white) people dressed up as Arab men with beards and headdresses. These men were holding mocked-up AK47s; huddled behind them were a group of 'women' wearing homemade black burkas, which reminded Sheila of *"shitty Halloween costumes"* (Sheila, September 2011).

She told me that she immediately tensed up at this sight, worried about what would come next. Out of the darkness came a group of people wearing Canadian and American flag patches around their arms, who were loudly laughing and talking about their day. The 'Arab men' jumped in front of them and yelled at them in Arabic, shouting *Allahu Akbar* (God is great) while gunning down the Canadians and Americans. Sheila said that she was frozen in her seat.

She felt like her friends were looking at her and that everyone else was too. *“To me, it felt like it was me up there shooting those people. I don’t even know what that part was about.”*

Then the assembly went on to reconstruct the destruction of the Twin Towers while the same Arab men rejoiced. *“I don’t even know what happened after that. I just grabbed my bag and got out of my seat and got out of there as fast as I could.”* The next day at school, she said that nobody talked to her except for her other Muslim friend, Mona. They both talked about how uncomfortable that assembly was, and Mona asked her if she thought anyone was treating her differently, because she (Mona) felt it. Sheila said, *“I didn’t want to admit it, but yeah. It was really different.”*

While young people negotiate their own ideas of community and their feelings towards them, the idea of a unified Muslim community can also be imposed on them by others – in this case, what transpired in the school assembly. Sheila, and presumably her classmates, only began to learn more about the attacks through the ten-year commemoration and memorials at school and on television that year. The connection between Muslims and terrorism was reinvigorated in many ways as it reached a new generation and audience (Rane and Ewart, 2012).

In Sheila’s case, the feelings that she had towards being part of a Muslim community were conflicted. She felt like she was being represented. However, at the same time, she did not agree both factually and morally with the representation she had witnessed in the assembly. She told me that the reason why she walked out was not because she felt embarrassed or guilty but because she was offended that *“all Muslims were seen as the same”*.

Sheila (September 2011). *Those people aren't anything like me. Nobody I know, not here, not Pakistan. But now those people, they're gonna think we're all the same. I was hoping that some of my friends would ask me about this – but nobody ever did, so I didn't bring it up either.*

She was very upset recalling this story and went on to say:

Sheila: *It really hit me that day. In my heart I believe we're (Muslims) good people. They've got it wrong and also there's a war going on over there and lots of stuff has been happening. To me this is all just a part of it.*

The people depicted on stage were offensive, essentialised representations of Arabs and Muslims. Sheila felt so strongly about what she saw that she had to leave as she could not watch it anymore. She wore hijab so she was identifiable as Muslim by those around her but, according to her, that was not what bothered her. “*Those people all look like terrorists, like they are terrorists but most of the people over there were being terrorized by America and everyone else but they don't say that part*”. Sheila walking out was an act of solidarity with the Muslim community – a notion that at that moment, she felt deeply about. In her day to day life, interactions and friendships at the school, her link to the Muslim community was not something that came up very much. Rather, the assembly brought up feelings of loyalty and solidarity with not only the Muslims from the country “*somewhere in the Middle East*” depicted on stage but also to the collective identity of Muslims around the world. Although this could be seen as a political statement, I argue that this encounter cut to the core of what Sheila's feelings were about being Muslim and her empathy for Muslims around the world. It was also a wake-up call to her when she was treated differently after the assembly by her once supportive friends and peers. Her spiritual belief and her feeling of loyalty and defensiveness about the depiction prompted an instinctive reaction when she walked out of the auditorium. This is one example

of how Sheila's Muslim identity shifted when one of her core beliefs was threatened. She began to see herself differently in her local school community. She continued to play basketball and hang out with the same friends, but after that day she became even closer with her Muslim friends at school as well as her other non-white friends.

Mustafa

In July 2012 at NGen, a group of youths were in the computer lab huddled around one PC watching a trailer for the movie, *Innocence of Muslims*, by Sam Bacile. The controversial footage depicted the Prophet Mohammed as a paedophile, an adulterer and a murderer. Mustafa was also watching along with everyone else. In this particular scene, the actor playing Mohammed was involved in a sexual act with a minor. A lot of people around the computer gasped; some of them kept watching and a few others, including Mustafa, walked away. I was seated nearby with Omar and Rabia who asked Mustafa what was wrong. Mustafa walked right past us and left the building. Omar and I went after him – he was still there having a cigarette, but his face was flushed and red. He looked upset. He told Omar what they were watching and Omar mentioned that he had also heard about that film. He told Mustafa that it was just stupid and no-one believes it in there. Mustafa told us that it wasn't about that, and that it just really hurts him to see something like that. *“To me it's like if you say something about my mom, something really bad. I can't do anything about it, but it really just breaks my heart and I wish I never saw it. It hurts Walla.”* We agreed with him because we had seen it too and had similar feelings about it.

There was a sense of solidarity that concentrated on that feeling related to the idea of community and loyalty that we all shared at a specific moment. His distaste for the film was

not necessarily a moral objection but rather one that he felt on a spiritual level. If we can look at the respect for the Prophet Muhammad as a positive ethic, then for Mustafa, the film was disrespectful, and this hit him at a deeper level. *“It’s like it goes against my soul,”* he said.¹⁹ Crucially, this was a particular moment where the interplay between what he felt inside created friction with what he experienced, which made Mustafa react and feel the way he did. As upset as he was that day, this moment eventually passed.

While Sheila reacted to the assembly on a broader level where she felt that the community of Muslims was being misrepresented, Mustafa’s reaction to the film was a more personal reaction. But in his personal reaction to the film, he also found support in his ‘local’ Muslim community with Omar, Rabia and myself who understood what he felt because we had similar feelings about the issue. When considering both these reactions, what is important to distinguish is that these responses and feelings about the Muslim community came out of situations where both Mustafa and Sheila felt threatened, excluded and othered. In their everyday lives, their beliefs and feelings about a specific Muslim community did not emerge in the same way. It was when the notion of difference between them and ‘others’ who are not Muslim became noticeable that their feelings about their identity as Muslims as part of a collective identity became most prominent.

Schisms

Many participants also mentioned the divisions they encountered within ideas of community around ethnic and racial lines. Aisha told me, *“There is a huge borderline between us (South Asians) and them (Arabs). Like in Ramadan. There is an Arab Ramadan iftaar and then there*

¹⁹ This notion is similar to the idea of *‘fitrah’* – the nature of one’s soul. It can also be seen as a constant, Freudian, primordial nature.

is a Pakistani one. I used to go to the Arab one but I stopped because it was annoying. People talked in Arabic the whole time and looked at us funny” (Aisha, aged 15, October 2012). Amber also talked about such ethnic divisions and her relationship with her Arab Muslim friend, Hiba.

Amber (aged 18, April 2012): *See Hiba, I see her at school and we are friends. We eat together and everything. But then at the mosque she’s really obsessed with Arab people. You know she said to me one time “Why do Pakistanis think they can wear whatever when they go to the mosque?”*

Then I saw Hiba was wearing capris at the mosque. I was like “What? What’s that?” and the same day, she had the nerve to say “Why do you guys wear those see-through things on your head. It’s not proper.”

At school, however, they did not have the same kind of issues:

Hiba: *Then at school one day someone said something about my hijab and she totally lost it at them. Like, she totally had my back.*

At school, they are unified but in the Mosque issues around race and what conduct is more Islamic surfaces and causes problems between the two friends. Amber feels a distance due to the fact that she is of Pakistani heritage and that Hiba acts like only Arabs know ‘the true Islam’. At the mosque, issues around practice become conflated with ethnicity and race. Amber feels that Arabs think that they are better Muslims and this feeling is heightened by the things that Hiba says to her. Even within the small community that they live in and their local mosque, there are divisions. Again, these racially discriminatory problems within the ‘community’ can surface and are indicative of wider issues surrounding race and ethnicity that exist on a societal level, where social positions often change according to circumstances.

Fate, and Finding Home

“Verily, to those who believe, with hardship comes ease” (Quran 94:6)

Through this ethnographic work, one of the most significant findings in this research was the ways in which Muslim youth connected spiritual feelings and values to ideas of ‘home’. While ‘finding home’ is not a spiritual value rooted in Islamic tradition or a core ‘positive ethic’ in the way Mahmood (2011) has talked about Islamic values, it was an aspect of life that the young Muslim participants talked about often. As the young Muslims lived within a ‘diaspora space’ (Brah, 2005), as they lived and moved through their everyday worlds, they created new spaces of cultural production and ways of living Islam. Some of the participants often looked to spiritual identities such as fate and spiritual feelings to give them a sense of agency in their changing worlds. This section discusses how spiritual identities were key to the youths’ understandings and negotiations of home, belonging and the reconciliation of their pasts with the present.

Fate

The idea that those who believe, or Muslims, will not suffer endlessly without an alleviation of their suffering is a concept that I often heard from my participants. This was used in everyday situations like studying, when Asia (aged 19) had to pull two ‘all-nighters’ to cram for her final exams. She described the period of ease not only being immediate – for example, that the hardship would end after the exam period – but also that her hard work studying during this time in her life (high school) would lead to an easier time in her life in the future.

During my fieldwork, the war in Syria began to intensify. Many of my participants were from that region or had family there and expressed feelings of great distress, hopelessness and confusion. They often did not know what to do precisely because there was not much they could do but hope for the best – and pray. These moments of prayer and litany, and reflection during difficult times, seemed to be a solace and a comfort to the participants, including those who did not pray or recite litanies regularly. In this sense, prayer does not mean the act of prayer but rather making supplication to God, meditating and reciting litanies, often silently. As they encountered difficult things in their lives, they often looked for some way to understand it. Many could not understand or reconcile such difficult events. However, there were those who voiced a belief in the notion of fate, or *Qadr*, which can be understood as a *divine plan*. This positive ethic or virtue played a role in the way that the participants accepted hardships and difficult situations and came to terms with the often traumatic things that happened in their lives. Some, like Roze, struggled with this notion of a divine plan when she talked about a relative who had cancer, whom she saw as a good practising Muslim who did “*everything she was supposed to, but still got sick*”. This made Roze feel angry and she struggled with understanding ‘the plan’: “*I don't know. I don't get why God would do that*” (Roze, August 2012). Other participants found the spiritual virtue of fate comforting in that what was happening in their life was meant to happen.

