University of Alberta

I Am Not a Problem, I Am Canadian:
Exploring the Experiences of Canadian-born Muslim Women Who
Practice *Hijab*

by

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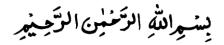
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Abstract

This research explores understandings of what it means to "be Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab,* an outward expression of personal identity practiced by some Muslim women and visible by the covering of the head and modest clothing. The women's identity negotiations occur within discourses of Orientalism and multiculturalism, which construct the women's identities as outside of social and state conceptions of what it means to "be Canadian." Through dialogic, reflexive, and collaborative research processes guided by theories of antiracism feminism and modes of narrative inquiry, the experiences of Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* contribute to a growing understanding of manifestations and processes of racism in Canada. The women's narratives and understandings of what it means to "be Canadian" highlight the reality of our present Canada so we can formulate our resistances and move forward in our journeys toward creating new realities.

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

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Chapter One: One Journey of "Being Canadian"

It is never an easy decision or task to write about one's emotional landscape.

hooks, 1997, p. xxi

Whenever I am introduced to a new acquaintance, one of the first questions asked of me is, "Where are you from?" Before commencing graduate school, I responded in an unchallenging manner by saying, "I was born here but my parents are originally from Pakistan." Increasingly, however, I found this query problematic. I wondered, when these individuals look at me, what do they see? Specifically, when they see my *hijab*,[1] what associations do they make? Even as a legally entitled Canadian citizen, what is it about me that suggests I am not from here, not Canadian? I questioned, is there a disjuncture between practicing *hijab* and "being Canadian?"

Born and raised in Canada, I considered myself to be Canadian. Confidence in my Canadianness, however, began to waver following global events such as September 11, 2001, which intensified the worldwide gaze on Muslim women practicing *hijab*. As *hijab* was increasingly proliferated through media reports and became a mainstream public issue, I increasingly contemplated (and continue to contemplate) the intersecting and interlocking nature of my being, questioning: Does my *hijab* conflict with my Canadian identity?

My experiences as a Canadian woman, who, through the practice of *hijab*, externally and visibly denotes her Muslim identity, influenced me to formulate a research project that explores the narratives and lived experiences of other Canadian women who are visibly Muslim through *hijab*. I ask the following research question: What is the experience of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab?* As "one of

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[1] I define *hijab* as an outward expression of personal identity practiced by some Muslim women and visible by the covering of the head and modest clothing. The concept of *hijab* is elaborated in Chapter 2.

the starting points for narrative inquiry is the researcher's own narrative of experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 70), I commence exploring these queries by sharing my own journey of "being Canadian."

Who Am I and How Did This Research Project Emerge?

My research is a part of my life and my life is a part of my research.

Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 268

I was born and raised in urban Alberta to a Muslim family of Pakistani heritage. Growing up in an upper-middle class neighbourhood in Edmonton, I was surrounded by a supportive network of Muslim and non-Muslim friends, community members, and neighbours. Education was of the utmost importance to my family, and my brothers and I were encouraged from an early age to become professionals in our chosen fields of study. As a member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, a marginalized and often persecuted sect within the religion of Islam, I recognized the potentially divisive nature of religious ideologies at an early age.

My faith as a Muslim, though, remained strong, and I made the conscious decision to practice *hijab* in high school. Throughout my life, I had worn modest clothing and practiced *hijab* on certain occasions, but I realized at that moment that I was ready to fully embrace the practice. I wondered how my friends and teachers would react to this change in my physical appearance. Would they respect and support my decision? Would they assume that draping my scarf around my head instead of my neck would make me a different person? My concerns subsided when their response was more positive than I could have imagined. Not only was I complimented on my *hijab* but I also felt truly accepted by my peers, accepted for the entirety of my being. Soon after, I organized a presentation entitled "Introduction to Islam" at my high school. Presenting to thirty of my peers during the lunch hour not only allowed me to share my beliefs and practices with my community but also established my faith in education as a significant tool for

building respect and understanding. This commitment to education led me to organize interfaith events both on- and off-campus during my undergraduate education and, as I learned more about other faiths and systems of belief, I grew more confident, and continue to grow, in my understandings of myself as a Muslim.

Education is also the motivation for this research project: learning through individual, collective, societal, formal, and nonformal means. As I grew in my understandings about the world around me through this project, I also grew in my understandings of my self. I was immersed in the journey from beginning to end, not only as a researcher but as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*. Consequently, my journey is fraught with moments of clarity and moments of haziness, instances of profound optimism and instances of cavernous pessimism. I share below one such pivotal experience, at once disruptive and conscientizing (Freire, 1970).

> June 2010. "I have never experienced racism in my life!" I proclaimed, crying to a friend in a secluded stairwell at the University of Toronto. I had just witnessed a poignant and heartbreaking play portraying manifestations of racism in the lives of Othered individuals. In the performance, the actors shared vignettes depicting instances of violence, hostility, and aggression: that, to me, was racism. "I haven't been through what they've been through ... why not?!" I exclaimed. Reflecting on my own life while watching the play, I recalled that I had never been called an ugly word, had never been talked to in an aggressive manner, nor physically assaulted, even though I had practiced *hijab* for the duration of my adult life. "I feel guilty! Why haven't I been through what they've been through?"

Coincidentally (or not), I witnessed this play in the midst of determining a topic for my thesis research. At this time, I had just completed a qualitative methods course for which I was required to design a hypothetical research project. I thought, let me take a risk and select a topic that personally intrigues me, a part of my daily being that has remained isolated from my scholarly life, a topic that I discuss socially but not academically. Let me

formulate a research project on the challenges and distinctiveness of being a Muslim woman and, specifically, a Canadian Muslim woman. As I commenced my search of the existing academic literature, I was astounded to discover a breadth of academic research on Muslims, Muslim women, and *hijab*: how was I ignorant of this? I was determined to engage with this body of work further and contribute to it in my own way. Never before had I felt so passionate about a research project. Not only was I researching it, I was living it.

Even with this discovery, I was not yet fully cognizant of the complexities shaping my identity as a Canadian Muslim woman. As witnessed in my aforementioned response to the play, I still felt exempt, excluded, and not belonging to the shared struggle of Canadian Others. As I reflected upon times when someone made a snide comment toward me or conveyed dislike or confusion through their facial expressions, I recalled that I had brushed off their responses, excusing their behaviour to their bad mood or my own paranoia. Why had I downplayed these instances, I wonder? Why did I not challenge them? Below, I share some additional instances where I felt my personal identity as a Canadian Muslim woman in question:

> May 2009. After I delivered a presentation on *hijab* to a group of women from rural Alberta, one woman approached me to say, "Thank you for helping me to see how normal Muslim women are. I've never actually met a Muslim woman before; I have only ever seen one on TV. Thank you for shattering all of my misconceptions about Muslim women."

> July 2011. While presenting a poster at an academic conference in Toronto, a female professor asked me a stream of questions: "Why would you want to associate with a religion that is patriarchal and abusive toward women? Why do women wear that thing when they could easily show their hair and blend in with the rest of society? If women want to wear that thing, why don't they go back to where they came from and wear it there?"

October 2011. After delivering a presentation to a church
congregation on my experiences as a Canadian Muslim woman
engaged in interfaith work, one woman asked, "So why did you decide
to immigrate to Canada?"

I even began to reflect upon unsettling instances with my colleagues at the
university, as some would question, "Aren't you a little overdressed for the
weather?" or "Don't you feel hot wearing all those clothes?" Reflecting
critically on other's responses to my identity, I wondered, what message do
these incidents send to me as a Canadian Muslim woman? Furthermore, what
do they demonstrate about the nature of our Canadian society?

A few of my contemplations regarding what it means to "be Canadian"
follow in a series of personal reflections and social commentaries written
while taking a course on race, racialization, and education. My queries,
revelations, frustrations, and moments of optimism and pessimism are all
captured below. I offer these reflections as a means of contextualizing the
complexity of the issues that are addressed in this research project.
Revisiting these reflections even after writing this research reminds me of
the many challenges and uphill battles that lay ahead in understanding
multiple meanings of what it means to "be Canadian."

We commenced the course by considering the Canadian narrative, a
historical understanding of how the nation of Canada was constructed. At the
time, I reflected upon how I had personally learned about the creation of
Canada in my schooling experiences, concluding that I had been taught a false
narrative in which a regime of colonialism and forced occupation was
replaced with a feel-good story of amiable encounters between indigenous
and settler populations:

At no point did we discuss the infectious diseases brought by the
settlers to Canada. At no point did my teachers share with me how
land was forcibly seized from the Aboriginal peoples. Most shockingly,
until my undergraduate classes, at no point in my formal education
did we discuss residential schooling and the physical, psychological,

and social impacts on Aboriginal peoples, which remain to this day. It is my belief that the majority of Canadians are ignorant of the true Canadian history, the one that speaks to the colonization and subjugation of Aboriginal peoples. Many people even forget that Aboriginal peoples were the first peoples living in Canada! We are living on their land! It is these false narratives that must be challenged and countered. It is only by respecting the histories and beings of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada that we can truly embody what it means to be Canadian. (October 6, 2010)

After critiquing the "real" narrative of the founding of our nation, we also considered the hierarchically raced and racialized structures of identities in Canada. We questioned and critiqued the term "white privilege" and its relevance and current manifestations in the Canadian context. Although our discussions were uncomfortable and tense, they were necessary, and led to more analytical understandings of our nation's character:

I have been pondering over the concept of white privilege, its ubiquitous nature, and measures that will result in the opening of R_1[2] eyes to their privilege. This is the fight against "white supremacy," the term I will use in place of "racism" for this analysis as I agree with Charles Mills (1998) that there needs to be a shift in "the focus from the individual and attitudinal to the global and structural" (p. 146). White supremacy, like many other social concepts, is a contested and ever-changing term. It used to be associated with the Jim Crow laws and the KKK but its current widespread nature has resulted in double consciousness, defined as "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois, 2007, p. 144). It is this supremacy that denies that "a man be both a Negro and an American" (Du Bois, 2007, p. 144) and that a woman be both a Muslim and a Canadian. Double consciousness is all too familiar. Like the overlapping centre of a Venn diagram, one who is doubly conscious is constantly searching for similarities between the two worlds, trying to prove to others that one can contentedly co-exist amongst both without sacrificing aspects of one or the other. In other

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[2] In his analysis of white privilege, Charles Mills (1998) theorizes "a dichotomous bipolar racial polity in which R_1s are the privileged race and R_2s are everybody else (so R_2s are just non- R_1s)" (p. 153).

words, this is how it feels to be a problem, to be judged as unable to seamlessly integrate into the dominant world without significantly altering one's core beliefs and values. As though problems only exist with the R_2s of the world, our identities are continually judged according to R_1 standards. The only way to move further in dismantling this structure is to stop exclusively pinning the R_2 group as the problem and turn the lens back onto the R_1s: "The white eye can thereby learn to see itself seeing whitely" (Mills, 1998, p. 151). Acknowledgement is the first step. Privilege in its pervasive and powerful forms must be acknowledged. Although R_1s are not homogenous, the simple fact of their whiteness affords them privileges that an R_2 cannot ever match, and this privilege cannot be denied nor understated. (October 13, 2010)

As my understanding of the hierarchies of identities in Canada continued to grow, I realized that Muslims were also constructed and understood in processes similar to those of other "race" categories, assumed to possess and typify essentialist and homogenous characteristics and attributes:

> For another class, I am reading *The Threat of Race* by David Theo Goldberg (2009) who contends that "the idea of the Muslim himself ... has come to represent the threat of death" (p. 165). From where does this fear of "The Muslim" arise? And how has it come to represent the threat of death? Does society fear that Muslims are taking over the world, one *hijab* at a time? What threat do I pose to Canadian society? Most importantly, what are the implications of these fears on Canadian Muslim youth? Through the misrepresentation of Muslims in the media and underrepresentation in educational resources, my own fear is that Canadian Muslim youth are becoming increasingly disenfranchised and disengaged from society at large. After constantly trying to prove that we fit in, that we are not that different, that we, too, are Canadians and deserve to be here alongside our Canadian-born peers, time and time again we are pushed away. We are forced to justify our religious practices, publicly distance ourselves from "those fundamental terrorists," and yet are still seen as Muslim first. And not even the kind of Muslim that we know ourselves to be, but the most stereotypical and degrading conception of Muslims: backwards, hostile, violent, oppressive and on and on. We want to be and are contributing members of Canadian society yet are constantly

reminded that our beliefs and practices are incompatible and thus, we are "'kept out' both physically and attitudinally" (Borg & Mayo, 2007, p. 180). Not a day goes by without a breaking story about another "Muslim" revealed as part of a terrorist plot or a Muslim woman forced to wear the *burka* by her husband. This categorical need to "save" Muslim women in the name of gender equality and women's rights baffles me. As though patriarchy does not exist in non-Muslim Canadian society. Take for example the unfortunate case of Aqsa Parvez, a Mississauga teen who was brutally murdered by her father and brother for numerous reasons, one of which was her refusal to practice *hijab*. As tragic and condemnable as this incident was, the way in which it was presented by popular media reinforced the link between Muslim women and forced obedience. As a cultural and familial practice, this was abhorrent, but it had nothing to do with the religion of Islam. However, in this way, unfamiliarity with Islam and Islamic teachings continue and the Othering, the Islamophobia, and the Muslimania continue to grow. How then does our society balance between integration and valuation of individual beliefs and practices? How do we create organic identities in which one is simultaneously part of one and another? Haig-Brown (2007) refers to a restricted interpretation of integration which always assumes that the Other will change to fit in and presents the non-Other as painstakingly making sacrifices, most notably in the name of reasonable accommodation in Canada. To conform, to homogenize, to create this ideal Canadian citizen, the upholder of Canadian values, is perceived to be the solution to the problems of our multicultural society. "We will all get along if you give up your identity and become like us." In one of my classes, a student conjectured that Muslims are the new Jews or the new Blacks. Being a Muslim in today's world is to be subjugated to the lowest rung on the ladder of privilege. This is how racism is manifested in our institutions. This is how it feels to be a problem. (October 20, 2010)

This growing understanding of "being Canadian" involved a recognition that identities are negotiated within a global climate of neoliberal globalization. Neoliberal ideologies pervade our society and shape our conceptions of "being Canadian," particularly through institutional policies and practices related to multiculturalism and immigration in Canada, which I began to understand through course readings and discussions:

Our education and employment institutions are more neoliberal than we would like to think. Not only do we stress values contrary to many cultures—individualism, privatization, competition—but we enforce those on others, expecting immigrants, Others, to abandon their ways of knowing to adopt "ours." This mentality premises on the notion that, as a western nation of affluence and influence, Canada's institutions must reflect stringent standards even if this translates to the reproduction of "systemic barriers to the recognition of international qualifications" (Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2007, p. 206). After the guest presentation last week, a classmate asked why some people immigrate to Canada knowing that these barriers exist. Why do they leave their lives, their families, and their communities to move to a new nation with a completely different way of life? My grandparents and countless other community members immigrated to Canada beginning in the 1970s to flee religious persecution and save their family from imprisonment, torture, and persistent subordination. To come to a land of freedom. Little did they know that Canada's labour market was racially stratified nor that their credentials, experiences, and their beings would constantly be questioned and fundamentally unrecognized. (October 27, 2010)

Ultimately, the growing clarity about the world around me took its toll. There were many points in time when I felt disillusioned, despondent, and helpless, unsure of how to proceed:

When I think about all the oppressions in the world—gender inequities, religious persecutions, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, ethnic conflicts, and so on and so on—I cannot help but think pessimistically about our future. When there is so much suffering, so many power struggles, so many structures designed to inferiorize others, how is it that one day, all these issues will be resolved? Or will they simply morph and become new iterations of power and privilege? When Alexis de Tocqueville (as cited in West, 2001) contended almost two centuries ago that "I do not imagine that the white and black races will ever live in any country upon an equal footing" (p. 135), he was right. It is difficult for me to be optimistic as I write this, but the issues we have discussed in this class thus far have left me feeling a cavernous sense of despair. My hope is that, as I further contemplate my own research, I can find potential prospects for change. (November 24, 2010)

By the end of the course, I felt that I had grown in my personal sense of consciousness and understanding of my own experiences of "being Canadian." I felt more conscious, more aware, and more prepared to resist challenges to my identity as I embarked upon my journey as a researcher. I continued to learn every step of the way, whether through conversations with colleagues, attending academic conferences, or meeting other Muslim women to hear about their experiences of "being Canadian." I was determined to continue resisting, no longer downplaying remarks about my appearance or challenges to my Canadianness. The following is a letter published in the Edmonton Journal entitled "Veil Ban Fuels Discrimination" which demonstrates my growing consciousness of "being Canadian." I wrote this letter after the implementation of a national piece of legislation requiring women who covered their faces to uncover while reciting the oath at the Canadian citizenship ceremony:

> As a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*—an outward symbol of my inner identity which is visible to others through the covering of the head and modest clothing—I am very proud to be simultaneously Canadian and Muslim. However, a piece of legislation such as the one recently instituted by Stephen Harper's government leaves me feeling disappointed and frustrated with our leaders and makes me wary of the direction toward which our society is heading. I question, what message does this law send to new Canadians? That to become a Canadian citizen, a Muslim woman should sacrifice her values and beliefs? The issue of concern here is not why a woman would make the choice to wear *niqab* or *burka* nor whether the covering of the face is required in the religion of Islam. The larger issue at hand is an increase in state regulation of women's bodies, which represents the very patriarchy and oppression that proponents of this legislation claim to challenge. State legislation of women's dress serves to further fuel public confusion and fear surrounding Muslim women and Islam. What happens is that society becomes increasingly segregated based upon distinctions between "us" and "them," which constitutes the notion of "difference" as a negative quality. In fact, a law such as this fuels and legitimizes institutional and systemic discrimination and Othering, a path that unfortunately

our society is hurtling toward at an alarming rate. Put simply, as a proud Canadian Muslim woman, this law breaks my heart. I hear stories from my mother, who also practices *hijab* and who immigrated to Canada in the 1970s to a small town in Nova Scotia where she was welcomed with respect and dignity, warming her heart to this nation and its people. I think now about present-day misconceptions and fears about Islam and how that affects my generation and generations to come. As Canadians, let us go back to that Canadian society based upon respecting—not assimilating and fearing—diversity and difference. (Mian, 2011)

This letter demonstrates my personal growth throughout my graduate education, from a few years previous when I had proclaimed "I haven't experienced racism!" to a growing consciousness of hegemonic structures of privilege and oppression in Canada and their effects on my identity as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*. I increasingly recognized my *hijab* as an act of everyday resistance. By living my life as a Canadian Muslim woman who practices *hijab*, I was constantly challenging other's conceptions of my identity. I now offer my research journey as one of many forms of resistance in the hopes of transforming our nation as a whole.

Research Framework

For this research project, I was inspired by antiracist and feminist epistemologies as a means of exploring my guiding research question: What is the experience of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*? Feminist research explores the experiences and identities of women as a means of challenging and resisting structures and institutions of privilege and oppression (Reinharz, 1992). Research based upon antiracist and feminist epistemologies critiques and challenges dominant discourses in our nation which"[make] it impossible to understand or name systemic and cultural racism, and its implication in gender and class" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 54). In terms of methodology, "narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 8) and, as such,

narrative inquiry provided a starting point from which to explore the women's experiences of "being Canadian." I chose to use pre-interview written narratives, individual, in-depth interviews, and a focus group conversation with other Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* as viable methods for exploring the research question. Designating time and space for reflexivity between these conversations allowed the women and I to engage in reflections about our experiences and return to our subsequent dialogues with our growing analyses of what it means to "be Canadian," emphasizing "collaborative processes of inquiry, education, and action" (Maguire, Brydon-Miller, & McIntyre, 2004, p. x). As a narrative researcher, then, my task was to link the women's narratives and analyses with dominant societal discourses, institutional practices, and interlocking structures of privilege and oppression whilst simultaneously honouring and respecting their words and experiences (Josselson, 2007). I also shared my experiences both as a Canadian Muslim woman who practices *hijab* and as a researcher, as it is crucial "to be able to articulate a relationship between one's personal interests and sense of significance and larger social concerns expressed in the works and lives of others" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 122).

I am cognizant that my research question is ontological and classed in nature, originating from the body of a privileged being and involving others who were also members of a particularly privileged social class. Our class privilege led to unique analyses of our experiences as Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*. Although the women and I were privileged in terms of our social class, we were unprivileged due to our membership in religious, cultural, and gendered social groupings in Canada. Thus, analyses of the interlocking nature of identities is significant as a means of resisting interlocking institutions of oppression and privilege, as is endeavoured in and through this research project.

Significance of the Research Project

This research is more crucial now than ever. As Canada celebrates the 40th anniversary of official multiculturalism and the 30th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the narratives of Canadians highlight the adverse realities of such policies. Alas, due to Canada's global reputation as a "cultural mosaic," we live in a nation where many Canadians do not recognize nor acknowledge racism as an oppressive institution that affects our day-to-day existence. This research challenges the myth that there is *a* single way to "be Canadian" by questioning how understandings of "being Canadian" are constructed and exploring the experiences of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*.

I am aware that these issues are extremely complex and that the issues will not dissipate through this research project. However, as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*, I am thoroughly exhausted with "being here, but not belonging. Being seen but always only as a Du Boisian[3] problem" (Goldberg, 2009, p. 167). I am not a problem, I am Canadian. And so the journey continues.

Thesis Overview

In the preceding chapter, I shared my journey that led to the creation of this research project. In chapter 2, I conduct a review of the existing literature and academic research, exploring the concepts of multiculturalism, Orientalism, identity, *hijab*, secularism, and the unveiling of Muslim women. Chapter 3 outlines the research journey, discussing the antiracist, feminist and narrative epistemologies, methodologies, and methods that guided this project along with my various navigations as a researcher throughout the process. In chapter 4, the reader is introduced to Amal, Rana, and Sakeena,

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[3] W. E. B. Du Bois (as cited in West, 2001) wrote in 1903 about his experiences as a colored American man and the ways by which his identity was challenged, particularly through subtle questioning which implied, "How does it feel to be a problem?" (p. 5). The notion of "being a problem" is explored in chapter 6.

three Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* who shared their experiences of "being Canadian." Next, chapter 5 presents an analytical dialogue between the women's words and academic literature, exploring the women's identity negotiations as they relate to understandings of "being Canadian." Chapter 6 discusses racism in Canada as a means of contextualizing the women's identity negotiations. Finally, chapter 7 speculates potential implications for policy and practice in Canada and further queries for us to contemplate how we can move forward toward formulating resistances and creating new Canadian realities.

Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature

We remain an ambiguous presence, our existence a question mark in the side of the nation. ... We continue to live here as outsider-insiders of the nation which offers a proudly multicultural profile to the international community.

Bannerji, 2000, p. 91

In the following chapter, I share a focused analysis of the existing literature and academic research related to the concepts and issues explored in this research to establish a contextual background for the reader. As disclosed in chapter 1, this research originated from my personal experiences as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab,* and I turned to this body of literature to provide an academic analysis of discourses and concepts that shaped understandings of "being Canadian." In this manner, personal and academic epistemologies merged to create new knowledges and understandings.

Upon analysis of the existing body of literature on Muslim women's identity negotiations in "western" societies—henceforward referring to Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom—I discovered three holistic themes: (1) how Orientalist and essentialist constructions of *hijab*, disseminated through societal institutions, impact both a Muslim woman's understanding of self as well as others' understandings of her identity; (2) how the hierarchization of components of identity by self and others saliences the "Muslim" aspect of identity; and, (3) how western societies perceive overt religious displays of identity such as the practice of *hijab* to be incompatible with national identity. Although emerging from my exploration of the literature, these themes were also noticeable in the women's narratives and analyses in chapter 5.

Although a multitude of recent research has been conducted on the experiences of Muslim women and girls in Canada (Alvi, Hoodfar, & McDonough, 2003; Bullock, 2002; Hamdan, 2009a; Shahnaz Khan, 2002;

Meshal, 2003; Zine, 2006), the analyses predominantly explore how the women negotiate "being Muslim" in western nations. Also, the experiences of immigrant women in this research address transitional and migrational understandings and expressions of their identities. I was unable to locate research, however, on studies that explore how Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* negotiate their personal sense of "being Canadian." It is their experiences that I explore and share in this research project.

In this chapter, I begin my review of the academic literature by exploring the origins of and current contentions surrounding multiculturalism in Canada. Next, I problematize the pervasiveness of the Orientalist discourse in western nations and explore how the discourse affects the identities and hybridities of Othered individuals. Subsequently, I explain the religious origins and dominant misconstructions of the concept of *hijab*. Then, after exploring notions of secularism and national identity in Canada, I focus on one particular site of contestation between public spaces and private identities, namely fascinations with unveiling The Muslim Woman. The concepts contained in this chapter provide a contextual background by which to explore the specific narratives of Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*.

Multiculturalism in Canada: Origins and Recent Debates

Canada is a nation defined on the global stage by its official policy of multiculturalism. As a modern nation-state, Canada is "a historically specific international legal entity" (Dhamoon & Y. Abu-Laban, 2009, p. 166). The construction of a unifying national identity is a challenge in this settler state, a multinational federal nation that is home to numerous "parallel societies" which co-exist within the same geographical territory, although often in isolation (Kymlicka, 2002). There are four such major internal differences that define Canada's national character: between indigenous and settler

populations; between white and nonwhite populations; between Francophone and Anglophone populations; and, between immigrant and native-born populations (Dhamoon & Y. Abu-Laban, 2009). Despite the distinct histories and narratives of these peoples, the state has attempted to protect the rights, freedoms, and equality of all Canadians in its official policies, most notably the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act.

Canada's reputation as a "cultural mosaic" was established in its unanimous passing of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in July of 1988. This policy was created in response to an influx of new immigrants to a predominately bicultural Canada (Samuel & Schachhuber, 2000), and sought to encourage the *integration* of minority groups as opposed to their *assimilation* (James, 2005). A nationwide commitment to equality for all Canadians was captured in Section 3(e) of the document: The ultimate goal of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act is to "ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity" (CanLII, 2003, para. 2). Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, who envisioned the creation of the Act, described it as such:

> Such a policy should help to break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies; national unity, if it's to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. ... It can form the base of a society which is based on fair play for all. (Magsino, 2000, p. 324)

Policymakers thus attempted to ensure that, in Canada's pluralist society, Canadians were granted the right to retain their beliefs and values whilst respecting others for doing the same. Canada's growing reputation as a "cultural mosaic" required that it be accountable for meeting a lofty set of goals. These aspirations are captured by Joseph E. Nancoo (2000) in his poem entitled "Canadian Diversity in the Twenty-First Century:"

Canada, cornerstone of the Twenty-First Century,
Formidable foundation for building a future
Egalitarian society, enriched enormously
With dynamic diverse cultures, cherishing
Shared visions and common soaring aspirations
For a heroic, humane, global community
Valuing the liberty, dignity and nobility
Of each and every human being! (p. 379)

As prided and promoted, differences between Canadians were perceived "not as a problem, but instead as a strength, which, rather than separating citizens, allows them to pursue together the plural quest for what is just and good" (Dion, 2000, p. 95). These universalistic aspirations of sameness in the face of infinite difference (Gutman, 1994) were presumed to emerge from the implementation of multiculturalism policies within Canadian institutions. These guidelines are cemented in Section 3(f) of the Act, which clarifies that it is the policy of the Canadian government to "encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character" (CanLII, 2003, para. 3). Through these policy provisions, Canadians were assured that there would be "no coercion into a single cultural standard" (Samuel & Schachhuber, 2000, p. 31).

Debates surrounding the multiculturalism discourse, however, deliberate over the policy's simultaneous call for difference and unity (Bannerji, 2000, 2010; Banting, Courchene, & Seidle, 2007; Bissoondath, 1994; Dei, 2000; Dhamoon, 2009; Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; Kymlicka, 2004, 2007; Magsino, 2000; James, 2005; Patel, 2007; C. Taylor, 1994a). "Multiculturalism," thus, is a topic of intense public debate stemming from the growing recognition that Canada ascribes more to its American neighbour's "melting pot" character than to the values typically associated with a "cultural mosaic" (Dallmayr, 1996). Critics argue that liberal multiculturalism in Canada reifies "difference as something that exists 'in' the

bodies or cultures of others, such that difference becomes a national property" (Ahmed, as cited in Dhamoon, 2009, p. 6). Thus, the primary critique of Canadian multiculturalism is its inherent focus on "other" cultures, implying the existence of a "self" culture to which these "other" cultures are compared. Constant "focus on other cultures highlights their difference from the 'norm,' the dominant yet silent Anglo culture" (Shahnaz Khan, 2002, p. 13). These essentialist constructions of the other are founded upon "assumptions of static, unchanging, and undifferentiated notions of communities ... [which] deny their heterogeneity" (Rattansi, as cited in Shahnaz Khan, 2002, p. 13). Thus, Canadian multiculturalism is tainted with "the paradox of multicultural vulnerability," coined by Ayelet Shachar (as cited in Benhabib, 2006, p. 159), who argues that state policies enacted to create equity amongst diverse individuals in fact manifest as institutional discrimination against the very individuals they claim to protect. The Canadian multiculturalism discourse, then, fails to challenge socially constructed yet pervasive hierarchies of power and instead "reduces the problem of social justice into questions of curry and turban" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 38).

Himani Bannerji (2000) posits that this "multiculturalism from above" derives from "'organic intellectuals' of bourgeois society, who, from their elite standpoint," have created a system of political, social, and economic color coding based upon Orientalist and racist discourses (p. 125). Critiquing not only the adverse realities of the multiculturalism policy but also the nature of its creation, she argues that policymakers strategically shift the focus away from the hegemonic discourses which form the foundations of the policy. This shift to a euphemistic discourse of "diversity ... distracts us from what actually happens to us in our raced and gendered class existence" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 34). According to Earle Waugh (1991), the multiculturalism discourse "may also be a cloak for conformism to a secular ideology, either Anglo or Franco" (p. 79). Rather than benefiting non-white

Canadians, the multiculturalism discourse seeks to maintain status quo in the form of classed, raced, and gendered hierarchies and systems of privilege and oppression. Rita Dhamoon (2009) writes:

> There is little talk of colonialism, racism, white privilege, sexism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, or capitalism, as if multiculturalism now makes up for the past and can correct present social inequalities. It is all about accommodation and diversity, not anti-racism, decolonization, white supremacy, or power. (p. x)

George Sefa Dei (2000) posits that the issue at hand is not "diversity" but institutional practices that "create and sustain injustice and inequity among groups" based upon social differences (p. 303). These inequities are not recent manifestations but are foundational to the construction of the nation at which time the emphasis was placed on "integrating other nationalities into the Canadian way" (McLean, 2002, p. 233). "The Canadian way" thus excluded the knowledges and experiences of indigenous peoples, women, "visible minorities," and those belonging to marginalized social classes. Rooted in neoliberal ideologies, Canada's multicultural policy was also perceived as a means of achieving capitalist desires. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney (as cited in Y. Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002) professed in 1986 that "we, as a nation, need to grasp the opportunity afforded to us by our multicultural identity, to cement our prosperity with trade and investment links the world over and with a renewed entrepreneurial spirit at home" (p. 111). This critique of multiculturalism raises the questions: When Canadians express pride in our nation's acceptance of diversity, what does this really mean? Have the strategically propagated euphemistic discourses successfully veiled their harsh realities?