Amir (June 2012): *It's hard when everything is always changing. You don't know who you are anymore. Part of you is always lost somewhere else and when you find that part of you, you lose something else. Like when I moved to Canada and I started feeling like I really belonged here, I started to forget a little about what it was like growing up in Lebanon. Then when I went to Dubai and was speaking Arabic more, I started to forget a little about Canada and my life there, my friends, my house, my school. Now*

I'm here (Canada) again and doing the whole thing all over. I mean, am I ever gonna figure it out? I remember all the places, remember walking to the mosque with Jiddu (grandfather) there (in Lebanon) and to the market with Rana (his sister). Whenever I feel bad or even if something awesome happens, this feeling is always there. What is meant to happen will happen. It helps me wherever I go and it reminds me like 'this is who I am. This is what is meant for me'

In the same way that Stuart Hall talked about structure and agency, Amir felt that his Muslimness and the idea of fate gave him the agency to act out and negotiate his other identities within the understanding that everything is happening for a reason. As Hall looks at identity through the engagement of all aspects of cultural life, Amir's story highlights how spiritual beliefs do not always manifest in obvious ways – they are often not spoke about in everyday life. However, this does not mean that they do not play a role in young Muslims' lives, the way they see themselves and their feelings about belonging, staying true to themselves and, ultimately, finding home.

Hall observes that the colonised subject is always “somewhere else: doubly marginalized, displaced, always other than where he or she is, or is able to speak from” (1996c, pp114-115, original emphasis). About his own identity, Hall stated “Thinking about my own sense of identity, I realize it has always depended on being a migrant, on the difference from the rest of you” (ibid.). Like Hall, many of my participants expressed their own identities as migrants, as refugees or as children of migrants – but along with this, they expressed that it was their spiritual feelings about being Muslim that they felt able to draw on for comfort.

To Amir, this otherness was both imposed upon him as well as something that he identified with throughout his life. Wherever he went, he negotiated his otherness in all its facets, including his Muslimness. But he expresses in the statement above that his Muslimness, while also shifting and changing in its expression, still was a defining factor in the way he negotiated belonging. It is a relationship, in many ways, with one's spiritual self as well as an acceptance of their *Qadr* or fate, which during many moments helped the Muslim youth to reconcile with ideas of an imagined home.

Home

When I talked to Sana about her experience living in Egypt and in Canada, I asked her where she found belonging and where she felt like she was at home. She told me *"When my forehead is to the ground, that's the only time I feel it. I close my eyes (while praying) and it feels like everything is going to be OK. Like I'm in the right place. Even if it's just for a minute"*. Here, Sana did not see home as a country or a place; rather, she described home as the feeling she felt when she was praying. This is similar to the way Brah sees diaspora space (1996), where lived experiences and the imagined intersect. Here it is the spiritual – which we can liken to the 'imagined' – and shifting nature of religious and spiritual subjectivities that can play a role in the way that young Muslims see themselves and their experiences in the world.

Many found spiritual and moral ideals from those closer to them like their mothers, fathers, family and friends. Through them, they often found a connection to what they considered sacred and these were also often the ones they turned to when searching for a sense of safety. Almost all of the 42 Muslim youths in this ethnographic study expressed 'a feeling' that they got when they engaged with their spiritual selves. Many of these feelings were related to ideas

of home and belonging on a spiritual level, as some participants expressed that they ultimately ‘found home’ not in a country or a house with friends or family but rather that the idea of home was a feeling within.

Where is home? In other chapters, I talked to the participants about this in relation to Canada and local spaces and the friends and spaces they had made their own. In this chapter, as we look more inwardly, as young Muslims going through the ups and downs of daily life, many of my participants expressed that home could be a feeling or an imagined place, and that belonging was not always found in a physical space, surrounded by walls and people. Belonging could also be a feeling that could be felt simultaneous to the experience of belonging, or despite it. It could also be found within the spirit, within the beliefs that they held onto, and in an internal space that did not threaten their ideas around fate and destiny. These spiritual beliefs changed and shifted and were unique to each individual through their spiritual beliefs and outlooks. It is in this space that Brah’s notion of diaspora space becomes relevant, allowing for different positionalities with regard to ‘home’, both from the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ (Brah, 2005, p14). This way of looking at home, as Brah states, “places the discourse of ‘home’ and ‘diaspora’ in creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins” (2005, p7). For many of my participants, this ‘tension’ was alleviated through spiritual ideals and feelings as they reconciled and negotiated the idea of returning to a home that no longer existed.

Abdi

Abdi (April 2013): *I know I’ll never be able to go back there (to Somalia), I know even if I go back that place isn’t going to be there. Even if my house it’s not there – it will never come back. I was a kid then. I’m not anymore. I used to with my brothers, with*

my friends on the steps of our house after dinner. We used to sit for hours and hours watching everyone coming back from Maghrib. We would wait for our fathers and they came back. That will never come back. That was my home.

Abdi has now made Canada his physical home. His memories of his old life are beautiful, painful, distant and at the same time near. His idea of home is now not a physical place or a country but rather a place in his mind. He moves forward and he tries to create something new and something different – perhaps a different version of home than the one he knew as he creates a life for himself: *“Maybe one day I’ll have kids and they will remember their home the way I remember mine. Maybe for them, it will be only good things, Inshallah, Inshallah (if God wills)”* (Abdi, April 2013). As he told his story, it seemed to me that it was not only a story of loss and displacement but also one of a young boy who in the midst of all these changes, as he moved from country to country, began to leave his childhood behind. He and many others like him will never get that life back and, with that acceptance, there is a sense, a freedom and a longing for home both old and new.

Abdi told me that people in Canada often saw him as a threat and as someone without a past. *“They don’t see past our papers”*, Abdul told me once. *“When they see refugee, you are nothing. They don’t know what I left behind.”* Yet all of the young Muslim migrants in my research did have other lives – people knew their family names, and they were connected to the pasts of the places they lived. Sana told me that in Egypt, everyone knew her grandfather and her great grandfather. They had respect there because people knew their family names. After she came to Canada, according to her, she became a nobody and had to start all over again. *“People think you are a bad thing, like you don’t want to work, like you don’t want to do something good, but God knows what’s in my heart. I can’t let them tell me who I am.”*

Sana said that there was a point that she remembered where she stopped thinking about her old home in Canada when her father was alive. It was only two years before I met her. As life moved on so quickly, the memory of that life, of that home, became as distant in a way as Abdi's memory of Somalia. *"We live in the same house – but it's not the same place after dad is not there"*. Her mother and siblings lived their lives, went to school and worked but when she came home, they still had an empty seat at the table. *"One day I won't see that seat as empty. I will just remember him and remember he good, he is with Allah"* (Sana, June 2012).

Gina

We were at NGen for the Wednesday cooking class. The cooking class was led by either a member of staff or whoever wanted to run it. It was a place for young people to learn a life skill and also to share the food from their different cultural traditions. On this particular day, one of the youths was teaching the class how to make Chinese food. One of the dishes contained pork. Gina helped cook but at the end when everyone was eating said *'I don't eat pork. We don't eat pork'* (March, 2012). At this time, I'd known Gina for over eight months. I had not noticed her talk about her own Muslimness or having any restrictions due to her religion. She had not grown up with religion being a big part of her life. She later told me that she did not remember much about how her mother practised Islam. She didn't remember seeing her pray and she remembered that she used to drink. *"But one thing about my mother is that she never, ever ate pork. When people would serve it, she would say 'no' we are Muslim. We don't eat this pork"* (Gina, March 2012).

Months later, the pork issue came up again. As Gina's mother had been murdered by her boyfriend two years before I met her, at this time, she and her brother were under the care of a couple who were their legal guardians. The couple were Catholic and were old friends of her mother. One day at the youth club, she told us about something that had happened at home.

(Gina, July 2012) *She made us pork chops for dinner. She never did that before. When I asked her about it, she said that food is expensive now that my brother and me are there and pork is cheaper to make. I just stared at it. I didn't eat it. Then I said to her "I'm not eating that. You know we don't eat that". She told me that I'm not even a real Muslim.*

They had a heated argument and Gina refused to eat the pork that she had been given. Her guardian told her that if she didn't eat it then she wasn't getting anything else. Gina's eight-year-old brother then spoke up and said that he wouldn't eat it either. The couple said that he had to eat it – that he was underage and in their care.

They made him eat it:

Gina (July 2012): *I just sat there and watched him eat it. He ate it so slowly. We sat there for ages just watching him eat. He kept looking at me and I tried to make him feel better. I smiled at him. He kept eating. It was killing me. But I didn't want him to feel bad. Have you ever had pork chops?*

Me: *No, I haven't.*

Gina: *So finally he finished. Then this little boy, my baby. He looked at her and said, "When I'm old enough to do what I want, I will never eat pork again". Can you believe that? Mama would be so proud. Do you know what his name means (in English), my brother?*

Me: *No, I don't.*

Gina: “ _____ ” *(name withheld for anonymity). It means revolutionary life.*

He's going to hang on to it. He won't let them change him.

When people talk about Islam and Muslims, most people know that eating the meat of pigs is unlawful in Islamic law. Being Muslim is often reduced to these practices in Islam: most people know that Muslims pray, fast, don't drink and don't eat pork. When I started this research, I wanted to move away from these essentialised understandings of Islam and explore how being Muslim was more than this for many of these youths. I thought that the restriction of not eating pork was a part of Islam but not the core of what it means to be Muslim. When I heard this story from Gina, I reflected on my own understanding of this point. These young Muslims have gained their spiritual connection from a multitude of things, and for Gina, it came from not eating pork. And more than that, it gave her a feeling of home.

Gina (March 2012): *When someone offers it (pork) to me, it reminds me of my mom. How strong she was in her faith. Then I think about all the times we sat at the table... when we were all together you know, at our house. Or I'd come home and find mom cooking and I could smell it when I came up the road. Amazing things. Mostly the bread, the Turkish (bread) she would make was...wow. But no. No. No pork ever....*

When I don't eat it (pork), it reminds me of mama. It makes me feel like a kind of connection to her? And also, I don't know. It makes me feel good inside. Like I'm close to God. Like I made God happy because I'm doing what I know. When I do that, you know, I'm doing a good thing I think. I think if I'm good I'll see her again. Like one day... we will all be together again. To me, that is my real home.

Abdi, Sana and Gina all talked about the idea of home being a place that did not exist anymore in ‘this world’ but one they sought to find. Their memories often gave them peace but more than that, their spiritual feelings about home linked the idea of home to a spiritual place or way of thinking. Not eating pork makes Gina feel close to her mother, and when her brother was forced to eat it, it upset her. Regardless, she sees this tribulation as temporary and recognises the tension between where she is and ‘her real home’. This act of refraining from eating pork, as well as being ‘good’, is given a deeper meaning and imbued by her spiritual identity. And through that, she hopes one day she will find that home again.

Concluding Thoughts

The youths in this research often looked to their spiritual beliefs to get them through difficult times in life, to celebrate good times, and to help reconcile their past lives with their present and future. They also saw home as a place that was part of their spirituality – not a physical space but one that existed in an imagined, spiritual home. Although not all of their experiences with their spiritual identity were positive, they drew on them to negotiate their cultural contexts, histories, ethnicities, gender and class. In line with Hall’s conception of identities, these notions of identity intersected with the ways in which they connected to their spiritual identities, which were also fluid, shifting and malleable and could not be seen as ‘one true identity’ which was superior to all of their other identities.

This chapter has demonstrated the multitudes of Islams, based on spirituality, which the study participants connected to their Muslimness. These ideas were *feelings* and articulations of Muslimness linked to ‘positive ethics’ (Mahmood, 2011) and spiritual ideals, which I have

called *spiritual identities*. I have demonstrated that among other things, spiritual identities can relate to the positive ethics of community, duty to parents, and a relationship with God and the Prophet Muhammad. For my participants, these spiritual identities were at the core of their Muslimness, as many of them did not perform other notions of Muslimness related to praxis or rituals. When discussing the everyday lives of Muslim youth, it is often these ideas of Muslimness that are intangible and not always recognisable, but rather felt and articulated in specific ways that are not often considered. For my participants, it was these spiritual ways of thinking about being Muslim that were important in the way they saw themselves. These spiritual identities imbued many aspects of their lives, at different times and places, gave them a sense of agency and played an important part in reconciling simultaneous tensions of belonging and not belonging, and of loss and longing for an imagined home.

CONCLUSION: ALCHEMIES

“I like this line a lot that I heard it one time in a movie, and... I keep having it in my head because I love it. I don’t know who said it, but it goes like this, it says, “People will tell you who you are, until you tell the world”. That’s stuck in my head because yeah people will tell you who you are but they don’t really know. You should stay true to yourself and accept who you are and not listen to what other people say. I should be the one to tell the world who I am, what’s my story? I sure as hell am not going to let them tell me. For years now, it stuck in my head and I keep going with it. That’s what I do, and that’s what I’m going to keep doing”.

(Anna, June 2012).

When it comes to ‘the issue’ of Muslim youth, the problem with listening uncritically and, by default, accepting the positions of some voices we have heard again and again, is that discourses shift in certain trajectories and often away from the people who are affected most by those discourses. Those who have been given platforms to speak about Muslim youth often have little interaction with youths themselves. Those positions of consultation and pontification are also normally reserved for those with money and a degree of privilege. They are usually not the poor, young, black and brown folk amongst us, and they most certainly are not Muslim youth. Rather, those conversations around Muslim youth tend to focus disproportionately on issues involving security, ‘integration’ and accommodation, and are confined to government roundtables, boardrooms, consultations and focus groups. My aims, on the other hand, in this research, have been not to address the ‘problem’ of Muslim youth, offering a series of solutions and 12-step plans, but rather to broaden our understanding of the nature of being a Muslim

youth in Canada: what they view as important and what we can learn from the encounters and experiences they have in their everyday life. It is an effort to delve deeper into the things that matter to Muslim youth and what they hold to be important and relevant to their lives, rather than what they are asked to deem important or what is imposed upon them. My interest is not to offer a ‘solution’ to the problem but rather to query the way we frame work around Muslim youth, in an effort to get to the pertinent, relevant issues and concerns they face in their everyday life. In this research, I have explored the meanings Muslim youth bring to the banal and mundane happenings in their everyday life and consider the role that their environments, relationships and convivial encounters play and the lenses through which they see the world. In an effort to increase our understanding of what being a Muslim means to them, in Les Back’s words, “political focus groups are not really about the kind of attention I am arguing for” (Back, 2014). What is lost when we focus only on politicised issues and media stories of Muslim youth are the alchemies of experiences, feelings, intersections, spiritualities, and identities that Muslim youths negotiate, and more importantly, what they bring to the spaces, communities, and countries they live in as they move through everyday life. What gets lost are voices like Anna’s.

Anna wanted to be in theatre. She fought with her sister constantly but said she could never live without her. Anna fought to keep the youth club open. She was also put into an ESL programme due to her accent despite her perfect English scores. Yet she went along with it because her friends were also put in the ESL class and she didn’t want to miss out on the fun. Anna was a Muslim but she was, at the same time, many other things. When I met Anna, I didn’t really understand what being Muslim meant to her, or what things mattered to her in her everyday life. She told me a lot of things though, which I dutifully wrote down in my notebook. Then one day when we were talking, she abruptly stopped what she was saying (Anna, January

2011). I looked at her and she said, “*YOU’RE NOT LISTENING!!!*” I told her that I was listening and repeated what she had just told me. “*BUT STILL, YOU ARE NOT LISTENING!*” she said. She was right. I was and at the same time I wasn’t. This is often the challenge for ethnographers – to learn the ‘art of listening’ while talking to our participants (Back, 2007). On this matter, Back has stated “The main lesson offered here is that listening is not merely the instrumental extraction of information or a matter of ‘ticking the box’ of consultation” (Back, 2017). It is rather an art which requires listening attentively, engagement, sharing and listening to participants with a genuine sense of interest, respect and compassion.

So I put down my pen and paper and began to try to *listen*. “*Just record it on your iPhone*”, Anna said helpfully, “*in case you’re worried you’ll forget*” (Anna, January 2011). And that is what I did from that point on and for the rest of my fieldwork. It was only through the process of this kind of listening that I was able to engage in the research in a more meaningful way and, in doing so, was open to the many things about Muslim youths’ lives I had not anticipated when I started my research. Through this type of listening, I was able to get a better sense of what mattered to someone like Anna, what her concerns and hopes were as she went through her daily life, and what it was that she wanted to “*tell the world*” (Anna, June 2012).

On the Future of Muslim Youth in Canada

When it comes to Muslim youth, we continue to hear about those who have ‘been radicalised,’ focusing on the stories of the few rather than the many. We hear that one of the issues pertinent to Muslim youth is ‘foreign policy’. On this matter, a former CSIS analyst, specialising in homegrown terrorism and violent extremism, said he found that Canada’s foreign policies played a significant role in the radicalisation of some individuals (CBC News, May 13, 2016).

In my research, I found that Muslim youth (my participants) were largely not actively engaged in issues around politics, foreign policy and multiculturalism in the way they spoke or through their experiences and performances in everyday life. Certainly, specific research on radicalisation cannot be used to make wider conclusions (or assumptions about Muslim youth as a whole). I would suggest that the emphasis on radicalisation and cases like that of the American Muslim boy Ahmed Mohammed, arrested for making a homemade clock for his engineering class, could impact on Muslim youth and their sense of belonging far more than the politics of what is going on halfway around the world. Such incidents are much closer to home and perhaps more immediately relevant.

As I mentioned in my introductory chapter, one of the moments in my life that raised the questions I have explored in this research was what happened to one of my students who, at the age of 18, was arrested and convicted as one of the ‘Toronto 18’ for “conspiracy and intent to commit acts of terror on Canadian soil” (Teontino, 2006). After being convicted and serving time, in 2015 he was granted day parole “with special conditions that included avoiding contact with those involved in criminal activity and a requirement to participate in religious counselling to deal with religious extremism” (CBC News, October 1, 2015). What this religious counselling looked like is unknown but I would contend that perhaps the best thing we can do as sociologists is to work to create new spaces and ways of talking about these issues, giving young people, Muslim and not, ‘safe spaces’ where they are listened to and where their everyday experiences have meaning and value. These conversations will not single-handedly stop terrorism, sexism, Islamophobia, inequality or racism, or indeed on their own heal the wounds of our intersecting histories of violence nor quench the thirst of empire. But they are a place to start.

This Research

This thesis covers a diverse group of youth: multi-ethnic, mixed ethnicities, differentiated classes, a wide range of religious practices and understandings, multilingual, and from varied migration and immigration backgrounds. What they all share is that they all self-identify as Muslim. The strength of this sample is that I have been able to view the intersections of race, class, gender and age through the experiences of these Muslim youths. In a Canadian context, it was possible to do this because this diversity is not so unique or something that I needed to seek out. Rather it is a reality of everyday life in the cities and towns across Southern Ontario. The Canadian context here is crucial, even though it is often a country that looks ‘sort of American’. While references are made to a wide range of theoretical positions, the understanding that is gained is uniquely, apologetically, unequivocally Canadian. With the world looking to Canada as a model for multiculturalism, liberalism and integration (Adams, 2007), this is a significant contribution not only to understanding the everyday life of young Muslims but how multiculturalism is lived, fought for and negotiated.

This research tends to shift away from governmental language of policy and integration. As Stuart Hall said, “Politics is often the source of a spectacle designed to divert you from what is really important” (Hall, 2010). What is important at this time is a greater understanding of how multiculturalism is lived, in this case by Muslim youth, who are often demonised and treated with suspect. This research is an attempt to help us understand the everyday ways in which young Muslims see Canada and the communities they live in and the way they see themselves not only as Muslims but as people.

To begin to understand how my young Muslim study participants lead their lives, there is a need for research from the ground up, away from just policy discussions and responses to world

events. The ethnographic methods are crucial here because in using them, we begin to understand what the nature of their everyday life is. This research aims to push the existing field of work in the areas of race and ethnicity to include an examination of religious identity. The examination of 'Muslimness' tends to concentrate on praxis, inclusion and accommodation. What is often left unexplored is what it means for young people to be Muslim and what this can tell us about their identity and the way they see their lives and the contexts around them. If religious self-identity is expressed by Muslim youths, then it is crucial we find a discursive and theoretical language to engage with it, otherwise we will miss out on the fullest picture of what their daily lives look like, how they find – and feel – belonging and how they define home.

The purpose of this study has been to explore what being a Muslim youth meant to my participants. I found that as a Muslim youth lives their life every day, different identities and identifications become relevant in different situations. This is due in part to their positionality within certain situations as well as their own desires, wants and needs. In order to present this diversity of experiences, I have conducted my research in spaces that are 'for Muslims' as well as neutral (not affiliated with religion) such as youth clubs, malls and spaces where youth hang out to consider the breadth of experiences and also to highlight the ways identities are negotiated in different times and places. In doing so, I have aimed to break down the perceived essentialism about the lives of Muslim youth and have shown how intersections of age, class, race, ethnicity as well as their own personal diasporic histories play a role on how young Muslims experience everyday life in Canada. I argue that if we are to look at identities, for example as Hall (1990) does as multidimensional, complicated, intersecting and shifting, then we must look at religious, Muslim identities in the same way – not just as experiences but as ways of becoming. I argue that utilising ethnographic methods, such as participant observation

and interviews, provides greater understanding of Muslimness and the impact of this identity formation on Muslim youth. Participant observation has been invaluable in considering the role of everyday encounters, happenings and how they shape youths' identities, sense of belonging and feelings of home. Through exploration of the issues and challenges Muslim youths face every day, I have found that Muslim youths do not always see themselves as 'Muslim' first. Rather, explicit Muslim identities surface and become relevant in certain times and places.