The reality of Canada's diversity is that by the year 2031, close to one-third of the Canadian population will be a "visible minority[4]" ("Minorities to

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[4] In the study, visible minorities are defined as "persons, other than aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" ("Minorities to Rise Significantly by 2031: StatsCan," 2010, para. 6).

Rise Significantly by 2031: StatsCan," 2010). On the other hand, a poll conducted by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC) in 2003 revealed that every three out of four Canadians believe that "there is still a lot of racism left in Canada" (Patel, 2007, p. 261). Henry and Tator (2010) posit that though it is difficult to quantify racism and understand its pervasive manifestations through the use of polls and surveys, certain conclusions can be drawn from surveys such as the CRIC poll. They contend that studies that demonstrate a perceived increase in racism in Canada imply either that instances of racism are on the rise or that Canadians are increasingly concerned about racism and its oppressive effects, or both (Henry & Tator, 2010, p. 48). How do Canadians determine a balance between achieving unity as Canadians when "racism in Canadian society continues to invade our lives institutionally, systematically, and individually" (Fontaine, as cited in Patel, 2007, p. 263)?

Some critiques of multiculturalism argue that too much emphasis on difference "condemns members of ethnic groups to a life of perpetual isolation and disadvantage in a land of opportunity and affluence" (Magsino, 2000, p. 321). Thus, obsessive nationwide attention to Others through the multiculturalism discourse fundamentally fuels their continual marginalization: a vicious cycle. Said (2006) questions: "Is the notion of a distinct culture (or race, or religion, or civilization) a useful one, or does it always get involved either in self-congratulation (when one discusses one's own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the 'other')?" (p. 140). In their analysis of the politics of difference, Ghosh and Abdi (2004) argue that,

> for those who are different, their inability to challenge these interpretations (their silence and powerlessness) oppresses them. It violates their sense of worth, self-esteem, and overall individual and social identities. The fear of difference is perhaps the greatest impediment to understanding among different people because it creates barriers. Further, it puts the onus on those who are different

to cross the distance between their realities and the dominant consciousness, while those who represent the norm avoid their responsibility. (pp. 25-26)

Difference then must also be understood as a socially constructed and politically manipulated tool of racism. Alfred Memmi (as cited in Dei, 2000) contends that "making use of the difference is an essential step in the racist process. ... [However] it is not the difference which always entails racism; it is racism which makes use of difference" (p. 302). Thus, social constructions of difference are taken up as a tool to Other and to construct and maintain hierarchies of identities in Canada.

Multiculturalism in Canada, though assumed to function as a means of achieving equality and respect amongst Canadians, instead focuses state and societal gaze on the Other and different, away from critical analyses of institutional and systemic structures of privilege and oppression. The Orientalist discourse is one particularly significant discourse that creates and maintains the notion of the Other in Canada.

The Orientalist Discourse in Canada

The Orientalist discourse remains a pervasive influence in western societies such as Canada, permeating our nation and its institutions. A discourse is constructed to "understand" a group of individuals based upon an other's conception of that group. According to Stuart Hall (2007), the construction and dissemination of popular discourses results in "the production of knowledge through language" (p. 56), and an analysis of dominant discourses exposes prevalent (mis)constructions and perceived "truths" about the Other. Far from representing reality, then, a discourse represents the assumptions and biases of the political, social, and economic elite who, through their attempts to understand and accommodate difference whilst maintaining positions of power and privilege, construct legitimized regimes of truth. In this regard, Michel Foucault (as cited in Hall, 2007)

theorizes that a co-constitutive relationship exists between power, knowledge, and discourse, in that a discourse represents the medium through which power is exercised by the elite, resulting in its legitimization as knowledge.

One such discourse that permeates the western world is the Orientalist discourse. Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said (2006) traces the long history of Orientalism from the late nineteenth century onwards, outlining a system of "truths" that creates an ontological and epistemological distinction between "the Orient," or the East, and "the Occident," or the West. In particular, those individuals who are perceived to be Muslim are constructed through this Orientalist lens, which conflates Muslim with Arab and vice versa. In the western world, the construction of Muslims through the Orientalist discourse was emphasized in the wake of the Iranian revolution, the Gulf War, the ongoing Palestinian/Israeli conflicts, and global disputes over Kashmiri land, yet its proliferation amplified significantly after the events of September 11, 2001.

The Orientalist discourse constructs the Oriental in contrast to the Occidental, signifying the need for the Other through which to establish and legitimize the Self. The Oriental Other possesses little or no control over the construction and perpetuation of this externally imposed identity (Said, 2007), epitomizing W. E. B. Du Bois' (2007) notion of "double consciousness:" the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (p. 144). Constructions of the Other are proliferated and universalized through multifarious means: academia, literature, news media, and everyday conversations. Currently, in the western world, the discourse of the Occident versus the Orient has narrowed its scope to categorize not only "The West and the Rest" according to Stuart Hall (2007), but indeed the West and Islam.

"Western Islam is now a reality" though (Ramadan, 2010, p. 44), and the line of differentiation between these two seemingly dichotomous worlds has blurred to create a novel and controversial conception, one which is difficult for both Muslims and western states to navigate and comprehend. Muslims are caught "betwixt and between the black and white worlds" (Malcolm X, as cited in West, 2001, p. 139) in today's globalized and increasingly transnational society. The group denoted "Muslim" is stripped of its earlier religious qualifiers, which defined Muslims as adherents of the religion of Islam, and is increasingly juxtaposed against social categorizations of "White" or "The West." Founded upon essentialist and political constructions of Islam and Muslims, the characterization of Muslims as a "race" enables western societies to identify between the Same and the Different (Borg & Mayo, 2007). This Orientalist discourse constructs Muslims as a monolithic and homogenous group who is "hostile, violent, untrustworthy and totally incompatible with our standards and values," "our" referring to the West (Calleja, as cited in Borg & Mayo, 2007, p. 180). Thus a fear of Muslims develops, a fear that manifests in the phenomenon labelled Islamophobia which, as Dhamoon and Y. Abu-Laban (2009) contend,

> functions by representing Islam as a fundamentalist religion rather than a variedly interpreted faith, a source of spirituality, an element of ethno-cultural identity, a marker of geography, an oppositional ideology, and an official state ideology for a number of countries. (p. 180)

Ubiquitous in nature, the hegemonic Orientalist discourse in Canada creates an unfounded fear and distrust of those individuals perceived to be Muslim. This discourse operates to manipulate the identity negotiations of an Othered individual, who is understood through distinct definitions of and differentiations between Self and Other.

Identities and Hybridities

> *To survive the Borderlands*
> *you must live* sin fronteras *(without borders)*

be a crossroads.
<div align="right">*Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 217*</div>

The Orientalist discourse constructs a complex environment for an individual living in double consciousness. As a holistic, fluid and interlocking understanding of being, identity provides an individual with an understanding of self as well as a sense of solidarity with other individuals with whom some identity facets may overlap. Rita Dhamoon (2009) contends that "identity is not the base of a subject but an effect of being produced as a subject through meanings of difference" (p. 11). As such, understanding the nature of the construction of one's identity follows the deconstruction of hierarchical systems of power, privilege, and oppression that construct difference and, consequently, identity. Ali Rattansi (2007) succinctly provides seven salient themes, known as "processes of identification," to understand the complexities surrounding one's identity negotiations:

1. An individual or group identity is only partly a matter of *self*-identification. Identities are also assigned by others or created by the state and civic institutions ...
2. Identities usually imply and rely on the *recognition of difference.* ... Any identity also requires identifying what it is not ...
3. Identities are the outcome of *processes* of *power relations* and are located in *structures of authority* ...
4. *Identities* as bounded entities *are not permanently fixed* ...
5. Identities always involve *multiplicity.* Individuals have multiple roles and a variety of 'subject positions' pertaining to different roles and identifications ...
6. Identities, therefore, are rarely coherent and integrated. They are prone to *inconsistency* and *contradiction*, depending on the context ...
7. It is important to grasp that *group* or social identities also lack inner coherence. (pp. 115-118, emphasis in original)

Thus the process of negotiating and understanding identity occurs, not in isolation, but within complex sets of power relations and through relationships with others' identities. Understandings of Self premise upon an

Other's perception of Self. No Self is possible without an Other (Todd, 1998), and there is no Us without Them. According to Paul Gilroy (2007), "identity helps us to comprehend the formation of that perilous pronoun 'we' and to reckon with the patterns of inclusion and exclusion that it cannot help creating" (p. 280). Thus, the process of identity negotiation occurs socially because

> it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside* that the positive meaning of any term—and thus its 'identity'—can be constructed. (Hall, as cited in Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 12, emphasis in original)

In this sense, externally constructed definitions of identity based upon power hierarchies position individuals within predefined notions of Self and Other since the constitution of "sameness and otherness is an intrinsically political operation" (Gilroy, 2007, p. 280). The management of rigid boundaries between Self and Other serve to "define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 25). Within these boundaries, "what is often called the black soul is a white man's artefact" (Fanon, as cited in Bhabha, 1994, p. 63) as the Self constructs the Other in its diametrically opposed image. At times, however, overlapping interstices may be constructed by individuals living in double consciousness, as categorizations presumed to be distinct begin to overlap.

These intersecting spaces are sites of empowerment for the Other (Bhabha, 1994). Individuals coded as Others navigate their individual identity negotiations by seeking third spaces, hybrid spaces, "'in-between' spaces" that provide "innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2). Gloria Anzaldúa (2007) describes the construction of these spaces as a process of developing "a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer* … a consciousness of the Borderlands" (p. 99). She contends that borderlands exist "wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where

under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 19). At these particular borders, which may be "linguistic, spatial, ideological [or] geographical" (Manning, 2003, p. 73), the Other determines a space for hybridity, a space to blur the distinctive categorizations of Self and Other, to negotiate a third identity. Freeing herself from forced notions of identity with rigid borders, *la mestiza* moves toward more holistic and inclusive understandings of Self since "the work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 102). Thus, *la mestiza* negotiates the process "between the person you choose to be and the things that determine your individuality by being thrust upon you" (Gilroy, 2007, p. 283). These processes of navigating hybrid spaces are further complicated by the interlocking nature of our identities.

Understandings of identity are not premised upon distinct social categorizations but are explored by understanding the co-constitution of all categories of social difference such as social class, gender, ethnicity, religion, and race. The interlocking nature of identities guarantees that individuals are simultaneously privileged and unprivileged, included in and excluded from social hierarchies of power, "depending on the particular site of power" (Stasiulis, 2005, p. 52). The interlocking nature and complexity of identity negotiations are highlighted in Friedman's (as cited in Stasiulis, 2005) description of "a relatively dark-skinned Brahmin woman who moves back and forth between London and Calcutta:"

> As a Brahmin she is privileged by caste; as a woman, she is oppressed. As a frequent traveller, she is well-off in class terms, but called black by the British and subject to the disorientations of a bicontinental postcolonial identity. As a dark-skinned woman, she is differently disadvantaged within the Indian context of colorism and the British context of racism. (p. 52)

Identity negotiations occur within powerful hierarchies of privilege and oppression which necessitate that singular challenges to one social

categorization occur through resistance to multiple structures of social oppression. In this research project, I explore the identity negotiations and interlocking identities of a particular group of individuals: Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*.

Canadian Muslim Women and *Hijab*

Within the seam of our multicultural nation resides a group of Canadian Muslim women whose identity negotiations are significantly influenced by the pervasive Orientalist discourse. According to the 2001 Census, about 600 000 Muslims live in Canada, of which 110 000 reside in Québec; after Ontario, this province is home to the largest Muslim population in Canada (Bramadat & Seljak, 2005). Sharon McIrvin Abu-Laban (1991) notes that "for Muslims, as for others, life is lived in context" (p. 8), and thus the manner in which over one-fifth of the world's population interprets and practices their faith varies considerably. However, it can be stipulated that the foundations of the religion are comprised of the belief in one God (Allah), the Holy Quran (the sacred text which contains revelations from Allah to the Prophet Muhammad), and the *Hadith* (a collection of sayings and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad).

The first Muslims arrived in Canada in the late nineteenth century from Syria and Lebanon and settled in Lac La Biche, Alberta, which was home to the first organized Muslim community in Canada (McDonough & Hoodfar, 2005). Fatima Mernissi (as cited in Shahnaz Khan, 2002) contends that Muslims make "[themselves] at home everywhere around the globe in unfamiliar as well as familiar surroundings" (p. 15). Increased numbers of Muslims immigrated to Canada after World War II from a variety of African, Arab and South Asian countries. These individuals settled into their new homes as Canadian society at large, though generally uneducated about the religion of Islam, was hospitable toward Muslims (McDonough & Hoodfar, 2005).

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Recent years, however, speak to a different reality for Canadian Muslims. A 2012 poll by Leger Marketing (commissioned by the Association for Canadian Studies and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation) involved a survey of close to 1500 individuals across the nation and revealed that 52 percent of the Canadian population believes that Muslims cannot be trusted while 42 percent of the population believes that discrimination against Muslims is "mainly their fault" (Boswell, 2012). These results raise the question, what views do these Canadians hold about Muslims that cause them to doubt their ability to trust them? Why are victims of discrimination blamed for the oppressive acts committed against them? Further to this, in a 2005 survey of Muslim women in Canada, "some 44 percent of respondents said they had experienced discrimination or unfair treatment in the previous five years" (Banting, Courchene, & Siedle, 2007, p. 7). It could be argued that the results of these surveys reveal the Orientalist sentiments of some Canadians toward Muslims:

> Insofar as Islam has always been seen as belonging to the Orient, its particular fate within the general structure of Orientalism has been to be looked at first of all as if it were one monolithic thing, and then with a very special hostility and fear. (Said, 1997, p. 4)

For Muslims, this widespread fear of their difference is an expression of "Islamophobia," defined by McDonough and Hoodfar (2005) as "dread or hatred of Islam and of Muslims" (p. 137). This Islamophobia, rooted in the Orientalist discourse, manifests in the public Othering of Muslims, particularly through increased state monitoring and regulations in the form of surveillance, securitization, and racial profiling. In a post-9/11 climate, this Othering "serves as a reminder of how one's citizenship may be irrelevant in light of one's perceived ethnicity, religion, or country of birth" (Y. Abu-Laban, 2005, p. 159). Regardless of an individual's legal citizenship status, the Muslim aspect of their identities declare them as "internal dangerous foreigners," legally-entitled citizens who are deemed as outsiders from within (Dhamoon & Y. Abu-Laban, 2009).

The Muslim Woman, in particular, is perceived as an enigma in the west as her appearance, her demeanour, and her attire is contrasted to that of a western woman's through the Orientalist discourse. The primary means of recognizing "The Muslim Woman" is by her *hijab*.[5] Far from being a simple piece of fabric or article of clothing, *hijab* is a concept, one contextually and historically rooted in diverse religions, cultures and traditions around the world (see Heath, 2008). Particular to the religion of Islam, the guidelines to practice *hijab* derive from the following verse of the Holy Quran:

> And say to the believing women that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts, and that they disclose not their *natural and artificial* beauty except that which is apparent thereof, and that they draw their head-coverings over their bosoms. (Al-Nur, 24:32, emphasis in original)

This verse is debated scrupulously within the Muslim community and, although what is considered to be "modest" varies significantly, there is an understanding that practicing *hijab* requires not only modest clothing but also an attitude, personality and manner of modesty (Meshal, 2003). Thus, a Muslim woman can interpret the teachings in a manner most suitable to her circumstances and positionality, resulting in the multifarious attires exhibited by Muslim women: *hijab*, *burka, niqab, jilbab, abaya, chador,* and *dupatta* to name a few. Though patriarchal structures and practices manifest in the coercion of some women into the practice, Muslim women feel empowered in their meaningful personal decision to either veil or not veil (Hamdan, 2010).