I have also argued that if we are to look at Muslim identities in the way that Hall looked at 'identities', as both necessary and 'impossible', we must open up new spaces of research. In this thesis, I have found that spiritual identities and the values and ideals that young Muslim connect to are vital in understanding the breadth of experiences and feelings that imbue Muslim lives. Spiritual identities have also been key to providing Muslim youth with agency in a world where they are positioned as marginalised, subordinate and at the same time as a group to be feared, dangerous and as 'other'.

In Chapter Three, I explored the role of national belonging in Muslim youths' everyday lives. I demonstrated the impact that their diverse 'arrivals' and routes that brought them to Canada had on their sense of belonging and identifying as Canadian. I found that ideas of national belonging and being Canadian were not issues that the young Muslim participants talked about every day. Rather, these notions surfaced in specific moments and encounters. Many expressed that to them, Canadian meant 'being white' – a notion that was further underlined in their experiences everyday as racialised people. These experiences of belonging with the 'nation' intersected with their own personal histories as well as with their social locations, class positioning, races, ethnicities, genders, age and Muslimness. These identities were negotiated,

shifting and unfixed. They also produced new cultures of belonging in Canada through the intersections of their collective performances and ways of ‘being Canadian’.

In Chapter Four, I turned to the local spaces in which young Muslims ‘hung out’ in everyday life. These included shopping malls, public transport and cars, which were spaces where my participants spent a large portion of their free time. This discussion illustrated the key role that consumerism played in participants’ performances of belonging, especially for Muslim girls. These were also spaces where my participants felt free as they were not supervised in the way they were at home and at school; however, the Muslim boys and girls were surveilled in these environments in different ways according to their social positioning and backgrounds. Girls were often surveilled by salespeople in stores while the boys, who hung out mostly in the food courts, would regularly be surveilled by mall security guards. The ways in which both boys and girls negotiated these encounters were impacted by their class positioning, disposable income as well as through individuals’ ‘exceptional qualities’, or buffers.

Having money impacted not only where the youth hung out but their mode of travel also, whether it be by car or bus. Those in cars tended to be those who had more money and who, through their relative privacy in their cars, had less racist interactions with other people. Those using public transportation had more Islamophobic and racist encounters as well as more positive convivial interactions with the public. This chapter demonstrated the crucial role that consumerism and ‘having money’ can play not only where Muslim youths hang out but in terms of what they do when they hang out, how they are treated, how they negotiate situations as well as the ways in which they get from place to place. These local spaces, and the important role they play in identity construction and negotiation, were more relevant to my participants’ lives than larger national and international narratives.

In Chapter Five, I explored the role of spirituality in the lives of Muslim youths. I purposely left the discussion of spirituality to the end of this thesis. The rationale behind this was to establish first the ways in which the participants' religious identities intersect with other identities and surface 'naturally' in everyday life. There were two reasons behind this rationale. Firstly, this was to highlight how participants' interactions and performances often differed from the ways they think about them, what they intend to do and their perceptions and feelings around spiritual identities. In an effort to move towards a more 'live sociology' (Back, 2012), this distinction is important and makes both interviews and participant observation necessary components of this research, as both broaden our understanding of Muslimness and the interplay between the social and the psychic (Brah, 2009) and the discrepancies between them.

As words cannot simply be enough on their own to understand Muslimness and its sociological significance, participant observation, performances and encounters that took place could not have been explored through interviews alone for these discussions are not and should not be simple matters of data 'extraction' but rather should be built on trust and empathy, which can expand the ways in which we see how youths see Muslimness in their everyday lives. Notably, the ways in which participants performed Muslimness were often different to the ways they articulated their Muslimness and spirituality.

In this chapter, I also developed the concept of 'spiritual identity', which draws on the work of Saba Mahmood on 'positive ethics' and expands it further to include youths' interpretations of spiritual ideals as they intersect with other aspects of identity. It connects the idea of spirituality to the importance of feelings, in the way Williams (1977) saw feelings as being important to identity as for many of the youths, their spiritual feelings were central to their Muslimness.

Last, I have utilised Hall's conception of identity as fluid and unfixed, both necessary and impossible (Hall, 1990, 1996) and connected it to religious and spiritual identities, which must be seen in the same way rather than being seen as a 'master identity' that informs all other identities. This illustrates the need to see Muslim youths as youths who are also Muslim rather than seeing them as 'Muslim first', which is a departure from the way Mahmood has positioned spiritual aspects of Muslimness in her work (Mahmood, 2011).

In conceptualising spiritual identities, I have also highlighted the importance of giving full consideration and value to young Muslims' articulations of their spiritual identities and how they imbue their lives and ways of feeling and thinking. Interviews and conversations were essential in expanding understandings of Muslimness to include spiritual ideals and ethics as well as how these identities link to broader understandings of belonging and home. This has also helped develop the notion that religious identities and spiritual identities can at times be seen as separate from each other, and sometimes overlapping and intersecting, and indeed gave different perspectives to the ways my participants see the world around them. These are homes and belongings that are imagined, felt, and longed for by participants. Seeing home and belonging through a spiritual lens within the worlds Muslim youths live in, and often in difficult life circumstances, can provide a sense of agency, feelings of comfort, safety and, most of all, hope.

Contributions to the field

This thesis has explored the nature of everyday life for Muslim youth in Canada and what being Muslim means to them. It contributes to the fields of youth studies, Muslim youth, Muslim identity, race and ethnicity, and geographies of space.

In this research, it has been found that being Muslim means different things to different youth. It has also been found that youth are seen as Muslim at times and, at other times, are not. This contributes to the understanding of the ways in which Muslim youth negotiate multiple and overlapping identities, the way others see them, and the way their identities, including spiritual identities, shift and change. Race, gender and class play significant roles in the way these identities are negotiated. It has also been argued that there are times where being Muslim and believing in Islam is 'too different'. This is where the dichotomies of secularity, religiosity, fascination and fear also play a role, in addition to race, class and gender.

This thesis also addresses the problems of researching everyday life through pre-conceived frames. This problem was addressed by using ethnographic methods, highlighting key issues that arose out of participant observation as they came about in everyday life. Crucially, by researching in spaces that are not 'only Muslim' or dictated by religious authorities and social spaces, such as the youth club which had both non-Muslim and Muslim members, I was able to address the nature of youths' everyday lives in the ways they actually live them. These everyday lives are spent with 'others', both non-Muslim and Muslim, and in the spaces which they ordinarily spend time as they go through their day to day activities.

My work has also focused on belonging, an issue that emerged out of the ethnographic fieldwork and the interviews. Initially the intended focus was on post-9/11 narratives and multicultural policy in Canada, however early on in my field work, even after the 10 year anniversary of 9/11, these were not themes that young people talked about and engaged in as part of their everyday lives. Rather, the complexity of belonging and how the intersections of class, race, religion, age and gender played into this, were negotiated in different times and places, and the way these overlapped and shifted were prominent features of their daily lives -

their encounters and interactions. The focus on spirituality, in the last chapter, also complicates the essentialisms of Muslimness, what being Muslim means and what it looks like.

Through this ethnographic research, I have demonstrated the need for studying Muslim youth while considering their multiple, overlapping and shifting identities as they move through their everyday environments, as they interact with other people, both Muslim and non-Muslim, and as they go about their daily lives. This type of research is needed to further our understanding of how their identities intersect and change, what aspects become important at different times and places, rather than trying to gauge some understanding of Muslim youth by only looking at their perceived Muslimness – a group observed through a glass box, in isolation and with fascination. What I found was that my participants, while living in Canada were largely ambivalent to the idea of ‘being Canadian’, a notion which many felt excluded from due to their ethnic and religious identities.

Overall, there are four key contributions made in this thesis.

Firstly –to reiterate an essential argument of this research – by looking at the everyday lives of Muslim youth it can be seen how young Muslims are the same as other youth, but also different. There is currently not much data on Muslim youth in the Canadian context or elsewhere that takes into account their multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-diasporic nature and experiences. These youth negotiate both urban and suburban spaces. They also negotiate and express multiple forms of religiosity.

Secondly, taking the above into consideration, there are some key areas where Muslimness becomes more important. They are: family life, dealing with difficult situations, values of belonging and being seen as Canadian, identity construction and negotiation, spiritual matters

and belief in oneself. Identifying as Muslim also becomes relevant in cases where youth felt ‘on the spot’, where they needed to defend their Muslimness or other Muslims, as was the case in the story of Sheila and the 9/11 memorial presentation at her school. Perhaps most importantly, this research illustrates that being Muslim is not confined to ritual or identity politics but can also play an important role in the ways youth think about their future and aspirations and the kind of people they want to be. These ways of looking at religious life are essential in areas such as youth or multicultural policy that often concentrates on ritual and essentialised notions of Muslimness. Without looking at the role of religious life in young people’s lives and the role that spirituality plays in the way they negotiate belonging as this research does, policy discourses and academic work will continue to focus around issues that do not truly address the needs and realities of Muslim youth in everyday life but rather offer essentialised representations that are imposed upon them (Nayak, 2017, Archer, 2002).

Third, this thesis highlights the key role that the ‘routes’ Muslim youth took to ‘becoming Canadian’ played in their identities and how those routes affected the ways in which they found belonging in Canada. Many felt that no matter what they did, it was not enough to belong. Despite these feelings of ‘not belonging’, participants continued to engage in the daily aspects of Canadian life and sought to find belonging in their everyday spaces, with their friends and particularly in spaces they felt they could be ‘themselves’, individually and as a group. These spaces also had their own exclusions: exclusions of class, through spending power, and exclusions of race and gender, as Muslim youth were surveilled in differently in these spaces than they were ‘on the street’. In malls for instance, they were surveilled by security guards and salespeople. In these cases larger narratives around Muslims, racialized people, migrants and refugees, youth and class became relevant in the local spaces they ‘hung out’ in, and to understand what they did while hanging out. In these cases youth utilised whatever ‘tactics’ (De Certeau, 1988) they could to ‘get by’, so they could continue to be in these spaces, and

with their friends. It was in these spaces that Black Muslim boys had the most difficulty, a symptom of the larger narratives around race, refugees and criminalisation connected to Somali youth (Berns-McGowan, 2013) in particular.

Although this research is situated in Canada, it also contributes to wider debates around multiculturalism, Muslim youth, ideas of home, diaspora and belonging and the nature of what it means to be a Muslim in the context of the nation state. The current understanding and the recent past of Canada's multicultural identity and has left void on what life actually looks like, specifically to Muslims and Muslim youth and this thesis makes an intervention on the way Muslim youth encounter and are challenged by Canada's multicultural legacy. It also highlights how life in Canada is connected to the global flows of diaspora, migration and Muslim identity. Cultural production for Muslim youth in Canada is unique given its spatial and demographic particularities, history, national narratives and flows on migration. At the same time, it is connected to other types of cultures, multicultures and debates that we see in the rest of the world.

Last, I have developed and used the term "spiritual identities" to broaden to the way we as sociologists can look at 'religion' and 'spirituality' and its role in everyday life, especially for Muslim youth. The 'crisis of faith' among secularists (Habermas, 2008) points not a to the fact that we are moving towards post-secular but rather the way in which we study religion and spirituality in western and secular contexts, as it is lived, must expanded in ways that were previously ignored. For people who value religion, religion has always been a part of life.

Through my research, I found that Muslim youth interpreted these spiritual ideals, rooted to their understanding of Islam in a way that was relevant to their lives, aspirations, realities and spiritual feelings. These spiritual identities and the way they were interpreted by youth were

specific to individuals, were fluid and changing and did not always correspond to the ways they lived their everyday lives, nor to 'normative' Islamic interpretations of text and tradition.

Rather, through the intersection of spiritual identities new ways of being Muslim were produced, consistent with the ways we see diaspora space as an 'interpretive frame' (Brah, 2005), however the 'frame' of Muslimness was not always one that took precedence, but became relevant in different ways, spaces and times. Muslim youth articulated feelings about spirituality in different ways that they viewed as core to what being Muslim meant to them.

I have also contributed to the idea that 'home' can be seen as an 'imagined home' in the way Brah (2005) has talked homes. However, when connecting spiritual identities to the idea of home, many participants viewed home as a spiritual place, which they often carried with them and which gave them agency in dealing with their past and present circumstances. Muslim youth saw this idea of home as one that is not only 'imagined', but, with faith, as one that will one day be realised.

In this research, I am making an original contribution on how we can look at spirituality, and what that means to young people in everyday life. It illustrates how spirituality, or spiritual ideals are in some ways connected to other aspects of their lives as well connected to Islam. I conclude that even spirituality is negotiated, that is changes and shifts - often in a way that suits young people's lives and personal circumstances.

So much policy and work around Muslim youth is based on a simplistic understanding of Muslimness, without giving consideration to how they interpret and interact with spirituality and religion or the things that challenge them, their everyday struggles and concerns and what makes them feel like they don't belong. The exploration of these concerns I've presented here are much more complex - issues to do with class, race, ethnicity, access to wealth, the struggle to be accepted even when there is a will – and cannot ultimately be explained by simplistic

readings of Muslimness nor the alienation and anger that may arise about what is going on in other parts of the world. Muslim youths' struggles are much more ordinary, mundane and closer to home.

Finally, this thesis contributes to the field by broadening and deepening an understanding of how Muslim youth live the everyday, given their different ethnicities, skin colour, class positioning, and levels of religious practice. It pays attention to how their Muslimness and intersects with other identities, the social and the physic. It also respects the idea of faithfulness that may be linked to God but also acknowledges that Muslim spirituality as expressed by these youth is 'ordinary'. Crucially, this research opens up a space for talking about how religion can also be a positive force in young Muslim lives and something that can play a key role in belonging, feeling like they belong, be it nationally or locally and how they find home.

Closing Thoughts: Future Considerations

This thesis has explored the nature of everyday life for young Muslims in Canada with honesty and attuned to complexity, to seek to understand what these experiences look like, to listen and observe a whole range of processes – of diaspora, belonging, spirituality, growing up – and to negotiate the multiplicities of identities and belongings. Most of the time this is negotiated without careful deliberation but rather intuitively, with an impulse to belong, to find home, and to do what they feel is right in order to get through everyday life with a sense of anticipation and hope for the future.

So much has changed since I completed my fieldwork in 2013, yet much has also stayed the same. Canada now has a Liberal Prime Minister after ten years of Conservative leadership. ISIS has replaced Al Qaeda as the new violent 'Islamist' threat. The Black Lives Matter

movement has started to address some of the pervasive racisms many of my participants faced. Donald Trump is President of the United States. The refugee crisis has now reached epic heights. Political and social contexts have indeed changed, at times, dramatically. But has everyday life for Muslim youths changed? Have the textures of daily interactions and convivial encounters shifted drastically? Or have the ways in which the role these larger questions play in Muslim youths' lives become more salient? Do they still look to spiritual identities to help them negotiate life? Are racisms, sexism and class politics now less important for them? My guess – my educated guess – is that this is not the case.

I recently saw one of my participants, Zayn, who is now 24. He came to visit me at LSE (January 2017). He has graduated from university now. “*Before you graduate!*”, he teased me. “*Ask me some questions!*” he said. So I asked him one: “Do you think you’ve changed very much since then?” What he told me was that many of the things that went on in his life had changed, but life is “*pretty much the same, but I’m just doing something else*”. We talked more about his everyday interactions – ones that continued to intersect with the boundaries of race, gender and social economic class, Islamophobia, and age but now not as a teenager but as a young millennial. After talking a bit more, I could tell that many things in his life have also changed but still, “*the Leafs still haven’t won the Stanley Cup, so I guess too much hasn’t changed at all!*”, he joked. “*I guess in some ways I’m a bit sure about myself now*”, he reflected. “*I guess I’m more okay with myself now, you know*”? I got some sense of that as we walked through Covent Garden. He was definitely more outgoing and confident in the way he interacted with others. And he seemed happier than when I saw him last.

I would like to go back and revisit more of my participants to do a follow-up study. I have stayed in touch with many of them and through the filter of social media I have had a glimpse

of what is going on in their new, adult lives. And things have changed. My research took place during a specific time in their lives and indeed within a specific time in Canada. Most of my participants were teenagers, or at the very most, had just graduated from high school. Some had been in the country for only a year. Now many of them are in university or college, some have full-time jobs, one got signed by a professional sports team, three are married, and one just had a baby. Many have left Canada and while those who have stayed have maintained their friendships, those daily after-school hangouts at the mall now take place on the weekends. I am interested in revisiting them and seeing how life has moved in other ways, when it comes to matters of Muslimness and spirituality and the role that those things might play in their lives now. I would like to revisit the question of what being Muslim means to them now.

A few years after I finished my fieldwork, my father was in a hospital, minutes away from many of my field sites. Many of the participants came with flowers, food and prayers. I have a sense of what has changed and also of how some things have stayed the same. I look to them now not as my participants but as people who have taught me what it means to live a life that embraces, often with no choice, uncertainty and change, and most of all how to negotiate life in a world that underestimates one's true capacity for goodness. They taught me about resilience and hope.

The 'Muslim question' (Kazemipur, 2014) continues to be of importance to policy-makers, governments, academia. If we are to see the 'bigger picture', the discussions must address the role that religion and spirituality plays in the life of Muslims and other people of faith. Spiritual identities must be seen as they intersect with everyday life experiences, changes and belongings. This work could be explored further by looking at wider networks of relationships and how Muslimness intersects with those relationships. This work could be expanded to other

countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, which share many of the features that Muslim youth in Canada experience but within different national narratives and local particularities. The roles of gender and class and their relationship with Muslimness and spirituality can also be an avenue for further research. In an effort to make sociology more 'live' rather than 'dead' (Back, 2012), looking at spirituality and researching further notions of feelings and the senses can be valuable further sociological research on Muslim youth and to ethnographic work in other settings.

REFERENCES

- ABU-LABAN, Y. & GABRIEL, C. 2002. *Selling diversity: Immigration, multiculturalism, employment equity, and globalization*, New York; Ontario, University of Toronto Press.
- ABU-LUGHOD, L. 2008. Writing against culture. In *The Cultural Geography Reader* (pp. 62-71). Routledge.
- ABU-LUGHOD, L. 2006. The Muslim Woman. *Online Version, consultado el, 31*.
- ABU-LUGHOD, L. 1995. 10 Comparing Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles: testing some world cities hypotheses. *World Cities in a World-system*, p.171.
- ACTIVISION. 2015. Call of Duty. <https://www.callofduty.com/uk/en> [Accessed January 23, 2015].
- ADAMS, M. 2008. *Unlikely utopia: The surprising triumph of Canadian multiculturalism*, Canada, Penguin.
- ALEXANDER, C. 2004. Imagining the Asian gang: ethnicity, masculinity and youth after 'the riots'. *Critical Social Policy*, 24, 526-549.
- ALEXANDER, C. The limits of identity theory. Documento de trabajo presentado en el ESRC Identities Programme Conference, Aston University, 2006.
- ALEXANDER, C. E. 2000. *The Asian gang: Ethnicity, identity, masculinity*, Oxford, Berg Publishers.

- ALI, A. I. 2014. A threat enfleshed: Muslim college students situate their identities amidst portrayals of Muslim violence and terror. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, 27, 1243-1261.
- ALI, S. 2003. *Mixed-race, post-race: Gender, new ethnicities and cultural practices*, Oxford; New York, Berg.
- ALI, S. 2004. *Reading racialised bodies: learning to see difference*, Wiley Online Library.
- ALI, S. 2006. Racializing research: Managing power and politics? *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29, 471-486.
- ALLEN, C. 2010. *Islamophobia*, Farnham, Ashgate.
- AMIN, A. 2002. Ethnicity and the multicultural city: living with diversity. *Environment and planning A*, 34, 959-980.
- ANDERSON, K. 1996. Engendering race research: unsettling the self-other dichotomy. In: DUNCAN, N. (ed.) *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, New York: Routledge.
- ANDREW, C. 2004. Our Diverse Cities. Canadian Heritage Multiculturalism.
- ARCHER, L. 2005. Muslim adolescents in Europe. Developing Identities among Adolescents. *European Issues*, pp.55-70.
- ARCHER, L., 2002. Change, Culture and Tradition: British Muslim pupils talk about Muslim girls' post-16'choices'. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 5(4), pp.359-376.

- ASAD, T. 2003. *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, modernity*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- ASAD, T. 2007. *On suicide bombing*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- BACK, L. 2005. Home from Home": Youth, Belonging and Place'. *Making Race Matter: Bodies, Space and Identity*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 19-41.
- BACK, L., 1996. New Ethnicities and Urban Culture: Racisms and multiculturalism in young lives.
- BACK, L. & SOLOMOS, J. 2000. *Theories of race and racism: A reader*, Psychology Press.
- BACK, L., 2007. *The art of listening*, Berg.
- BACK, L., 2010. Broken devices and new opportunities: Re-imagining the tools of qualitative research. ESRC.
- BACK, L., 2012. Live sociology: social research and its futures. *The Sociological Review*, 60(S1), 18-39.
- BAKHT, N. 2008. *Belonging and banishment: being Muslim in Canada*, Tsar Pubns.
- BANNERJI, H. 2000. *The dark side of the nation: Essays on multiculturalism, nationalism and gender*, Canadian Scholars' Press.
- BARTH, F. 2010. Introduction to ethnic groups and boundaries: the social organization of cultural difference. *Selected Studies in International Migration*

and Immigrant Incorporation, 1, 407.