For women who practice *hijab*, this visible symbol of religious ideology "gathers its adherents in an embracing, exclusive fold and, more often than not, extends to the individual a positive sense of belonging and a firm sense of identity" (Meshal, 2003, p. 102). The solidarity provided by externalizing "identity as a visible discourse" is immensely positive for

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[5] I refer to *hijab* as a practice as opposed to an item of clothing as *hijab* extends to a woman's heart, mind, thinking, and actions.

practicing women (Stewart, as cited in Hamdan, 2009a, p. 166). However, as a Muslim woman practicing *hijab* seeks to cover herself, she simultaneously makes herself immediately recognizable. Muslim women then negotiate the paradoxical space in which, as they seek to cover themselves, they are increasingly visible. *Hijab* is defended as "a mark of agency, cultural membership, and resistance" (Hirschmann, as cited in Hamdan, 2010, p. 84), and there is an increase in young Muslim women in western nations voluntarily choosing to practice *hijab* as a means of resisting dominant discourses that construct Islam as a religion of oppression and subjugation (Bullock, 2000; Marcotte, 2010). In this sense, *hijab* is understood by the women as part of their hybrid identity, "an ambiguous identity in which Muslim women create a space between the mainstream racism and discrimination they may face as Muslims in Canada, and any patriarchal religious dogmas that discriminate against them" (Hamdan, 2009a, p. 137).

Islamic feminists who advocate for the equality of men and women root their resistance in Islamic teachings contained in the words of Allah in the Holy Quran and teachings from the life of the Prophet Muhammad. The nature and goals of Islamic feminism are compared to those of western liberal feminism, as in Zarina Awad's (as cited in Waldman, 1991) address to the Islamic Society of North America in 1985:

> Sisterhood is powerful—but not powerful enough to demand more than watered-down feminism: not powerful enough to resist the subtle extortion which society is inflicting on the women's movement, the notion that women must be identical to men if they wish to be equal, that they must suffer for their suffrage. Yeah, you can have equal pay for equal work, women are told; you can be sled dog drivers or longshoreman, but there's a price. And that price is emotional and psychological well-being. Women feel compelled to make this sacrifice, to accept this incomplete feminism—after all, half a loaf is better than none, so let's just settle for our physical rights—let's not ask the impossible. But why not? For 14 centuries ago, a truly radical feminist ideology was born. Radical for its age as well as ours; radical not only in its letter but its spirit. For it provided not only for

women's—for humanity's—social, economic, and legal rights, but emotional and spiritual rights as well. (p. 321)

Further, American scholar Nimat Hafez Barazangi (2004) notes that "feminists' emphasis on gender as the central concept is viewed by Muslim women scholars as replacing patriarchal power with feminist power instead of balancing individual and social relations" (p. 31). Additionally, she contends that

> many feminists still view their Muslim colleagues as the Other, Women of Color, or Third World women, instead of viewing them as agents of change for their own situations, as partners in the struggle for social justice, and as a living experience to learn from. (Barazangi, 2004, p. 32)

Thus, Islamic feminists root their claims in the scriptural teachings of the faith yet are confined to positions of the Other as they strive to achieve a socially just society.

Not only Islamic feminists but also Muslim women who practice *hijab* are objects of discriminations premised upon Orientalist ideologies. Ideological misconstructions of *hijab* are perpetuated, not based upon the piece of clothing, but by interpretations attached to it. As such, Muslim women are perceived as "passive, exotic, oppressed and sensually alluring figures in need of protection and liberation" (Tarlo, 2010, p. 3), and *hijab* is interpreted as either "forced silence or radical, unconscionable militancy" in the western world (Rana, 2007, p. 171). Daniel Ahadi (2009) offers four narratives to explain the fascination with *hijab* in Canada: (1) as a symbol of a fanatical and violent religion; (2) as a symbol of female oppression; (3) signifying the failure of women who engage in this practice to integrate into western society; and, (4) as a part of the ethnic experience in diasporic communities. These narratives, rooted in the Orientalist discourse and constructed by individuals who are disengaged from the practice, attempt to de-legitimize the power a Muslim woman imbues through the decision to practice *hijab*. These ideologies increasingly construct the practice as a

political gesture that conflicts with national allegiance (Benhabib, 2006). In her study of representations of *hijab* in western media, Byng (2010) discovered that *hijab* is juxtaposed against national identity in western nations, concluding that "the values and ideals of each nation [are] consistent with women not veiling, and that in order to fit into their cultures, Muslim women [can] not veil" (Byng, 2010, p. 123).

Orientalist constructions of *hijab* do not account for the reality of the mosaic within a mosaic which are the individualities and unique positionalities of Muslim women and the significant percentage of Muslim women who choose not to practice *hijab.* A Muslim woman practices *hijab* for a variety of reasons: adherence to religious tenets, as a statement of personal identity, or a means of political resistance, amongst many others. But, regardless of her reasons, *hijab* is universally constructed in western media as a representation of terrorism, colonialism, violence, and barbarity (Bullock, 2000). Chandra Mohanty (1984) distinguishes between "Woman" as "a cultural and ideological composite Other constructed through diverse representational discourses" and "women" as "real, material subjects of their collective histories" (p. 334). In this regard individual Muslim women give way to The Muslim Woman, the stereotypically meek, vulnerable, and subjugated woman with no individuality, personality, or spirit. As the woman is removed from her positionality, it is easier to generalize, universalize, and abhor.

The visibility of private religious identities in the form of *hijab* is increasingly deliberated in public spaces, particularly stemming from the discourse surrounding the reasonable accommodation debates in Canada. I now turn to the concept of secularism in Canadian society and its role in understanding and constructing notions of national identity.

Secularism and Notions of National Identity

In Canada, notions of national identity are determined by demarcations between public spaces and private identities. "State power is fully secular" in Canada (Hall, as cited in Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 12), signifying a nationwide commitment to the separation of political and religious institutions. This does not suggest, however, that religion is irrelevant in the lives of Canadians nor that it refrains from permeating Canada's public spaces. According to the 2001 Census, eighty percent of Canadians self-identified as Christian (Bramadat, 2005a) while two percent of the Canadian population self-identified as Muslim, establishing Islam as the second-largest religion in Canada (Beyer, 2008). Individual and collective freedom to practice religion is enshrined in section 2(a) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms yet there exists an assumption that religious practices will occur exclusively in private spaces, confined to homes and places of worship. These private spaces are distinct from public places, state institutions and spaces which are accessible to all Canadians and required to remain "neutral" and "secular" (Bouchard & C. Taylor, 2008).

The Supreme Court of Canada defined secularism in Canadian public institutions, namely the education system, in the Chamberlain versus Surrey School District No. 36 case in 2002 when an elementary school teacher attempted to incorporate books about same-sex marriage into his kindergarten curriculum. The judgement read:

> Religion is an integral aspect of people's lives, and cannot be left at the boardroom door. What secularism does rule out, however, is any attempt to use the religious views of one part of the community to exclude from consideration the values of other members of the community. (Supreme Court of Canada Judgement, 2002, para. 19)

This definition of secularism, though recognizing religion to be an integral facet in the lives of Canadians, requires that it be relegated distinctly to the private sphere and not be used as an exclusionary tool in public spaces.

Alberta legislation extended the concept of secularism when, in 2009, it passed Bill 44, which allows parents to pull their children out of classroom lessons in which matters of religion, sex, or sexual orientation are discussed ("Alberta Passes Law Allowing Parents to Pull Kids Out of Class," 2009). A law such as this dangerously perpetuates the taboo nature of religion in public spheres, relegating education about religion to the realm of "optional and expendable" (Bramadat, 2005b, p. 207). Meanwhile, "the secular world accepts the normativeness of the majority religion and has an acknowledged relationship with it: Christian values, history and influence result in state sanction of Christian holidays and heritage" (Waugh, 1991, p. 72).

Attempts to relegate religion to the private sphere were challenged by the reasonable accommodation debates in Québec. In the spring of 2002, twelve-year-old Gurbaj Singh was informed by his school board in Lasalle, Québec that he could not wear his *kirpan*, a ceremonial dagger worn by orthodox Sikhs, to school. This decision was overturned by the Supreme Court of Canada in 2006 but, in the interim, sparked a province-wide debate on the limits of the law in "accommodating" religious minorities. The concept of "reasonable accommodation" subsequently spread rapidly throughout the nation: *sharia* law was discussed in Ontario, polygamy was debated in British Columbia, and Hutterite groups were exempted from displaying their photographs on their driver's licences in Alberta. Debates refocused in Québec in 2010 when an Egyptian woman was expelled from her French language class because her *niqab*[6] was deemed an unfit garment for that public space, resulting in a controversial piece of provincial legislation, Bill 94, which proposed a ban on *niqab* and *burka*[7] in all public spaces in Québec ("Niqab-wearing Woman Pursues Quebec College," 2010). The public debates and media attention surrounding these incidents signified that religion remains a salient facet in the personal identities of Canadians and will

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[6] *Niqab* is a veil worn by some Muslim women that covers the entire face except for the eyes.
[7] *Burka* is a veil worn by some Muslim women that covers the entire face and body.

inevitably be expressed in public spaces. However, the response of state leaders and public policymakers remain rooted in the Orientalist discourse.

Public declaration that an individual's identity must be "accommodated" into society by those who possess the power to accommodate signifies a nationwide process of Othering (Beaman, 2008). In this power hierarchy, a satisfactory identity is to be determined by the "majority" or the Self who consequently exhibits flexibility toward those "minority" individuals considered to be different, and thus Other. The act of accommodation premises on the notion that "the *minor*-ity's voice is always personal [and] that of the *major*-ity, always impersonal" (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 28). It is presumed that the Self is governing in the best interest of the entire nation but instead maintains hierarchies of power and privilege which manifest in definitions of Canadian national identity:

> The core community is synthesized into a national we, and it decides on the terms of multiculturalism and the degree to which multicultural others should be tolerated or accommodated. This 'we' is an essentialized version of a colonial European turned into Canadian and the subject or the agent of Canadian nationalism. (Bannerji, 2000, p. 42)

Nationalist processes, then, construct two bodies. According to Michel Foucault (as cited in Razack, 2007), there is "the normal and the abnormal body, the former belonging to a homogenous social body, the latter exiled and spatially separated" (p. 78). The strict division between these bodies functions to create a sense of national identity. The construction of the foreign Other determines "which subjects are legitimate and which are illegitimate citizens" (Dhamoon & Y. Abu-Laban, 2009, p. 167). In Canada, the non-white, "illegitimate" citizens are taught that sameness is recognized and appreciated while difference is tolerated or refused (Cowan, 2008). For the unity of the nation, then, Others are the objects of assimilationist messages through public debates and decisions regarding their religious identities

(Thompson, 2008). In this manner, the united social Self eradicates challenges to its power and thus remains secure.

Samuel and Schachhuber (2000) contend that there exist particular values perceived to be integral to Canadian identity: individual dignity, right to full participation in society, inclusive public policies, responsible personal behaviours, recognition of collective identities and differences, and negotiations for a common purpose. However, Stuart (2008) explores explicitly racial constructions of what it means to "be Canadian," arguing that

> the reification of the nation and linking of national identity to multiculturalism lead to a discourse of white/anglo normativity; people of colour and members of non-charter ethnic groups are present in the narrative primarily as illustrations of the righteousness of dominant-group Canadians. (p. 89)

Raced, classed, and gendered constructions of what it means to "be Canadian" complicate notions of citizenship in Canada. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (2005) define "citizenship" in accordance with T.H. Marshall's definition: "membership in a community ... which assumes a given collectivity, with pre-defined boundaries" (p. 30). According to Member of Parliament Paul Martin Sr. (as cited in Y. Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002), who introduced the Canadian Citizenship Act in 1947,

> citizenship means more than the right to vote; more than the right to hold and transfer property; more than the right to move freely under the protection of the state; citizenship is the right to full partnership in the fortunes and future of the nation. (p. 43)

This "right to full partnership" continues to be debated and negotiated as what it means to "be Canadian" remains elusive and indefinable:

> 'Being Canadian' has always presented itself to me as somewhat coterminous with homelessness, if one can gauge a nation by its incessant preoccupation with its own sense of elusive identity. However, the obsession with 'Canadian identity' perpetuates a violent discourse of national exclusion that is masked in the myth of

Canadians as a harmless, open, and generous people. (Manning, 2003, p. xvii)

Ambiguous and contradictory conceptions of secularism, citizenship, and national identity in Canada raise numerous questions: How can we as Canadians globally profess our respectful inclusivity of diversity while our practices remain exclusionary and assimilationist? How do we navigate between "a politics of universalism emphasizing the equal dignity of all citizens" on the one hand and "a politics of difference focused on individual and cultural distinctiveness" on the other (Dallmayr, 1996, p. 286)? How can we avoid straying too far toward one side or the other on the continuum? Why is religion deemed to be incompatible with public spaces in Canada when the reality is that close to eighty-five percent of the Canadian population proclaims religious affiliations (Statistics Canada, 2005)? In the report summarizing the findings of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, the body constructed to assess and guide the processes and outcomes of the accommodation debates, the authors conclude that "the right to freedom of religion includes the right to show it" (Siddiqui, 2008, p. 13), which contradicts state attempts to maintain secularism in its public spaces. This debate surrounding public displays of private identities manifests specifically in state fascinations with unveiling The Muslim Woman in Canada.

Unveiling the Muslim Woman

Public policies regulating private identities, though contentious in theory, are plausible in reality, resulting in a blurring of lines between public and private spheres (Benhabib, 2006). Othered identities, in particular, present a threat to the seemingly unified national whole, resulting in the regulation of visible displays of Othered identities. Émile Durkheim contends that society can only survive if there is a certain degree of homogeneity amongst the population but I question, does the creation of national Canadian identity necessitate the sacrifice of Other religious identities?

The public desire for homogeneity and conformity as a means of unifying a population necessitates the rescue of The Muslim Woman from the clutches of her presumably violent religion and its oppressive males. As such, the increased visibility of Muslim women who practice *hijab* represents western society's ineffective attempts to conform Muslims into "The Western Way of Life" (Byng, 2010). Sheema Khan (2009) contends that state restrictions of WMD (Women in Muslim Dress) are premised on the following sentiments: "We know what is best for you; you can't possibly wear that thing out of free will, and if you do, you are too oppressed to know any better" (p. 143). This display of narcissistic samaritanism can be witnessed in societal obsessions with unveiling The Muslim Woman, as demonstrated in the aforementioned Bill 94 in Québec. The intention of the ban, as outlined by Québécois Premier Jean Charest, was to defend Québec's shared values (Hamilton, 2010), implying that Muslim women who practice *niqab* and *burka* represent a threat to provincial unity. Further, the ban, which models *l'affaire du foulard*[8] in France, is an attempt by the state to legitimize the "neutrality" with which they govern (Benhabib, 2006). Support for the unveiling of Muslim women through state regulation of *niqab*, *burka,* and *hijab* is expressed not only by the state but by more than half of the Québécois population who believes that banning the *hijab* is "a good idea" (Sheema Khan, 2009). These sentiments are echoed in Meshal's (2003) nationwide study of young Canadian Muslim women and their experiences of practicing *hijab*:

> Women who adopt the *hijab* encounter little in the way of positive feedback from the wider mainstream society. Whatever support or encouragement for the *hijab* exists is to be found at home, or in the Muslim community; the wider Canadian society reacts at best with tolerance, manifested as indifference, and at worst with discrimination. (p. 95)

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[8] The headscarf affair

Bill 94, then, is an expression of assimilationist tactics guised as a means to strengthen, in this case, Québécois identity as the policies "make women and girls objects of state regulation and punishment in order to teach the nation a lesson" (Benhabib, 2006, p. 157). The lesson is that, to be accepted as Canadian, Muslim women must abandon their religious dress.

The fascination with unveiling stems from a component in the Orientalist discourse which strives to exert dominance and control over the Other in order to safeguard the Self. In his essay "Algeria Unveiled," Frantz Fanon (1959) writes that, in Algeria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, French colonizers determined that control would be established over the Algerian peoples through the process of unveiling the Algerian women. In the struggle between colonizer and colonized, the women's resistance was symbolized by their *hijab*:

> Unveiling this woman is revealing her beauty; it is baring her secret, breaking her resistance, making her available for adventure. Hiding the face is also disguising a secret; it is also creating a world of mystery, of the hidden. ... There is in it the will to bring this woman within his reach, to make her a possible object of possession. (Fanon, 1959, p. 29)

The desire for power and control drives the obsession with unveiling a Muslim woman. The veil stands as a wall, signifying the distance between the colonizer and the colonized, a space of self-determination and autonomy, and "the colonizer's drive to unveil is the desire 'to win the battle of the veil at any cost', to unmask and unclothe with the view to dominate, to exploit, to penetrate—in short, to satisfy every whim" (Goldberg, 1996, p. 187). According to Sherene Razack (2008), "unveiling the Muslim woman … renders the Western woman as the colonial, observing, possessing subject" (p. 86). Control over and possession of the Other results in a strong sense of Self. Resultantly, the Other must negotiate, lost in a space of double consciousness, seeking her individual identity in the opacity of appropriated and prescribed group identity.

Thus, in Canada, debates over the regulation of Muslim women's dress become at once "a site of power and oppression" (Dei, 2007, p. 189). Choudry, Mahrouse, and Shragge (2008) conclude that

> the veiled woman herself is rarely heard. Instead, we are inundated with surveys and polls, opinions and media coverage about her — whether she should be allowed to vote or play soccer while veiled, and so on. Herouxville's municipal "standards" and the *Conseil du statut de la femme du Québec*[9] both view Muslim women as one-dimensional victims of violence; treat Muslim family life as intrinsically barbaric; and deflect attention from sexism and racism in Quebec and Canada. (p. 17, emphasis added).

Thus, state attempts to unveil, regulate, and assimilate Muslim women's identities satisfy a nationwide desire and need to create a unified national core premised upon Orientalist constructions of the Other. As Muslim women are visible and recognizable through their *hijab*, they are targets of public debate and scrutiny, representing either the nation's success in "accommodating" Others into Canadian society if they sacrifice their visible identities, or perpetual positions of Other if they resist. Either way, the women are perceived as a Problem to be solved in Canadian society.

Moving Forward

Presented above is a brief analysis of my understanding of the existing literature and academic research related to this topic, which established a conceptual framework to commence my research journey. I shared recent contentions surrounding the Canadian multiculturalism discourse, the process by which the Orientalist discourse constructs the Other, how Othered individuals undergo dialectical negotiations of identity, the origins of and Orientalist constructions of *hijab*, the presumed secular nature of public spaces in Canada, and western fascinations with the unveiling of Muslim women.

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[9] The Council on the Status of Women of Québec

After reading this literature, I was eager to talk to Canadian-born Muslim women about their experiences of "being Canadian." The academic literature had primarily explored the experiences of immigrant Muslim women or focused on the "Muslim" aspect of their identity. I was eager to explore how other Canadian-born Muslim women who practiced *hijab*, like myself, negotiated "being Canadian." My enthusiasm was not fuelled by a desire to "verify" the theories but instead to engage in a reflexive and dialogic analysis of the women's experiences of "being Canadian." In this way, we could create a reflective space in which to create and share new knowledges and understandings. What was revealed in this space was that Orientalist constructions of *hijab* and subsequent assimilationist messages significantly influenced and ultimately altered the women's understandings of their *hijab* and Self, as highlighted in the narrative threads analyzed in chapter 5. As a narrative researcher, thus, I merged the women's experiences with the academic literature to create a multilayered and contextualized analysis of the complex identity negotiations of Canadian Muslim women who practice *hijab*. Thus, I revisit the literature in a dialogue with the findings from the women's experiences in chapters 5 and 6. In the next chapter, I share how I conceptualized and navigated the research journey.

Chapter Three: The Research Journey

The research process is a learning process.

Johnson, 2002, p. 108

The following chapter summarizes the most stimulating and inspiring component of the research experience for me: conversing with the women. After experiencing a lifetime as a Canadian Muslim woman, I was now afforded the opportunity to dialogue with other women to explore the question: What is the experience of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*?

As I progressed through the research journey as a narrative, antiracist, feminist researcher, there were numerous points of contention, turmoil, and negotiation stemming from my dual positionalities of researcher and Canadian Muslim woman. My research journey was complicated yet iterative, characterized by a series of reflexive experiences through which I progressed, "modifying procedure in light of growing understanding, shifting strategies as themes [developed]" (Josselson, 2007, p. 557). At certain times, it seemed as though the research process and concepts were clear in my mind and, if questioned, I could describe any of my research decisions in detail. At other times, the process and concepts were incoherent and untraverseable; I felt lost in a vortex of ideas and debates. These were all captured in my research journal and, as a feminist narrative researcher, the only option available to me was to explicitly share my journey with the reader, describing both the experience under study as well as my experiences experiencing the experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Reinharz, 1992).

One of the most fundamental points in the research design was the collaborative and reflexive nature of the project. As the women and I conversed, we engaged in a reflexive and collaborative analysis in which the women increasingly linked individual incidents and encounters with other

Canadians to broader societal understandings of Muslim women and *hijab*, which I interpreted to refer to the Orientalist discourse in Canada. This continual exploration of structures, context, and agency occurred in a "becoming space … where we can think and act with one another into the future in ways that both mark and loosen limits" (Lather, 1991, p. 101). Each woman expressed the impacts of this reflective process on their growing and changing understandings of their experiences of "being Canadian."Amal (#2) said, "I've always thought about that type of stuff but I never ever explained it to anybody. … It makes you think about a lot of things, … about who you are." Rana (#2) reflected: "I like for people to learn from my experiences. I'm very open and let people learn from what I went through." Sakeena (#2) also shared that she had "been more aware of things after we've spoken about it, which is really cool." The nature of this research project was such that it required the women to consciously reflect on their everyday experiences as Canadian Muslim women, a process which they may not have otherwise engaged in. This process of consciousness-raising relies on an understanding of "a human being as fully and freely creating herself and the world in which she lives, a process which includes negotiating that creation through dialogue with others" (Westkott, as cited in Chovanec, 1993, p. 3). By exploring what it means to "be Canadian" through personal reflections and dialogues with other Canadian Muslim women, the women found patterns of identity negotiations across their narratives and increasingly expressed feeling part of a shared struggle of resistance. These negotiations are further discussed in chapter 5.

In this chapter, I discuss antiracist and feminist research epistemologies and narrative inquiry methodologies, which guided this research project. After discussing how I navigated my status as an insider/outsider, I share how the women were recruited and selected and the methods for collecting their narratives: pre-interview written narratives, individual, in-depth interviews, and a focus group conversation. I then share

the process for analyzing the narratives, both collaborative and individual, and conclude by discussing the significance of developing an ethical attitude as a researcher.

Epistemological and Methodological Frameworks

The goals of the feminist movement have not been achieved and those who claim we're living in a post-feminist era are either sadly mistaken or tired of thinking about the whole subject.

Atwood (as cited in Heilbrun, 1999), p. 100

Antiracist and feminist research epistemologies. This research project is founded upon qualitative research epistemologies, methodologies and methods. Particularly when exploring an individual's ontological understandings, qualitative research epistemologies provide more comprehensive analyses of the social realities and lived experiences of individuals than quantitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Within the field of qualitative research epistemologies and practices, I am inspired by feminist research, which is undertaken primarily by women to explore the identity of women (Reinharz, 1992). The goal of feminist research is to use the lived experiences of marginalized women to uncover and challenge dominant discourses and interlocking structures of privilege and oppression—patriarchy, capitalism, and racism—that are created and perpetuated by institutions and elite groups as a means of promoting social consciousness, social change and social justice (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). Nimat Hafez Barazangi (2004), a Muslim woman and feminist participatory action researcher, contends that her research goal has been to

> develop a self-learning pedagogical process that will improve … my capacities and those of my coresearchers to control our destinies as Muslim women more effectively. Effectiveness means to change life situations in the home, in the learning/teaching/research environment, and in the larger social context. (p. 23)

As such, the use of feminist-informed participatory action research epistemologies and practices with Muslim women links individual consciousness with social action, resulting in a transformation of self and society (Barazangi, 2004). Thus, in this research, although I do not engage in research with an entire community nor is the research directed by community members, I do employ feminist action research principles of reflexivity, collaboration, and dialogue to understand and challenge exclusionary constructions and manifestations of what it means to "be Canadian."

Feminist researchers recognize that "individuals' daily activities or material, lived experience structures their understanding of the social world" (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 10). As such, feminist epistemologies challenge the notion of a single, fixed reality which exists external to individual beings, instead contending that "reality" is socially constructed and that diverse and multiple realities exist (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). Furthermore, feminist epistemologies contend that power and knowledge are inherently connected and that to uncover sources of knowledge production and dissemination, the power hierarchies that frame the knowledges must be sought out and challenged. This critical exploration of "valid" and "legitimate" knowledge as a result of systemic structures of power, known as Dorothy Smith's (in Harding, 2007) "conceptual practices of power," is a fundamental aspect of my research. Although feminist researchers are diverse in terms of their positionalities, methods, and practices, "one shared radical tenet underlying feminist research is that women's lives are important. ... In other words, feminists are interested in women as individuals and as a social category" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 241).

Feminist researchers seek to explore how the overlapping and interstitial aspects of our identities construct our understandings of self. Gloria Anzaldúa (2007) writes in *Borderlands: La Frontera*:

Because I, a *mestiza*,

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        continually walk out of one culture,
        and into another,
        because I am in all cultures at the same time. (p. 99, emphasis in
        original)

Feminist researchers recognize that "individual subjects may occupy 'minority' and 'majority' positions simultaneously" (Brah, as cited in Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 17), and thus we are simultaneously privileged and unprivileged. Social categorizations in terms of gender, race, social class, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation and so on construct each individual's identity as a product of a unique interlocking system of privilege and unprivilege. When exploring identity constructions and negotiations in their research, feminist researchers question "how economic, political, and ideological structures construct and perpetuate group identities" (Dill, McLaughlin, & Nieves, 2007, p. 630), and subsequently challenge these interlocking systems of oppression.

      In the niche of feminist research qualified as antiracism feminism, researchers explore the identity negotiations of Othered women whose identities are constructed based upon racist and Orientalist discourses. Antiracist feminists presume the Other to be constructed as a binary to "white culture." To explain my understanding of the concept, I refer to Audre Lorde's (as cited in Tong, 2009) definition:

> If by white culture is meant a group of individuals who, because of their skin color, share a living, breathing, organic tradition that weaves together customs, religious beliefs, musical, artistic and literary works, family stories, and so forth, then white culture does not exist. In contrast, if by white culture is meant a hegemonic power structure that will do whatever it has to do to retain and increase its privilege, then white culture most certainly does exist. (p. 214)

An analysis of "white privilege," when explored in conjunction with other hegemonic systems of oppression such as patriarchy and capitalism, enables antiracism feminist researchers to understand women's complex and

interlocking identity negotiations and determine potential modes of resistance and praxis.

In this research project, I constitute the social categorization of "Canadian" as my primary unit of analysis. As a social scientist and qualitative researcher, I analyze the concept to comprehend the nature of its reification (Miles & Torres, 2007). Researchers conducting "doubled research ... [work] both with and against racialized categories" to simultaneously explore the lived experiences of women who are marginalized from membership in a certain social category while challenging dominant misconstructions of the category itself (Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 23). Analyzing understandings of "being Canadian" in conjunction with other markers of social difference such as "being a Muslim" and "being a woman" allow me as an antiracism feminist researcher to uncover how these interlocking structures of oppression and privilege impact the women's identity negotiations. In this regard, I found narrative inquiry to be the most viable methodology to guide my research practices.

Narrative inquiry. My research practices are informed by narrative inquiry as a methodology, particularly as a means of honouring and sharing the women's experiences while simultaneously challenging dominant discourses and structures of oppression and privilege in which they navigate their complex identity negotiations. When I initially commenced my readings on narrative inquiry, I found the research process to be slightly ambiguous. The more I continued to read, however, the more I understood that this was the beauty of the methodology: narratives exemplify and encapsulate the unique experiences of individuals. The narrative approach to qualitative research mirrors the human experience and emphasizes the process by which individuals understand and share their narratives, which is unique to every person. Furthermore, I learned that one "cannot police the boundaries of narrative inquiry," establishing the methodology as rooted in constant reflexivity, learning, and growth (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007, p. 636). Keeping

these concepts in mind, I continued (and still continue) to explore how narratives offer a means of engaging in resistance and social change.

So, why is narrative the most useful methodology for exploring my guiding research question? Clandinin and Connelly (2000) contend that "[as] the social sciences are founded on the study of experience, experience is therefore the starting point and the key term for all social science inquiry" (p. xxiii). Thus, narrative inquiry is a means of formulating personal experiences into a meaningful narrative that can be connected with others' narratives to embody voice and agency, of an individual and a group (Chase, 2010). The most appealing aspect of narrative inquiry is that it highlights the experiences of individuals who may be silenced or denied personhood as a result of membership in an oppressed group (Gunaratnam, 2003). As an antiracism feminist researcher, the personal narratives of marginalized women are crucial to understanding the influence of oppressive institutional structures and practices on women's identity negotiations (Chase, 2010), consequently providing a means of resistance and counterhegemony.

Specifically, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define the elements of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, a space that is particularly significant for narrative inquirers. This space involves the elements of *interaction*, *continuity* and *situation*. *Interaction* refers to aspects of personal and social being and the significance of situating personal experiences within broader social contexts. *Continuity* refers to the significance of determining a temporal analysis—past, present, and future—in any particular narrative. Finally, *situation* refers to the notion of place and the significance of determining the context and location of an individual's narratives. This three-dimensional space provides a guiding framework through which to explore the unique positionalities of the women as well as the relationship of their narratives with broader societal discourses.

Critics of narrative inquiry may challenge, however, how a narrative researcher determines whether or not a participant's narrative is authentic. The response to this challenge is, we don't. Following the advice provided by experienced narrative researchers, I understand that narratives are always "re-presentations ... [and] a retelling" (Molloy, as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 101). In all likelihood, under differing circumstances, the women could understand and share their narratives differently. Thus, I must be conscious not only of the content of the narratives but also of the manner in which they are presented, considering elements that are emphasized and elements that are perhaps left out. Within this conscious analysis, however, I continue to respect and value the knowledge and experiences of the women. As such, negotiating my role as an antiracism, feminist, narrative researcher was difficult, and the research journey was full of contentions and moments of uncertainty, as are explained in the next section.

Contentions as an insider/outsider. According to feminist and narrative research epistemologies, it was necessary for me to consider my own positionalities and understandings of self throughout the research process (Gunaratnam, 2003). In particular, I navigated my role and status as both an insider and an outsider. As an insider, I belonged to the same faith group as the women, was also born and raised in Canada, practiced *hijab*, belonged to a similar social class, and was around the same age as the women. However, I was simultaneously an outsider to the women as I was the researcher, the individual who constructed and led the research project.