BAYAT, A. and HERRERA, L. eds., 2010. *Being young and Muslim: New cultural politics in the global south and north*. Oxford University Press.

BBC News. October 1, 2003. "US 9/11 revenge killer convicted".

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/3154170.stm> [Accessed May 2, 2011]. British Broadcasting Corporation.

BEHRQAKIS, Y. November 12, 2017. "Canada's Refugee Plan- What we know so far".

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/canadas-new-refugee-plan-what-we-know-and-dont-know-sofar/article27476421/> [Accessed December 2, 2017]. The Globe and Mail.

BENSON, M. 2015. On Goffman: Ethnography and the Ethics of Care.

<https://www.thesociologicalreview.com/blog/on-goffman-ethnography-and-the-ethics-of-care.html> [Accessed, December 2017]. The Sociological Review.

BERNS-MCGOWN, R., 2013. " I Am Canadian": Challenging Stereotypes about Young Somali Canadians. *IRPP Study*, (38), p.1.

BEYER, P. 2005. Religious identity and educational attainment among recent immigrants to Canada: Gender, age, and 2nd generation. *Journal of International Migration and Integration/Revue de l'integration et de la migration internationale*, 6, 177-199.

BHABHA, F. A. 2003. Tracking Terrorists' or Solidifying Tereotypes-Canada's Anti-

- Terrorism Act in Light of the Charter's Equality Guarantee. *Windsor Rev. Legal & Soc. Issues*, 16, 95.
- BHABHA, H. 1994. *The location of culture*, London; New York, Routledge.
- BIBBY, R. 2002. *Restless gods*, Toronto, Stoddart.
- BIBBY, R. W. 1987. *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada*, Toronto. Irwin publishing.
- BIBBY, R. W. 2004. *Restless churches: How Canada's churches can contribute to the emerging religious renaissance*, Novalis.
- BIBBY, R. W. & POSTERSKI, D. C. 1992. *Teen trends: A nation in motion*, Musson Book Company.
- BILES, J., BERSTEIN, M., FRIDERES, J. 2008. Immigration and Integration in Canada in the Twenty-first Century, Queen's Policy Studies - School of Policy.
- BOUCHARD, G. & TAYLOR, C. 2008. *Building the future: A time for reconciliation: Abridged report*, Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles.
- BRAH, A., 2005. Cartographies of diaspora: Contesting identities. Routledge.
- BRAH, A. 1994. South Asian young Muslim Women and the labour market. *The Dynamics of "Race" and Gender. Some Feminist Interventions*, 151-171. Routledge.
- BRAH, A. 1999. The scent of memory: strangers, our own, and others. *Feminist Review*, 61, 4-26.

BRAKE, M. 1985. *Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth Cultures and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain, and Canada.*

BRAMADAT, P. & SELJAK, D. 2008. *Christianity and ethnicity in Canada*, University of Toronto Press.

BRAMADAT, P. & WORTLEY, S. 2008. Religious youth radicalisation in Canada. *Canadian Diversity*, 6, 47-73.

BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION. 2010. British Sociological Association: statement of ethical practice.
http://www.britsoc.co.uk/user_doc/Statement%20of%20Ethical%20Practice.pdf
[Accessed 3rd April 2016].

CALL OF DUTY. <https://www.callofduty.com/au/en/>. Accessed June 2016.

CANADIAN IMMIGRANT. <http://canadianimmigrant.ca/>. Accessed March 2017.

CANADIAN IMMIGRANT. 2017. <http://canadianimmigrant.ca/immigrate/new-policies-could-change-the-demographics-of-canada> [Accessed March 14, 2017].

CANADIAN MINISTRY OF HERITAGE. www.pch.gc.ca/multi [Accessed June 22, 2016].

CBC News. June 4, 2008. "Toronto 18: Key events in the case".
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto-18-key-events-in-the-case-1.715266>
[Accessed June 12, 2012].

CBC News. July 2006. <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2008/06/02/f-toronto->

[timeline.html](#), [accessed August 3, 2013].

- CHATTERTON, P. & HOLLANDS, R. 2002. Theorising urban playscapes: producing, regulating and consuming youthful nightlife city spaces. *Urban studies*, 39, 95-116.
- CHEN, K.-H. & MORLEY, D. 2006. *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies*, London; New York, Routledge.
- CLAYTON, J. 2012. Living the multicultural city: acceptance, belonging and young identities in the city of Leicester, England. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 35, 1673-1693.
- CLIFFORD, J. 1997. *Routes: Travel and translation in the late twentieth century*, Cambridge; Mass., Harvard University Press.
- CREESE, G. L. 2011. *The new African diaspora in Vancouver: Migration, exclusion, and belonging*, University of Toronto Press.
- DAULATZAI, S. 2012. *Black star, crescent moon: The Muslim international and black freedom beyond America*, University of Minnesota Press.
- DAY, R. J. 2000. *Multiculturalism and the history of Canadian diversity*, University of Toronto Press.
- DE BELLAIGUE, C. 2017. *The Islamic Enlightenment: The Modern Struggle between Faith and Reason*. The Bodley Head.
- DE CERTEAU, M. 1988. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

- DE CERTEAU, M. 2004. "Making do": uses and tactics. *Practicing History: New Directions in Historical Writing After the Linguistic Turn*, 217. Routledge.
- DEVJI, F. 2013. *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a political idea*, London, Hurst Publishers.
- DUNCAN, N. 1996. *BodySpace: Destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality*, New York, Routledge.
- DWYER, C. & BRESSEY, C. 2008. *Introduction: island geographies: new geographies of race and racism*, UK, Ashgate Aldershot.
- DWYER, C. & BRESSEY, C. 2008. *New Geographies of Race and Racism*, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
- DWYER, C., SHAH, B. and SANGHERA, G., 2008. 'From cricket lover to terror suspect'—challenging representations of young British Muslim men. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 15(2), pp.117-136.
- ELLISON, N. B. 2007. Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, 210-230.
- ESPOSITO, J.L. and KALIN, I. eds., 2011. *Islamophobia: The challenge of pluralism in the 21st century*. Oxford University Press.
- ETHNIC DIVERSITY SURVEY. 2006. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/cgi-bin> [Accessed February 2, 2016]. Statistics Canada.
- FATAH, T. 2008. *Chasing a mirage: The tragic illusion of an Islamic state*, Wiley.
- FISKE, J. 1989. *Reading the popular*, London, Unwin Hyman.

- FREIDENBERG, J. 2011. Researching Global Spaces Ethnographically: Queries on Methods for the Study of Virtual Populations. *Human Organization*, 70, 265-278.
- FREVERT, T. K. & WALKER, L. S. 2014. Physical attractiveness and social status. *Sociology Compass*, 8, 313-323.
- FRIDERES, J., BURSTEIN, M. & BILES, J. 2008. *Immigration and Integration in Canada in the Twenty-first Century*, Queen's Policy Studies-School of Policy.
- GEST, J. 2010. *Apart: Alienated and engaged Muslims in the West*, Hurst & Co.
- GILROY, P., 2010. *Darker than blue: On the moral economies of black Atlantic culture*. Harvard University Press.
- GILROY, P. 1982. Police and Thieves' in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 1970s Britain*. Routledge.
- GILROY, P. 2000. *Against race: Imagining political culture beyond the color line*, Harvard University Press.
- GILROY, P. 2004. *After empire: Melancholia or convivial culture?*, London; New York, Routledge.
- GOFFMAN, A. 2009. On the run: Wanted men in a Philadelphia ghetto. *American sociological review*, 74(3), pp.339-357.
- GÖKARIKSEL, B. & MCLARNEY, E. 2010. Muslim women, consumer capitalism, and the Islamic culture industry. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 6, 1-

18.

GLOBE AND MAIL video. September 28, 2015 “A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian”. (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/news-video/a-canadian-is-a-canadian-is-a-canadian-harper-trudeau-spar-over-right-to-revoke-citizenship/article26580135/>) [Accessed December 3, 2015]. The Globe and Mail.

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA. Six selection factors – Federal skilled workers (Express Entry) <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-factors.asp> [Accessed January 14, 2017].

GRENIER, E. 2017. “*Muslim Canadians Increasingly Proud*,” <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/grenier-muslim-canadians-environs-1.3551591>, [Accessed April 12, 2017. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

GROSSBERG, L. 1996. Identity and cultural studies - is that all there is? *In*: HALL, S. & DU GAY, P. (eds.). 1996. *Questions of cultural identity*. Sage.

HADDAD, Y. Y. & ESPOSITO, J. L. 2000. *Muslims on the Americanization path?* New York, Oxford University Press.

HALL, S. 1979. The great moving right show. *Marxism Today*, 23, 14-20.

HALL, S. 1990. Cultural identity and diaspora. *In*: RUTHERFORD, J. (ed.) *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

HALL, S. 1996. New ethnicities. *In*: MORLEY, D. & CHEN, K. H. (eds.) *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies*, New York; London: Routledge.