As explored in chapter 1, this research project emanates from my very being as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*. My journey is consistent with that of other narrative researchers in that "narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical" and "our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 121). The role of the feminist, narrative researcher though is not that of an "objective" conductor

who obtains information from a brief survey of a large number of individuals and stoically rearranges the data to create a thesis, careful to isolate her experiences from the research. Instead, my role is to clarify how this research project emerges from my personal experiences and, in this way, "the researcher assures herself that she is 'starting from the standpoint of women'" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 259).

Continual reflexivity and dialogue with my supervisor and colleagues increased my accountability as the researcher. Constantly questioning myself and allowing others to question me enabled me to not only comprehend the sources of my knowledge but also to expose the power structures in which I was functioning (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). I was distressed by the amount of power I possessed as a researcher, including the creation of the research question, the selection of the participants, the conceptual scope of the project, and, most significantly, how the women's narratives were to be analyzed and presented in the final research project.

In particular, I was confronted with what Amani Hamdan (2009b) refers to as "the reflexivity of discomfort" (p. 378). As I negotiated my simultaneous insider/outsider status throughout the research journey, discomfort emerged from the surfacing of new understandings of self. I had anticipated the development of new understandings about the world around me but realized that I also had to continually be open to and engage with radical new understandings of self. Apart from these self-realizations, I was conscious as to how my insider/outsider status would influence my dialogues with the women and whether or not they would entrust me with their narratives. In this regard, I read a study conducted by Merriam et al. (2001) on the insider/outsider status of academic researchers, which ultimately concluded that "what an insider 'sees' and 'understands' will be different from, but as valid as what an outsider understands" (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 415). I realized that, as an insider/outsider, I possessed a unique positionality, one that would allow me to relate to the women while

maintaining my role as the researcher. I still faced the dilemma, though, as to how I would incorporate my voice in the research project.

Thus, the primary matter of personal turmoil and contention in the research process was determining the manner in which to incorporate my narrative. From the outset, I had conceptualized myself as the fourth participant. I planned to write a pre-interview narrative, biographical description, and responses to the predetermined interview questions. In this manner, I could incorporate my narrative with the other three women's narratives into a broader analysis of what it means to "be Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab.* However, after careful deliberation and dialogue with my supervisor and colleagues, I finally decided not to include myself as the fourth participant. I made this decision after the focus group conversation with the women when I ultimately realized that, after the women had entrusted me with their narratives, I could not permit the possibility of my narrative overshadowing or downplaying their narratives. Even the possibility of this abuse of power was completely unacceptable and objectionable to me as a feminist narrative researcher. Thus, I decided not to include my experiences as a separate narrative but instead to share my positionality and experiences as a researcher. The reader will note that I use the pronoun "I" when I share my journey of "being Canadian" in chapter 1, my research journey in chapter 3, and my final thoughts in chapter 7. However, in chapters 4, 5 and 6, which include the women's narratives and experiences, I do not use "I" or "we" but instead use the pronoun "they" or "the women" to emphasize their narratives. My voice comes through as the researcher but I do not share my personal experiences with the topic. Bell hooks (1997) reveals that she writes in both first and third person, choosing to include the voice of "the third person narrator who has both critical insight and an almost psychoanalytic power that enables critical reflection on events" (p. xxii). I found this structuring to be most suitable and honourable when negotiating my insider/outsider status.

My role as an antiracism, feminist, narrative researcher, though complex, was cohesive as the primary focus of my research epistemology was the participants: the women. I turn now to discuss the next steps of the research journey: selecting women to participate in the project who were members of a particular demographic, methods for collecting their narratives, developing a collaborative analysis of their experiences of "being Canadian," and ethical considerations to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the women at all times.

Narrative Collection and Analysis

The research question in this project was, what is the experience of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*? In this regard, I sought out the experiences of individuals who were members of a distinct group. Kerby (1991) contends that "experience is *at once* part and whole" and that "the concept of experience can be used to cover the whole of a life ('There is nothing but experience'), and also the parts of a life ('I just had a strange experience')" (p. 16, emphasis in original). In this regard, as an antiracism, feminist, narrative researcher, I designed a research project that provided space for women to share their understandings of their experiences of "being Canadian." As Choudry and Kapoor (2010) assert, "reflexivity is crucial when starting from, engaging with, and analyzing activist knowledge" (p. 3). In this sense, our constant reflexivity throughout the research process enabled us to develop understandings of ourselves as everyday activists, as discussed in chapters 5 and 7.

Selection. Though this research project emerged from my personal experiences as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*, I was enthusiastic to seek out other women to learn about their experiences of "being Canadian." As my research question specifically identified that my participants be Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*, I was conscious of these factors when selecting women to participate in this

project. Although "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 244), I wanted to approach only a handful of women to develop trusting bonds and allow for sufficient space and time to explore their narratives.

Apart from being a woman, the most significant criterion for participation in this research project was that the women practiced *hijab*. As outlined in chapter 2, a woman's reasons for practicing *hijab* are varied and multiple and many Muslim women in fact choose not to practice *hijab*. However, Muslim women who do not practice *hijab* are not identifiable, recognizable, and visible in the same manner as Muslim women who do practice *hijab*. As such, societal constructions of *hijab* affect a *hijabi* woman's personal identity negotiations, which was the primary focus of this research project. These identity negotiations are described in chapter 5.

Another necessary criterion for participation in this research project was that the women were born and raised in Canada.[10] I was specifically interested in the women's experiences of "being Canadian" and wanted to dialogue with other second-generation[11] women to explore their understandings of this concept. Selecting women who were not Canadian-born, even if they were legal Canadian citizens, would require an additional layer of analysis, which was not within the scope of this project. Instead, I had determined that the gap in the existing academic research was an exploration of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*, and this is what I endeavoured to explore.

I employed two strategies to recruit potential participants. I started by approaching women from my personal social circles whom I knew to fit the

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[10] The only exception to this criterion was Fatima, who participated in the focus group conversation. She was born in Kenya but moved to Canada at a very young age. I was not aware of this fact until after we had begun our conversation and did not feel comfortable excluding her from the discussion for this reason at that point in time.

[11] Second-generation is defined as those individuals who themselves were born in Canada, but one or both of their parents was born outside Canada (Statistics Canada, 2009).

criteria, which is known as convenience sampling (Suri, 2011). After exhausting my personal contacts, I turned to intermediaries to look for potential participants within their social circles, which is known as snowball sampling (Suri, 2011). I did not search for participants randomly but instead trusted my acquaintances in the community to contact women who might be interested in sharing their experiences in the research. I provided a script containing a summary of the research project and my contact information to four intermediaries to convey to potential participants (see Appendix A). In the script, it was clear that the consent of the potential participant was required for the intermediary to provide me with her contact details. After the intermediary provided me with the woman's contact information, I contacted her directly and provided further details on the research project. For the focus group conversation, I invited the women to bring along their acquaintances who were also Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* and were interested in sharing their experiences of "being Canadian."

Demographic. All in all, I worked with seven women over the course of this research project: Amal, Rana, Sakeena, Faiza, Mariam, Reem, and Fatima. To safeguard the women's identities, I assigned all the women pseudonyms, even if they did not request one (Josselson, 2007). The women were 17 to 25 years of age, born and raised in Canada to Muslim families, self-identified as Muslim, from professional class families, practiced *hijab*, and were currently attending or had recently graduated from postsecondary institutions. Though the project was based in Edmonton, the women moved in and out of Edmonton, both prior to and during the research process. All seven women self-identified as Muslim and were not questioned on the nature of their religious beliefs or practices apart from the concept of *hijab*. These aspects were outside the scope of the research project even though "labels alone do not address degree of belief, measures of religiosity, or the relation between belief and practice (S. Abu-Laban, 1991, p. 11).

When I initially met with the women to share details about the project and sign the consent form, I asked them to fill out a demographic information sheet (see Appendix B). This revealed that within this group, there was diversity in terms of the women's parents' country or countries of origin and the sect of Islam with which they identified. The women identified that their parents had immigrated to Canada from Pakistan, India, Sudan, Kenya, Lebanon and Syria. As for religious sect, six of the seven[12] women identified as belonging to the Sunni branch of Islam, the majority sect within the religion. Interestingly, at no point during our conversations did the women reference or discuss sectarianism in Islam, perhaps because of their identification with the dominant and most recognized sect. I share next how I conceptualized the gathering of the women's narratives and the actualization of the process, which at times was quite different from the conceptualization. As a researcher, though, I had to be flexible while turning to feminist and narrative research epistemologies in moments of uncertainty.

Methods. Although feminist research "is driven by its subject matter, rather than by its methods" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 213), I chose three methods that would create safe and open spaces for reflection and dialogue. Particularly significant to the research design was the distinct allocation of at least one week between the various methods and conversations to allow space for reflexive analysis. "Feminist inquiry is dialectical" (Oleson, 2000, p. 216), and conversations following this allocated space for reflection resulted in deeper and richer analyses and understandings of what it means to "be Canadian." Through the use of pre-interview written narratives, individual, in-depth interviews, and a focus group conversation, the women were provided the space to share their experiences of "being Canadian" in a variety of different formats.

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[12] In the section entitled "religious sect" on the demographic information sheet, one woman wrote "Muslim" but did not clarify with which sect she identified.

Pre-interview written narratives. The first method in this research project was to approach 4-6 women to reflect upon and respond to the research question, what is your experience of "being Canadian" as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab* (see Appendix C)? Engaging in this pre-interview reflection prior to participating in dialogues with others provided the women with the choice of "what to share, how, and when" (J. Ellis, 2006, p. 118). By taking the time to reflect and carefully construct their initial responses to the research question, the women engaged in a deeper level of analysis during the subsequent phases of the research process. In her analysis of the use of pre-interview activities with children, Julia Ellis (2006) notes that "each person has the right to preserve the integrity of the personality. ... Giving people time to reflect on which stories they will choose to share is a thoughtful way to proceed" (p. 120). Apart from providing women with time and space to reflect, these narratives also provided me with an opportunity to "meet" the women I had not yet met and learn more about those with whom I was already acquainted. As I learned more about the women, I developed a sense of their unique positionalities and selected three participants from diverse backgrounds with whom to continue reflection and analysis. These written narratives were helpful in writing the women's narratives in chapter 4 but were also incorporated into the analysis in chapter 5.

Individual, in-depth interviews. The second method used in this research project was individual, in-depth interviews. Patton (2002) notes that "qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (p. 341). I was guided by feminist and narrative research practices to build intimacy with the women through the creation of a safe and trusting relationship (Johnson, 2002). By assuring the women of their confidentiality and creating open spaces for reflection and dialogue, the women felt comfortable sharing their experiences of "being Canadian." I conceptualized

two interviews with the women: I planned for the first interview to be open-ended, allowing the women to share their experiences to the research question without imposing a certain structure or set of questions, although I had prepared a flexible guide based on the women's written narratives. In this way, the interviewing process

> becomes less a conduit of information from informants to researchers that represents how things are, and more a sea swell of meaning making in which researchers connect their own experiences to those of others and provide stories that open up conversations about how we live and cope. (C. Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 853)

Johnson (2002) contends that "in-depth interviewing differs from other forms because it involves a greater involvement of the interviewer's self ... to progressively and incrementally build a mutual sense of cooperative self-disclosure and trust" (p. 109). In this way, "the interviewer tries to tune in to the interactively produced meanings and emotional dynamics within the interview itself" (C. Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 854). I transcribed the conversations immediately after each interview to both facilitate the analysis process and prepare myself for the next conversations. I personally transcribed the conversations exactly as spoken, including notations for non-verbal cues such as pauses, laughs and sighs. After scheduling some time after the first interview to allow the women to reflect on their experiences and for me to engage with the transcripts and notes, I scheduled a second set of interviews to focus on threads and themes that were emerging from the first interviews. The women signed a consent form at the beginning of the first interview, agreeing to be audio-recorded (see Appendix D), and the data from the interviews were used to write the women's narratives in chapter 4, define the narrative threads related to identity negotiations in chapter 5, articulate an understanding of racism in Canada in chapter 6, and propose possibilities for social change in chapter 7.

Focus group conversation. The third method used in this research project was a focus group conversation with the women. As mentioned

earlier, I was open to inviting women who had not yet participated but who fit the criteria in order to introduce new perspectives to the conversation to enhance the analysis. I envisioned that this particular conversation would allow the women to meet others involved in the project and dialogue around their experiences of "being Canadian." In this manner, the women and I conversed to substantiate or refute emerging narrative threads, comment further on preliminary themes, and discuss potential implications of the research project, highlighting particular spaces and avenues of social change. In this way, the group conversation both validated and allowed for new insights on the themes emerging from the written narratives and interviews (Morgan, 2002). Just as in the individual interviews, I was prepared to disclose parts of my personal experiences with the women as a means of "[encouraging] a sense of collaboration and [building] rapport" (Josselson, 2007, p. 547). I assured the women both at the beginning and end of the conversation that their confidentiality would be maintained, not only by me but also by the other women, who consented to keep others' identities and narratives in confidence (see Appendix D). The data from the focus group conversation are embedded in the analysis in chapters 5 and 6 and the implications for policy and practice in chapter 7.

　　Actualization. After conceptualizing the research design and garnering ethics approval, I was eager to actualize my research project. Through the convenience and snowball recruitment strategies outlined above, I connected with five women who agreed to participate in the research project: Amal, Rana, Sakeena, Faiza, and Mariam. I requested the women to write a response to the question: What is your experience of "being Canadian" as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*? After reading their responses, I selected three women—Amal, Rana, and Sakeena—with whom to engage in individual, in-depth interviews. I found that out of the five women, these three women were unique from one another and each shared distinct preliminary understandings of their

experiences of "being Canadian," and I desired to learn more. I scheduled the first set of interviews with each woman, which took place in university settings, and though I had prepared broad questions to guide our discussion (see Appendix E), the conversations flowed organically. After our first set of interviews, I transcribed the interviews and reflected on the content and manner in which the women had shared their narratives. Preliminary threads began to emerge within and across the women's narratives and, after preparing a list of themes, I scheduled the second set of interviews with each woman. During this time, due to the reflexive design of the research project, the women were also growing in their understandings of what it means to "be Canadian." In the second set of interviews, I asked each woman to consider and reflect further on each of the preliminary themes, engaging in a dialogic and reflexive analysis. My second interview with Amal took place in a university setting, my conversation with Rana over the phone, and my conversation with Sakeena over Skype© as Rana and Sakeena were out of the country at that time. Though I had originally planned to arrange for two interviews with each woman, Sakeena participated in three interviews, upon her request.[13] My third interview with Sakeena flowed most like a conversation as I had not prepared any questions in advance. Each interview conversation was between one to two hours in length.

During these conversations, I found it difficult at times to navigate my aforementioned insider/outside status but, as a feminist researcher, I was committed "to reflecting on the complexities of [my] own and participants' social locations and subjectivities" throughout the research process (Reinharz & Chase, 2002, p. 232). After transcribing the second set of interviews and preparing a more established set of themes, I contacted the women to schedule a focus group conversation. Despite our combined efforts, Rana, Mariam, and Faiza were unable to attend. However, two new

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[13] The nature of the third conversation with Sakeena is discussed in her narrative in chapter 4.

participants, Reem and Fatima, were able to join Amal and Sakeena to share their experiences of "being Canadian." We met on the university campus over lunch and, though I had prepared a conversation guide (see Appendix F), our two-hour conversation flowed organically as we reflected on the emerging themes and discussed potential sites and means of resistance and social change. After the focus group conversation, I was in possession of five written narratives, seven interview transcripts, one focus group conversation transcript and my corresponding notes and reflections with which to engage in a deeper analysis.

Analysis. This research project was designed to be reflexive and dialogic in nature. The analysis was not "saved" until after the data collection was completed nor was I the only person with the power to analyze the experiences at hand. Instead, the women and I collaborated to explore and understand multiple experiences of "being Canadian." Reinharz and Chase (2002) argue that reflexive feminist researchers "need to work at understanding and respecting participants' interpretations of their lives, particularly if those interpretations are different from our own" (p. 234). In between each of the methods and each conversation, the women and I were individually engaged in searching for new understandings of the experiences, which we shared in our subsequent conversations. As Reinharz and Chase (2000) contend, feminist researchers should "understand the possibly radical impact of the interview on the woman herself. She may discover her thoughts, learn who she is, and 'find her voice'" (p. 225). Allowing time and space to reflect on complexities of identity and structures of oppression and privilege enabled for self-realizations and the emergence of potentially transformative means of social action. Chovanec (1993) details the challenges associated with defining and rationalizing a dialectal and collaborative research project:

> I searched for a means to make sense of our experience so that I could write an acceptable academic thesis. ... It seemed that I needed to rationalize the findings more systematically yet it didn't feel right to

assume some kind of objectified authority apart from the involvement of the women. (p. 24)

Instead of classifying the nature of our research design, thus, I describe in detail our process and the means of developing our individual and collaborative analyses of our experiences.

The fluid and dialogic nature of this research project was especially contentious after my first set of interviews with the women. During this set of interviews, the women described in-depth their experiences of practicing *hijab*, being Muslim, and their experiences of "being Canadian." As they discussed instances of discrimination, which I interpreted to stem from Orientalist constructions of *hijab*, I found myself wondering, why don't the women use the term racism? Why don't they name these acts as racist acts? What is preventing them from doing so? Patti Lather (1991) contends that a central challenge for feminist researchers is "the interpretive paradigm" as the researcher negotiates "how to maximize self as mediator between people's self-understandings and the need for ideology critique and transformative social action *without becoming impositional*" (p. 64, emphasis in original). In this particular instance, I negotiated the interpretive paradigm by inviting the women to analyze individual and collective experiences by commenting on emerging themes in the second set of interviews. When I approached my supervisor and colleagues with this dilemma, they suggested that I question the women in the next interviews about this disconnect. As such, I asked each woman the following questions in the second interviews:

> There seems to be a disconnect between the overall discrimination of Muslim women at a societal level, an understanding that Muslim women are stereotyped and labelled in a certain way, and personal, direct acts of racism. The women recognized the racism at the systemic level but feel like they have not been affected by racism directly on a personal level. How have you experienced this? Have you felt either or both? How do you recognize and name acts of racism or discrimination or prejudice? Is it difficult and why? What do these terms mean to you? What about people that you know?

In this way, the women analyzed this recognition, or lack thereof, of racism on their identity negotiations. This process and the emergence of the concept of racism are detailed in chapter 6.

After my conversations with the women ended, I was tasked with engaging in a deeper process of "narrative coding" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), in which I searched for threads, themes, convergences, and divergences amongst the women's experiences at a deeper level than previously. My primary challenge was to honour the words and beings of the women who so openly and trustingly shared their narratives with me while simultaneously recognizing my role as a researcher tasked with writing a thesis that challenges dominant discourses and resists structures of privilege and oppression. "Keeping findings in context is a cardinal principle of qualitative analysis" (Patton, 2002, p. 563), and I was cognizant of the experiences the women chose to highlight, considering why they shared what they did, and what they perhaps refrained from sharing, whether it was because they felt uncomfortable exposing that part of their life or because they did not feel that something was relevant to the research question.

I found the process of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to be particularly helpful to engage with the data in a more analytical manner after my conversations with the women ended. IPA is concerned with developing an "insider's perspective," in which the researcher attempts "to understand what it is like, from the point of view of the participants, to take their side" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 53). An IPA study typically consists of a rich and detailed analysis of the narratives provided by a relatively small number of participants and its purpose is twofold: First, to attempt to understand the participant's world and describe it to the reader; and, second, to interpret the participant's narrative and position it within broader social, cultural, and theoretical contexts (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). The researcher attempts to understand the participant as part of a dialectical

relationship between self and world, consistent with Heidegger's view of a "person-in-context" (as cited in Larkin et al., 2006):

> We are a fundamental part of a meaningful world (and hence we can only be properly understood *as a function of our various involvements with that world),* and the meaningful world is also a fundamental part of us (such that it can only be properly disclosed and understood *as a function of our involvements with it).* (p. 106, emphasis in original)

This ideology is consistent with narrative epistemologies in that individuals "cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2).

As such, I engaged in an individual process of analysis after our conversations ended. I wrote the narratives for Amal, Rana, and Sakeena that appear in chapter 4, writing my understanding of their experiences of "being Canadian." Although I attempted to write their narratives as "authentically" as possible, I fully acknowledge that, by authoring their narratives, I added an additional layer of interpretation and analysis. Gergen (2004) contends that constructions of narratives are mutual and co-created experiences between the researcher and participant:

> The mutual gaze, subtle signs of agreement or disagreement, silences, smiles, frowns, and comments related to shared or diverse experiences all lend shape to the story being told. ... As the story is co-created, it loses its unique authorship and becomes something mutual. It is not clear who should be given the final authority under circumstances of a story heard or even read. Thus the researcher is within the stories researched. (p. 280)

I wrote the women's narratives following the aforementioned three-dimensional inquiry space outlined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), composing a narrative "that at once looks backward and forward, looks inward and outward, and situates the experiences within place" (p. 139). I sent each woman a copy of "her" narrative to read and revise. Some women suggested points of clarification while all three remarked at the surreality of reading their narratives in writing. I was confident moving forward after

these member checks, as the women had approved my written account of their narratives.

Following the writing of the narratives, I engaged in a step-by-step IPA analysis (see Smith & Osborne, 2008) of the three women with which I had conversed in-depth: Amal, Sakeena, and Rana. Following the guidelines of IPA analysis and using the computer data analysis software ATLAS.ti©, I engaged in an iterative process of generating superordinate themes that emerged within and across the women's narratives (Larkin et al., 2006). Being careful to "respect convergences and divergences in the data" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 73), I arrived at the narrative threads explored in chapter 5. Though these threads were similar to those determined through my preliminary analysis, I was now in possession of an organized system of themes with convenient access to corresponding quotes, which facilitated the writing of chapters 5, 6, and 7.

All in all, the research process was reflexive and fluid, at times structured and at times organic, enabling the women and I to engage in a dialogic analysis of multiple experiences of "being Canadian." Throughout the process, though, I was conscious of my responsibilities as an ethical researcher, and I share my ethical considerations below.

Ethical considerations. Ethics are of the utmost significance in a qualitative, feminist, narrative research project. By inviting the women to share their personal narratives and experiences with myself and other readers, I created a tenuous and complex relationship between myself and the women. My aforementioned negotiations as an insider/outsider necessitated navigating my powers as a researcher: to determine the research design, select which data to present, resolve how the data will be presented, and decide which data will be excluded. The researcher always possesses more power than the participant (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007),

but conscious and reflexive attention to the manifestations and negotiations of this power informs an ethical attitude.

I developed an ethical attitude in which I used my power as a researcher to ensure the women's safety during all phases of the research process. According to Josselson (2007), "ethical practice and ethical codes rest on the principles of assuring the free consent of participants to participate, guarding the confidentiality of the material, and protecting participants from any harm that may ensue from their participation" (p. 537), but the implementation of these values depends entirely upon the researcher. Most significantly, the development of an ethical attitude "requires that we write about other people with great respect and appropriate tentativeness and that we recognize that what we write may be read by the person we are writing about" (Josselson, 2007, p. 553). In this regard, I capitalized upon every opportunity to share my queries regarding this ethical attitude with my supervisor and colleagues, to be constantly questioned about my research practices. This dialogue, I believe, is crucial to "good" research. I also maintained open and honest lines of communication with the women, regularly contacting them between the interviews and afterwards to remain in touch and ask questions for clarification. I also encouraged the women to contact me at any time with their questions about the research.

A primary concern when conducting academic research is the acquisition of free and informed consent from participants. In this regard, I created three separate consent forms for each of the phases of the research process: to participate in the research project and write a pre-interview written narrative, to participate in the individual interviews, and to participate in the focus group conversation (see Appendix D). Asking for the women's consent before each phase ensured that they had the option to curb their participation if they so desired. Even after the women agreed to participate in the research project, they had the right to withdraw their

participation at any point during the data collection. If one woman decided at any point that she desired for her data to be withdrawn from the study, she would have needed to inform me of her decision prior to the focus group conversation. The women could physically withdraw from the interviews or focus group conversation at any point by discontinuing her participation or refraining from answering questions, but it would not be possible for her to withdraw her data after the focus group conversation had ended. By its very nature, the group conversation is an interactive, integrated, and interdependent experience, and it would be challenging to identify an individual's contributions within the group conversation transcript and be confident that her entire contributions had been removed.

An instance when I needed to modify procedure was during the selection phase of the research project. Although I had planned to select women who were 18 years of age or older, one intermediary informed me of a potential participant, Amal, who was not yet 18 years of age but was already pursuing an undergraduate degree. After conversing with my supervisor, I received approval for a revision to my ethics application which clarified that I would obtain parental consent for any participants under the age of 18.

In the information letter to the women (see Appendix D), I outlined that the data would be stored in a password-protected electronic file on my computer and any hard copies of transcripts and written responses would be stored in a locked file cabinet in my office. My supervisor and I would be the only individuals with access to this data, which could potentially be used in academic presentations and publications, but that standards of privacy and confidentiality would be maintained. Thus, the ethical attitude is one that I adopted and maintained throughout the entirety of the research process. Even as I write, edit, and revise now, I am challenged to continue to present the women's narratives and experiences in the most ethical and respectful manner.

Moving Forward

In this chapter, I shared my research journey. As an antiracism, feminist, narrative researcher, I was committed to honouring and emphasizing the women's narratives and experiences in the most ethical manner possible, particularly when negotiating my insider/outsider status. After connecting with seven Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*, we engaged in a dialogic, reflexive, and collaborative analysis of their experiences of "being Canadian" through the use of pre-interview written narratives, individual, in-depth interviews, and a focus group conversation. Scheduling time and space between the phases allowed the women to reflect critically on their experiences and develop contextual understandings of their experiences of "being Canadian." After these phases of the research project were complete, I continued to analyze the data using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis to develop more contextual understandings of the women's narratives. These themes are elucidated in chapter 5 and the process that resulted in an understanding of racism is shared in chapter 6. Establishing and maintaining an ethical attitude was of the utmost significance throughout the research project, which I continue to uphold as I share the women's narratives in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: The Women's Narratives

The veil is my body
The veil is also my mind
The veil defines my cultural identity
The veil is who I am.

Abdul Manaf, 2006, p. 246

This is what I think. This is me. It's from my point of view.

Rana, #1

The following chapter contains the narratives of three women: Amal, Rana, and Sakeena. As described in chapter 3, I worked with a total of seven women throughout the entirety of the research project but only arranged in-depth interviews with Amal, Rana, and Sakeena. In the narratives below, I attempt to articulate the women's positionalities and experiences of "being Canadian" as shared in their pre-interview written narratives and in the first set of interviews. As the women continued to engage in their individual and collaborative analyses, common threads and themes began to emerge across the experiences of the seven women, which are addressed in chapters 5 and 6.

As identities are fluid and ever-changing, so are the women's lives. Elliot Mishler (as cited in Riessman, 2002) asserts that "we continually restory our pasts, shifting the relative significance of different events for whom we have become, discovering connections we had previously been unaware of, repositing ourselves and others in our networks of relationships" (p. 705). As such, the experiences disclosed by the women during the research process reflect their positionalities, negotiations, and understandings at that particular moment in time. Hence, although I refer to the women's understandings of "being Canadian," it is rather a process of "becoming Canadian" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in that the women are not fixed in that point in time but rather continued to evolve and develop new

understandings even after the research project ended. As such, the following narratives consider the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space outlined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), in which they "have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places" (p. 50). Consideration of this three-dimensional space by the researcher, and often by the participants, results in a narrative that extends beyond boundaries of personhood, time, and place.

The following narratives were written by me as a researcher. After our conversations ended, my first task was to write Amal, Rana, and Sakeena's narratives and I was very conscious of the power I possessed as the author. Though these contentions were discussed in chapter 3, it is significant to reiterate that a narrative is "produced in the liminal space between the teller and the told" and that "a narrative comes into existence as a facet of relationship, not as a product of an individual" (Gergen, 2004, p. 280). Regardless, to maintain my ethical attitude, I sent each woman a copy of "her" narrative to read and revise before continuing with my analysis and writing. As approved by the women themselves, I share below Amal, Rana, and Sakeena's narratives.

Amal

Amal is a confident and intelligent 17-year-old woman who was born in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. Along with her mother and four younger siblings, Amal moved to Edmonton at the age of eight. Their move allowed Amal and her siblings to receive a more comprehensive education and to grow up in an environment surrounded by a strong Muslim community. Amal's father still lives in Inuvik where he is a respected business owner, and Amal and her family travel often to visit him. Amal's parents are immigrants from Sudan and, when sharing her experiences of discrimination, Amal

conjectures that she is doubly discriminated against as she is both Black and Muslim.

Amal attended the local Islamic school for her elementary and junior high schooling, recalling that it was a unique experience for her. *Hijab* was mandated as part of the girls' school uniform so that Muslim girls could become increasingly comfortable with the practice, and boys and girls were segregated from one another in school. Amal started to practice *hijab* full-time when she reached 12 years of age and was supported and encouraged in the practice by her mother. Amal also made many friends at her time at the Islamic school, all Muslim, many of whom are still her friends to this day.

As Amal had recently graduated from high school when this project began, she related in depth how she negotiated responses to her *hijab* within that particular environment. During their high school years, teenagers are typically subject to abnormal pressures to "fit in" by dressing and acting a certain way. Amal also faced these pressures, striving to maintain a positive sense of self despite the response of her Muslim and non-Muslim peers to her *hijab.* Amal attended a public high school as the Islamic school had not yet established its high school, which was a drastic change for her, a less sheltered environment where she encountered diverse individuals from diverse backgrounds. Many of her peers were generally unknowledgeable about Islam or believed widespread stereotypes about *hijab*, particularly that Muslim women who practiced *hijab* were extremists and terrorists. Some of Amal's peers professed that they were scared of Muslims and, judging by appearances alone, tended to distance themselves from Muslim girls who practiced *hijab*.

However, Amal's peers changed their perceptions about Muslim women once they became acquainted with Amal and other girls who practiced *hijab.* Amal once questioned a girl at school as to why she was afraid of Amal. The girl replied that, based on the news coverage of 9/11, she learned that all Muslims were terrorists and extremists. Gradually, as she

became acquainted with Amal and realized that she was a normal high school teenager who watched the same TV shows and listened to the same music as her, she recognized that she was not so different from her after all. Amal was also friends with girls who were forced to practice *hijab* by their families and who, after leaving their homes with a scarf on their head, would immediately take it off upon arrival at school. According to Amal, these girls' behaviour created confusion in the minds of her peers and teachers surrounding the practice of *hijab*, reinforcing the myth that all Muslim women are forced to practice *hijab*. Peer pressure, then, significantly affected Amal's relationships during her high school years as the constant judgements based on appearance meant that, even when wearing the same jeans and hoodies as other girls, she was not accepted because she practiced *hijab*.