- HALL, S. 2012. Avtar Brah's cartographies: moment, method, meaning. *Feminist Review*, 100, 27-38.
- HALL, S. and MASSEY, D., 2010. Interpreting the crisis. *Soundings*, 44(44), 57-71.
- HALL, S. & BACK, L. 2009. At home and not at home: Stuart Hall in conversation with Les Back. *Cultural Studies*, 23, 658-687.
- HALL, S. & DU GAY, P. 1996. *Questions of cultural identity*, London; Thousand Oaks, Calif., Sage.
- HALL, S., HELD, D. & MCGREW, T. 1992. *Modernity and its futures: understanding modern societies*, Cambridge, Polity.
- HALL, S. & WERBNER, P. 2008. Cosmopolitanism, globalisation and diaspora. *Anthropology and the new cosmopolitanism*, 345-360.
- HALL, T., COFFEY, A. & WILLIAMSON, H. 1999. Self, space and place: youth identities and citizenship. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 20, 501-513.
- HAQUE, E. 2010. Homegrown, Muslim and other: tolerance, secularism and the limits of multiculturalism. *Social Identities*, 16, 79-101.
- HESSE, B. 2000. *Un/settled multiculturalisms: diasporas, entanglements, "transruptions"*, Zed Books.
- HEWITT, R. 1986. *White talk, black talk: Inter-racial friendship and communication amongst adolescents*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- HIRA-FRIESEN, P. 2013. The New African Diaspora in Vancouver: Migration,

- Exclusion, and Belonging by Gillian Creese (review). *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 45, 151-153.
- HODKINSON, P. & DEICKE, W. 2007. *Youth cultures: scenes, subcultures and tribes*, New York; London, Routledge.
- HOLLANDS, R. 1998. Crap jobs, govvy schemes and Trainspotting: reviewing the youth, work and idleness debate. *Work and Idleness: The Political Economy of Full Employment*, 99-118. Springer, Dordrecht.
- HOOKS, B. 1992. *Representing whiteness in the black imagination*, New York, Routledge.
- HOPKINS, P. 2006. Youthful Muslim masculinities: gender and generational relations. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 31(3), pp.337-352.
- HOPKINS, P. 2007. Global events, national politics, local lives: young Muslim men in Scotland. *Environment and Planning A*, 39(5), pp.1119-1133.
- HUNTINGTON, S. P. 1993. The clash of civilizations? *Foreign affairs*, 22-49.
- IBBITSON, J. May 4, 2017. "Why you can thank multiculturalism for Canada's strong population growth". https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/thank-multiculturalism-for-canada-bucking-global-trend-of-population-decline/article34884804/?ref=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.theglobeandmail.com&click=sf_glofeb&service=mobile

- JAMAL, A. A. 2008. *Race and Arab Americans before and after 9/11: From invisible citizens to visible subjects*, New York, Syracuse University Press.
- JANHEVICH, D. & IBRAHIM, H. 2004. Muslims in Canada: An illustrative and demographic profile. *Our diverse cities*, 1, 49-56.
- KAZEMIPUR, A. 2014. *The Muslim Question in Canada: A Story of Segmented Integration*, UBC Press.
- KERNERMAN, G. 2006. *Multicultural Nationalism: Civilizing Difference, Constituting Community*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press.
- KNOWLES, C. & ALEXANDER, C. 2005. *Making race matter: bodies, space and identity*, Basingstoke; New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- KOEFOED, L. and SIMONSEN, K., 2012. (Re) scaling identities: Embodied others and alternative spaces of identification. *Ethnicities*, 12(5), pp.623-642.
- KOEFOED, L. and SIMONSEN, K., 2011. 'The stranger', the city and the nation: on the possibilities of identification and belonging. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 18(4), pp.343-357.
- KUNDNANI, A. 2014. *The Muslims are Coming*, London, Verso.
- KYMLICKA, W. 1995. *Multicultural citizenship: A liberal theory of minority rights*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- KYMLICKA, W. 2005. The uncertain futures of multiculturalism. *Canadian Diversity*, 4, 82-85.

- KYMLICKA, W. 2007. *Multicultural odysseys: Navigating the new international politics of diversity*, Oxford University Press.
- LAWLER, S., 2015. *Identity: sociological perspectives*. John Wiley & Sons.
- LEVEY, G. B. & MODOOD, T. 2009. *Secularism, religion and multicultural citizenship*, Cambridge University Press Cambridge.
- LEWIS, R. 2013. *Modest fashion: styling bodies, mediating faith*, IB Tauris.
- LEWIS, P., 2008. *Young, British and Muslim*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA. May 4, 2015. "Trudeau Presents Plan to Deliver Fairness for Middle Class". <https://www.liberal.ca/trudeau-presents-plan-to-deliver-fairness-for-middle-class/> [Accessed March 3, 2016].
- LINGS, M. 1983. *Muhammad*, Penerbit Serambi.
- LOFLAND, J. 2006. *Analyzing social settings: a guide to qualitative observation and analysis*, Australia; Great Britain, Wadsworth.
- MAHMOOD, S. 2011. *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- MAIRA, S. 2004. Youth culture, citizenship and globalization: South Asian Muslim youth in the United States after September 11th. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 24, 219-231.
- MAJAJ, L. S. 2000. Arab Americans and the Meaning of Race. *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*, 320-337.

- MALCOLM, X. & HALEY, A. 1940. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Aeonian Press.
- MAMDANI, M., 2005. Good Muslim, bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the roots of terror. Harmony.
- MANZO, J. 2004. The folk devil happens to be our best customer: security officers' orientations to "Youth" in three Canadian shopping malls. *International journal of the sociology of law*, 32, 243-261.
- MANZO, J. 2005. Social control and the management of "personal" space in shopping malls. *Space and Culture*, 8, 83-97.
- MARCUS, G. E. 1998. *Ethnography through thick and thin*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- MCDOWELL, L. 1996. Spatializing feminism: Geographic perspectives. In: DUNCAN, N. (ed.) *BodySpace: Destabilising Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*. U.S.A.; Canada: Routledge
- MCGOWN, R. B. 1999. *Muslims in the diaspora: The Somali communities of London and Toronto*, University of Toronto Press.
- MILLARD, G., RIEGEL, S. & WRIGHT, J. 2002. Here's where we get Canadian: English-Canadian nationalism and popular culture. *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 32, 11-34.
- MODOOD, T. 2005. *Multicultural politics: Racism, ethnicity, and Muslims in Britain*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

- MODOOD, T. 2010. *Still Not Easy Being British: Struggles for a Multicultural Citizenship*, Stoke on Trent, UK; Sterling, VA, Trentham Books.
- MOGHISSI, H., RAHNEMA, S. & GOODMAN, M. J. 2009. *Diaspora by design: Muslims in Canada and beyond*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- MUEDINI, F. 2009. Muslim American college youth: attitudes and responses five years after 9/11. *The Muslim World*, 99, 39-59.
- MULTICULTURALISM CANADA. 2010.
<http://www.multiculturalcanada.ca/Encyclopedia/A-Z/t6/2> [Accessed August 2, 2012), Government of Canada.
- NAWAWĪ & KELLER, N. H. M. 2002. *Al-Maqasid: Nawawi's Manual of Islam*, Amana Publications.
- NAYAK, A. 1999. Pale Warriors': skinhead culture and the embodiment of white masculinities. *Explorations in Sociology*, 52, 71-99.
- NAYAK, A., 2017. Purging the nation: race, conviviality and embodied encounters in the lives of British Bangladeshi Muslim young women. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 42(2), pp.289-302.
- NAYAK, A. 2016. *Race, place and globalization: Youth cultures in a changing world*, Bloomsbury Publishing.
- NAYAK, A., 1997. Tales from the darkside: Negotiating whiteness in school arenas. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 7(1), pp.57-79.

NAYAK, A. and KEHILY, M.J., 2013. Gender, youth and culture: Young masculinities and femininities. Palgrave Macmillan.

NOACK, R., 2016.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/07/10/leaked-document-says-2000-men-allegedly-assaulted-1200-german-women-on-new-years-eve/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.bd7089608221 [Accessed January 19, 2018]. The Washington Post.

NOBLE, G., POYNTING, S. and TABAR, P., 1999. Youth, ethnicity and the mapping of identities: Strategic essentialism and strategic hybridity among male Arabic-speaking youth in South-Western Sydney. *Communal/plural*, 7(1), pp.29-44.

NOBLE, G. and POYNTING, S., 2010. White lines: The intercultural politics of everyday movement in social spaces. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 31(5), pp.489-505.

OHRC. 2017. Under suspicion: Research and consultation report on racial profiling in Ontario [Accessed July 1, 2017]. Ontario Human Rights Commission.

PAGLIERO, J. June 9, 2012. "Eaton Centre Shootings".

https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2012/06/09/eaton_centre_shooting_sic_thugs_of_regent_park_and_the_allure_of_gangs.html [Accessed February 12, 2015]. Toronto Star.

- PARKER, D. 2003. Diaspora, dissidence and the dangers of cosmopolitanism. *Asian Studies Review*, 27, 155-179.
- PARKS, F. R. & KENNEDY, J. H. 2007. The Impact of Race, Physical Attractiveness, and Gender on Education Majors' and Teachers' Perceptions of Students. *Journal of Black Studies*, 37, 936-943.
- PEEK, L. 2005. Becoming Muslim: The development of a religious identity. *Sociology of religion*, 66, 215-242.
- PESSAR, P. R. 1999. Engendering Migration Studies: The Case of New Immigrants in the United States. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 42, 577-600.
- PORTER, J. 2015. *Vertical mosaic: An analysis of social class and power in Canada*, University of Toronto Press.
- POYNTING, S. and NOBLE, G., 2004. Living with Racism: The experience and reporting by Arab and Muslim Australians of discrimination, abuse and violence since 11 September 2001. Report to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 19.
- POYNTING, S. & PERRY, B. 2007. Climates of hate: Media and state inspired victimisation of Muslims in Canada and Australia since 9/11. *Current Issues Crim. Just.*, 19, 151.
- RAMADAN, T., 2009. *Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity*. Kube Publishing Ltd.

- RAMADAN, T. 2000. *To Be A European Muslim*, London, The Islamic Foundation.
- RANA, J., 2011. *Terrifying Muslims: Race and labor in the South Asian diaspora*.
Duke University Press.
- RAZACK, S. 2007. *Casting out: The eviction of Muslims from Western law and politics*, University of Toronto Press.
- RASACK S. 2008. *The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics*.
University of Toronto Press.
- ROACH, K. 2003. September 11, Consequences for Canada. McGill University Press
- ROY, O., 1994. *The failure of political Islam*. Harvard University Press.
- RUSHDIE, S. 2012. *Imaginary homelands: Essays and criticism 1981-1991*, Random House.
- SAKTANBER, A. 1997. Formation of a middle-class ethos and its quotidian: revitalizing Islam in urban Turkey. *Space, Culture and Power: New Identities in Globalizing Cities*, pp.140-156.
- SAUNDERS, D. 2011. *Arrival city: How the largest migration in history is reshaping our world*, Vintage.
- SAUNDERS, D., 2015. *The myth of the Muslim tide: do immigrants threaten the West?* Vintage.
- SAYYID, S. & VAKIL, A. 2010. *Thinking through Islamophobia: global perspectives*, Cinco Puntos Press.

- SEALE, C. 2004. *Researching society and culture*, Sage.
- SHAFFIR, W. 1974. *Life in a religious community: The Lubavitcher Chassidim in Montreal*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston of Canada.
- SIRIN, S. R. & FINE, M. 2007. Hyphenated selves: Muslim American youth negotiating identities on the fault lines of global conflict. *Applied Development Science*, 11, 151-163.
- SISO (Settlement and Integration Services Organization).<http://www.siso-ham.org/> [Accessed February 2011].
- SKELTON, T. & VALENTINE, G. 2005. *Cool places: Geographies of youth cultures*, Routledge.
- SOLOMOS, J. 2014. Stuart Hall: articulations of race, class and identity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37, 1667-1675.
- STATISTICS CANADA. 2001. Available at <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/home/index.cfm> [Accessed March 4, 2012].
- STATISTICS CANADA. 2006. <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/index.cfm?Lang=E>. [Accessed March 2 2012].
- ST LOUIS, B. 2009. On 'the necessity and the "impossibility" of identities' The politics and ethics of 'new ethnicities'. *Cultural studies*, 23, 559-582.

- SUBEDAR, A. May 4, 2017. "Why Catwalk Hijabs are Upsetting Some Muslim Women". [Accessed May 4, 2017]. British Broadcasting Corporation.
- SWANTON, D. 2008. Everyday multiculturalism and the emergence of race. *In*: DWYER, C. & BRESSEY, C. (eds.) *New geographies of race and racism*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- TARLO, E. 2010. *Visibly Muslim: fashion, politics, faith*, Bloomsbury Academic.
- TAYLOR, C. 1997. The politics of recognition. *In*: HEBLE, A., PENNEE, D. P. & J.R.T., S. (eds.) *New Contexts of Canadian Criticism*. Canada: Broadview Press Peterborough, ON.
- TAYLOR, C. 2007. *A secular age*, Harvard University Press.
- TIILIKAINEN, M. 2015. Looking for a Safe Place. *Journal of Religion in Europe*, 8, 51-72.
- TEONTINO, I. 2010. The Toronto 18 in The Toronto Star Special Feature, <http://www3.thestar.com/static/toronto18/index.html> [Accessed October 3, 2016]. The Toronto Star.
- TORONTO STAR.
https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2012/06/09/eaton_centre_shooting_sic_thugs_of_regent_park_and_the_allure_of_gangs.html . Accessed, January 2015.
- TYRER, D. 2010. Flooding the embankments': Race, bio-politics and sovereignty. *In*: SALMAN, S. & ABDOOLKARIM, V. (eds.) *Thinking through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- WALL, S. 2006. An autoethnography on learning about autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5, 146-160.
- WALTON-ROBERTS, M. & PRATT, G. 2005. Mobile modernities: A South Asian family negotiates immigration, gender and class in Canada. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 12, 173-195.
- WATT, P. 1998. Going out of town: youth, 'race', and place in the South East of England. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 16, 687-703.
- WEHR, H. and COWAN, J.M., 1979. *A dictionary of modern written Arabic: (Arab.-Engl.)*. Otto Harrassowitz Verlag.
- WILLIAMS, R. 1977. *Marxism and literature*, Oxford Paperbacks.
- WILLIAMS, A. October 2, 2009. "On the Tip of Creative Tongues". <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/04/fashion/04curate.html> [Accessed March 14, 2016]. The New York Times.
- WILLIS, P. 1980. Notes on Method. In: HALL, S., HOBSON, D., LOWE, A. & WILLIS, P. (eds.) *Culture, Media, Language*. Routledge.
- WILLIS, P. E., JONES, S., CANAAN, J. & HURD, G. 1990. *Common culture: Symbolic work at play in the everyday cultures of the young*, Open University Press Milton Keynes.
- YOUSIF, A. F. 1994. Family values, social adjustment and problems of identity: The Canadian experience. *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 15, 108-120.
- ZINE, J. 2001. Muslim youth in Canadian schools: Education and the politics of

religious identity. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 32, 399-423.

ZINE, J. 2006. Unveiled sentiments: Gendered Islamophobia and experiences of veiling among Muslim girls in a Canadian Islamic school. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 39, 239-252.

APPENDIX I

List of Figures

<u>Figure 1 Map of Visible Minorities in Greater Toronto (Census Data, Statistics Canada, 2006)</u>	
.....	1173
<u>Figure 2 Map of Hamilton surrounding areas (including Burlington) (Census, Statistics Canada, 2006)</u>	
.....	1174
<u>Figure 3 Jackson’s Square, Hamilton, Ontario.</u>	214

APPENDIX II

Participant Biographies

Below are short biographies of the core participants who are discussed in this thesis. Their names have been changed in order to ensure their confidentiality and anonymity. I have not included biographies of all of the participants, as some requested that they not be included for issues of privacy. Others who are not mentioned by name (by pseudonym) in this research are also not included in the biographies.

Abdul/Abdi: Male. Aged 22. Abdi was a refugee who moved from Somalia via Egypt when he was 19. Abdi was attending special classes at his high school for ESL (English as a Second Language) for mature students. He was trying to complete his high school diploma.

Adam: Male. Aged 19. White, lived in the suburbs of Hamilton. His parents converted to Islam before he was born. He attended both NGen and MIST.

Ahmad: Male. Aged 19. Ahmad was born in Syria and was of Arab descent. His family moved to Canada when he was three. Ahmad was in his last year of high school in Mississauga, Ontario. He was a prominent member and organiser for MIST and was active in stand-up comedy.

Aisha: Female. Aged 16. Aisha was born in Pakistan and migrated to Canada from Pakistan when she was six. Aisha was in grade 10 at Nelson High School, which was also my old high school. Aisha's parents had a difficult time getting jobs and were struggling financially. She worked at a clothing store. Aisha wore hijab.

Aliza: Female. Aged 19. Aliza attended college and was studying accounting. She was born in Kashmir, India. Her mother was ethnically half Italian and half Kashmiri. Both parents were doctors. When things became dangerous in Kashmir, they moved to the UK, then Iran and then finally to Canada when she was 17. Aliza worked in a bank and was an active member of NGen. She was also a model.

Amir: Male. Aged 18. Amir was a migrant, born in Jordan, of Lebanese decent and migrated to Canada with his family when he was 16. He was completing his last year of high school and was an active member of NGen.

Anna: Female. Aged 19. Mixed-race of European decent. Anna migrated to Canada when she was ten. She was a singer, actor and writer. She was finishing high school and taking acting lessons and took part in local theatre groups. She lived in Hamilton and attended NGen.

Belal: Male. Aged 16. Born in Pakistan and migrated to Canada at age 11. Belal attended the Halton Youth Club and loved video games and superhero films.

Dawud: Male. Aged 19. Dawud was born in Pakistan and was of South Asian descent. He migrated from Pakistan with his family to Canada when he was 14. He was completing his last year of high school in Mississauga and was active in MIST. His hobbies included stand-up and

improvised comedy along with his two best friends, Musa and Ahmad. He was a talented soccer player. He later went on to get signed by a well-known football club.

Gina: Female. Aged 19. Gina was born in Turkey. She lived in France with her younger brother and parents until her father died. She and her mother moved to Canada when she was 17. A month before her 18th birthday, her mother was brutally murdered – she was stabbed 17 times in the stomach by her boyfriend while Gina was at school. Gina and her brother were then both adopted by the ex-director of the youth club, who later kicked her out of the house for refusing to eat pork. She lived alone and was trying to finish high school and lived off the settlement money given to her by her mother’s life insurance company (her mother was murdered two years prior to my fieldwork). She had also suffered from anorexia.

Hassan: Male. Aged 21. Hassan was a refugee of Egyptian decent and was born and raised in Saudi Arabia. When he was 19, his mother, grandmother and two siblings were killed in a car crash on their way to perform the pilgrimage in Mecca. His father, who was also in the car, lost the use of his legs. Hassan, his father and his remaining siblings moved to Canada a few months after the accident. Hassan worked two part-time jobs at convenience stores and was trying to finish his college degree, studying full-time. His family was dependent on his wages and support in their everyday lives. Hassan attended NGen.

Hiba: Female. Aged 18. Of Lebanese decent. Born in Canada. Lived in Toronto and moved to Oakville during fieldwork. Attended both HY and MIST.

Layla/Nadia: Female. Aged 19. She migrated from Egypt with her family to Canada when she was two years old. She was in her last year of high school and her family was middle-class. Layla wore hijab. She attended HY.

Maryam: Female. Aged 18. Born and raised in Canada. Maryam was mixed-race – her mother was from Honduras and her father was Palestinian. She was in her last year of high school in Hamilton, Ontario. She attended MIST.

Mona: Female. Aged 18. Mona was born and raised in Canada and was of Lebanese decent. She was in grade 11. Her family had a lot of money and she was part of the Halton Mosque youth club. She wore hijab.

Musa: Male. Aged 18. Musa was born and raised in Canada and was of Kenyan descent. He was in his last year of high school in Mississauga, Ontario. He was a prominent member of MIST and his hobbies included competitive marathons and stand-up comedy.

Mustafa: Male. Aged 18. Moroccan decent. Migrated to Canada when he was 16. Attended NGen. He was in his last year of high school and had a side job selling marijuana.

Noor: Female. Aged 18. Born and raised in Dubai and moved to Canada when she was 17. She had held Canadian citizenship since she was young as she used to travel to Canada often. She was of Kuwaiti descent and came from a very affluent family.

Rashid: Male. Aged 21. South Asian of Pakistani descent living in Hamilton, Ontario on a council estate with his mother, grandmother and siblings. Born in Pakistan and migrated from

Pakistan to Canada when he was five years old. He attended community college and had two jobs, one of which was dealing marijuana. His father lived in Qatar as he was not able to find work in Canada. Rashid attended NGen.

Roze: Female. Aged 18. Of Albanian descent. She was born in Albania and migrated to Canada when she was 13.

Saima: Female. Aged 17. Born in Pakistan and of South Asian descent. Moved with her family to UAE when she was 10 and then later migrated to Canada at age 15. Attended NGen.

Sana: Female. Aged 19. Sana was born in Egypt. After the sudden death of her father when she was nine, she moved to Canada with her mother and five younger siblings. Sana attended Halton Mosque but most of the time I spent with her was at Mapleview Mall and elsewhere in Burlington, the city she lived in which is an affluent and predominately white, middle-class suburb of Toronto. When Sana was 15, she and her family moved back to Egypt because they did not like it in Canada, but due to the Arab Spring and instability in Cairo where she lived, they moved back to Canada when she was 18. Sana was in her last year of high school and wanted to become a medical doctor. She also had a job working as a tutor.

Sheila: Female. Aged 18. Sister of Aisha. Born in Pakistan and migrated to Canada when she was eight. Sheila was in her last year of high school and she was the top of her class. She worked as a tutor. Sheila also wore hijab and had a slight Pakistani accent.

Yahya: Male. Aged 16. Born and raised in Montreal, Canada. He moved with his family to Burlington, Ontario when he was 13. He was in grade 10 in high school and was a part of the Halton Mosque youth club.

Zayn: Male. Aged 19. Zayn was born in Morocco and his family migrated to Saudi Arabia when he was seven and then Canada when he was nine. His first language was Arabic and he was ethnically Arab. His father worked in Jeddah as he was not able to find work in Canada. Zayn was in his last year of high school in Hamilton and attended NGen.