Transitioning into her role as a university student in the biological sciences, Amal's eyes are even more open to the world around her. Amal hopes to become a dentist one day and, although Amal finds the university climate to be more accepting of her *hijab*, she still feels that she and her Muslim friends segregate themselves from their non-Muslim peers. They sit together during classes, study together in the library, and spend their breaks eating lunch and drinking coffee together. Amal feels safer this way, safer with a group of girls who are like her, who all practice *hijab*. When she is with this group, her own group of Canadians she calls them, Amal does not stand out but instead blends in. Amal recognizes that this segregation potentially fuels others' misconceptions about Muslim women but finds it challenging to relate to her non-Muslim peers. Conversely, if Amal sees another Muslim girl with *hijab*, she feels comfortable sitting with her even if they have never met as she knows that they have common interests.

Amal feels proud to be born and raised in Canada. She feels that not only does her Muslim identity complement her Canadian identity but her practice of *hijab* makes her stronger as a Canadian. She feels that she exemplifies the notion of Canadian diversity. However, Amal feels that she

does not belong in her own "home." She is perceived by other Canadians to be a foreigner or an immigrant and feels segregated from the non-Muslim community at large. When in public, people constantly watch her, scrutinize her appearance, observe her behaviour, and listen to her conversations. When Amal takes the bus with her *hijabi* friends, they are consistently stared at by their fellow passengers, looked at up and down by others who pay close attention to what they are saying, what they are wearing, and even what they are eating. When out in public, then, Amal feels protected when she is surrounded by her group of *hijabi* friends.

When asked about what the future holds for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*, Amal is pessimistic. Not only are prevalent misconstructions about Muslim women not going to change, posits Amal, but discrimination against Muslim women who practice *hijab* will continue to become even more commonplace and acceptable. She believes that, although she cannot change everyone's opinions about Muslim women, she can change the minds of her personal acquaintances by showcasing the beauty of her unique identity, though there will remain ignorant individuals whose constructions of Muslim women and *hijab* will never change. As Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*, Amal feels that all we can do is to remain strong and confident in our identities regardless of how others perceive us.

Rana

Rana is a shy and genuine 24-year-old woman who was born and raised in Edmonton. Her father is from Lebanon and her mother from Syria, and they are both well-educated with university degrees. Rana states that her parents' *deen* or faith in Islam became stronger after they moved to Canada and became involved in the Muslim community in Edmonton. Rana is the oldest sibling and has three younger brothers.

Until she reached Grade 5, Rana attended a public elementary school in Edmonton. Rana's school had an Arabic language program and a majority of the Arabs in her school were also Muslim. Rana started to practice *hijab* in Grade 3. At that time, her mother was already practicing *hijab* and was a role model for Rana. She was very excited to be the only girl in her school to be wearing the headscarf though, at the time, Rana recalls she made the decision to practice *hijab* for two reasons: because her mother wore it and because she had just gotten an ugly haircut. Her teachers and classmates responded positively toward Rana's decision, and she capitalized on the opportunities to educate her classmates about the practice. There came a point during that year when Rana wanted to stop the practice but was reminded by her mother that Allah would be disappointed if she took her scarf off, so she decided to continue with the practice. The next year, in Grade 4, Rana delivered a presentation to her entire school about the meaning of *hijab* and recalls being very proud of educating her classmates about the practice.

When in Grade 5, Rana's parents decided to temporarily move Rana and her younger brothers to Lebanon in order to experience life in a Muslim country. Even while attending a public school in Lebanon, Rana was one of a very few number of girls who wore the headscarf but recalls that she did not face any discrimination at school. Rana's family decided to move back to Edmonton the following year and, at this time, Rana started attending the local Islamic school. She recalls that she was very comfortable at the school as the uniform required that all girls practice *hijab*. She increased her religious knowledge at this time and learned the Islamic teachings of the practice of *hijab*. Rana saw her *hijab* as an evolution or progression, and hopes to improve her level of *hijab* to include the full body dress, which she feels is necessary according to her faith.

For her high schooling, Rana returned to a public school. According to Rana, September 11th of that year altered the manner in which *hijab* was perceived and understood in Canada, which Rana experienced by an

increased questioning of her practice of *hijab.* Though Rana feels blessed to not have experienced discrimination or taunts due to her *hijab*, she knows of many other girls who have. At this time, Rana still felt very comfortable with her choice to practice *hijab* as she knew that she was following the teachings of her faith and that provided her with confidence.

Rana moved on to obtain an undergraduate university degree in education. During her time in university, Rana was very involved with the Muslim Students Association and was active in organizing *da'wa* booths, information booths about Islam. At this point, Rana was also receiving marriage proposals and felt confident knowing that *hijab* was looked upon positively as a condition for marriage. Upon graduation, Rana joined the teaching staff at the local Islamic school. She was passionate about teaching and wanted to be a positive role model for the Muslim students. Rana always found ways to incorporate Islamic teachings into her classroom. For example, when students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds would fight with one another, she would remind them that they were all Muslim brothers and sisters and that the religion of Islam encourages peace and cooperation. In the midst of the research project, after leaving her teaching position and getting married, Rana temporarily moved to Lebanon to live with her husband.

Rana feels very strongly about challenging dominant misconceptions about Muslim women and *hijab* and finds filmmaking to be an effective medium through which to challenge these assumptions. She started by exploring her passion for photography and film which, when coupled with her desire to educate others about her faith, resulted in the development of four short films which garnered widespread acclaim at a local Muslim film festival. Rana always finds a way to incorporate *hijab* into her films as it is an easily identifiable symbol, one that Muslims and non-Muslims alike recognize and associate with Islam. It is Rana's dream to become a film producer in the future.

When asked about her circle of friends and her relationships with non-Muslim Canadians, Rana replies that she is neither friends nor acquaintances with Canadians who are not Muslim. Rana's family is in minimal contact with non-Muslims, learning about Canadian culture from TV more so than from relationships with other people. That being said, Rana is very confident in her sense of "being Canadian." She is very proud of her nation and the opportunities that it has provided to her, although she feels that she could be Muslim in any country in the world. Even when others question her Canadian identity or perceive her as a foreigner who does not speak English, Rana is unfazed in her pride as a Canadian and cannot recall any instances when she felt un-Canadian as she understands "being Canadian" to exist in her heart.

Sakeena

Sakeena is a confident and charismatic 25-year-old woman who was born and raised in Edmonton. Her parents immigrated at young ages to Canada from India. Growing up on the north side of the city, Sakeena attended public schools where she met and became friends with children from many different cultural and religious backgrounds. Currently, Sakeena is in her final years as a student of medicine in Europe and is very passionate about the medical field. Though she has been living and studying in Europe for the past five years, Sakeena is very proud of her Canadian identity, confidently sharing with all her acquaintances that she was born and raised in Canada. However, Sakeena notes that she is stronger in her sense of "being Canadian" and is questioned less on her Canadian identity when living abroad.

Sakeena decided to practice *hijab* after returning from a spiritual pilgrimage to Mecca, called the *Umrah*, with her family in 2010. She was not expecting to make this decision before she went on the journey but, when she returned, she felt as though on a "*hijab* rush" and was very keen to adopt the

practice as a means of visibly demonstrating her faith. Her family members, friends, and strangers responded with mixed reactions to her decision. Although her family members were shocked by her decision, they supported her fully. Her mother practiced *hijab* and, though she started the practice at an older age, she supported Sakeena's decision as she felt it was the right step to take. Sakeena's father was also supportive of her decision but cautioned her to remain moderate in terms of her religious beliefs and practices. Sakeena shared the reaction of two male Muslim friends to her newfound practice. One colleague responded by saying that Sakeena was beautiful and that she should not cover her beauty by practicing *hijab*. Another male friend, with whom she was close, reacted aggressively, stating that her *hijab* did not suit her personality and that she was more beautiful without it. He then pulled off her *hijab* a week after she started wearing it. Sakeena also met some non-Muslim health care professionals at an academic conference that week who greeted her with the Arabic greeting, *Assalamo Alaikum* meaning peace be on you, stated that she looked radiant and beautiful, and compared her scarf to that of Audrey Hepburn's.

Sakeena perceived her newfound practice to be a positive step in her life as her *hijab* encouraged her to become a better person and to respect herself and others. It opened herself up to educate others about her practices and her faith. Sakeena believed that if she were open to others, others would also respond to her in an open and accepting manner. However, Sakeena noticed that soon after she started practicing *hijab*, she was stared at when in public and began to feel less and less Canadian. Sakeena contends that her Canadian identity was never in question before she practiced *hijab.* But after she took up the practice, people started speaking slowly to her, assuming that she did not speak English, and increasingly asked her, "Where are you from?" When in line at the grocery store, the cashier would converse freely with the person in front of her but when it was Sakeena's turn, the cashier was silent.

About a month after our second interview, Sakeena emailed me to say that something had changed with regards to the research project and that she needed to schedule a third interview. In our conversation, Sakeena revealed that just a couple of days prior, she had made the decision to stop the practice of *hijab*. Particularly in the hospital where she was studying and working, the discrimination toward her *hijab* was beginning to affect her academic learning. Until this point, Sakeena had ignored these responses and discriminatory acts but could no longer do so. The doctors did not call upon her to answer questions nor ask her to scrub in for surgery. Some of the male patients reported feeling uncomfortable with Sakeena as their examining doctor. She was incorrectly categorized as belonging to the same nationality as other *hijabi* girls in her group, a country that was not hers. As a *hijabi* female in a male-dominated profession, Sakeena worked doubly hard to prove her merit. Even though her *hijab* made her more visible, Sakeena was treated as being invisible, and it was this discrimination that fuelled her decision to stop the practice of *hijab*. Sakeena had begun the practice as a means of visibly demonstrating her modesty but felt that her *hijab* had enabled her to come to terms with her modesty, allowing her to feel modest in her appearance and her heart without practicing *hijab*. Sakeena divulged that she had been thinking about these issues for months prior to the commencement of the research project but had not disclosed them in the previous conversations as she desired to present a positive view of *hijab,* one that countered the misconstructions depicted in the media. However, Sakeena could no longer face the contradictory constructions of the practice and attempted to free herself from the discriminations by sacrificing part of her identity.

Moving Forward

In this chapter, I presented Amal, Rana, and Sakeena's narratives as I understood them. The richness and diversity of their backgrounds and

experiences attest to the mosaic nature of Muslim women. Convergences and divergences emerge within and across the women's narratives, signifying continual negotiations of their identities in response to others' responses to and constructions of their *hijab*. I explore these identity negotiations in the subsequent chapter, discussing how all seven women negotiated "being Canadian" as Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* and proceed to discuss the contextualization of these identity negotiations, namely racism in Canada, in chapter 6.

Chapter Five: Experiences of "Being Canadian"

You try and keep on trying to unsay [the dominant story], for if you don't, they will not fail to fill in the blanks on your behalf, and you will be said.

Minh-ha, 1989, p. 80

After conversing with the women and listening to their narratives, I was in awe. I marvelled at their openness and commitment to resistance through the sharing of their experiences. I began sorting through the transcripts and my notes, returning to my research question as a means of determining coherent narrative threads: What is the experience of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*? The experience of "being Canadian" for Amal, Rana, and Sakeena involved constant negotiations between the personal and the social, between Self and Other, and between individual and collective. "Being Canadian," thus, is constructed within and constrained by societal structures, involving the navigation of understandings of Self in response to externally imposed definitions of Other.

In chapter 4, I presented three women's distinct narratives and, in this chapter, I discuss the threads that emerged within and across all seven women's narratives. I weave an analysis of the experiences of "being Canadian" as a dialogue between three key epistemologies: the women's words and narratives, academic research on the subject matter, and my voice as a researcher. Using "a metaphor of conversation" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 136), I attempt to construct and understand knowledge through a contextualized and hybridized process. The task of contextualizing the women's narratives within broader societal structures and discourses is no easy feat for a narrative researcher (Josselson, 2007). However, my challenge is to balance my voice as a researcher, maintain the authenticity of the women's narratives, and simultaneously uncover and challenge the dominant

discourses that shape our experiences and identities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Harding, 2007).

In the following chapter, I discuss the two key identity negotiations that emerged from our reflexive and collaborative analyses related to the seven women's experiences of "being Canadian:" (1) between "being a Muslim" and "being recognized as Muslim," and (2) between "being a Canadian" and "being recognized as Canadian." Although these two negotiations were identified by the women during our conversations, what emerges below is a deeper analysis that connects the women's experiences with academic theories to develop contextual understandings of what it means to "be Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab.* Although each of the women addressed both of these themes, there were differences in the women's experiences, and this testament to the diversity within presumed homogeneity is captured below. I questioned how and why the women were subject to these identity negotiations, discovering three processes from the women's experiences that defined what it means to "be Canadian:" the state, mass media, and Muslim families and communities. In chapter 6, I continue the discussion by exploring processes and manifestations of racism in Canada, which provide contextualization for the women's identity negotiations.

In this chapter, when I use the term "the women," I refer primarily to Amal, Rana, and Sakeena, with whom I developed a collaborative analysis of what it means to "be Canadian." However, I also incorporate the experiences of Mariam, Faiza, Reem, and Fatima throughout the chapter to supplement and enhance the analysis. The data below emerges from the pre-interview written narratives (WN), interviews (#1, #2, and #3), and the focus group conversation (FGC).

Narrative Threads

The experience of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* involves a process of negotiating hybrid identities in response to externally constructed definitions of Self. As discussed in chapter 2, a hybrid identity or third space is constructed by an individual caught in double consciousness, between two or more seemingly discrete social categories, as a site of empowerment (Bhabha, 1994). Thus, understanding what it means to "be Canadian" depends upon our individual positionalities, our relationships with others, and the interlocking structures of oppression and privilege that shape our identities (Hall, 2007).

The women identified two key identity negotiations related to "being Canadian" through our dialogic and collaborative analyses: (1) between "being a Muslim" and "being recognized as Muslim," and (2) between "being a Canadian" and "being recognized as Canadian." The women understood the "Muslim" and "Canadian" components of their beings to be complementary and convergent but were constantly questioned on both of these identities as they were presumed to be disconnected, forcing the women to question what it means to "be Canadian." The women, though confident in their understandings of what it means to "be Canadian," suggested three processes that constructed their identities as excluded from conceptions of what it means to "be Canadian:" the state, mass media, and Muslim families and communities. Thus, as human identity is constructed dialogically (C. Taylor, 1994), the women negotiated their identities in response to external constructions of them. As discussed in chapter 3, it is possible that the women would not have developed these understandings of self had they not participated in this reflexive research project, as "I was more aware once you started this project whereas before, it was easy to just ignore it. ... I'm more aware of the discriminations" (Sakeena, FGC). The women began exploring

what it means to "be Canadian" by describing their negotiations between "being a Muslim" and "being recognized as Muslim."

Between "Being a Muslim" and "Being Recognized as Muslim"

Who, me, confused? Ambivalent? Not so. Only your labels split me.

Anzaldúa, 2009, p. 46

As Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*, *hijab* was a visible means of demonstrating their identities to others, but the practice was constructed as not only personal but political due to others' constructions of *hijab*. The women strove toward "being a Muslim" as a personal identity that brought them spiritual guidance and a sense of community, but away from categorized and political constructions of "The Muslim," signifying an "aversion from and desire for the categorized image of Muslim" (Shahnaz Khan, 2002, p. 27).

The women discussed their concerted efforts to follow the teachings of their faith, including adopting the practice of *hijab* as a daily reminder of their faith to themselves and others: "If you're a Muslim girl, you should show that you're a Muslim by wearing the *hijab*" (Amal, #1). They defined "being a Muslim" as having a strong belief in Allah and His Messenger and following the teachings of the faith as prescribed in the Holy Quran and the Hadith. In this way, the women possessed an *asserted* Muslim identity, one that was "a matter of personal choice" and provided "a sense of belonging" in a non-Muslim context (Buitelaar, Ketnar, & Bosma, as cited in Hamdan, 2009a, p. 139). Even after Sakeena stopped practicing *hijab*, she remained strong in her Muslim identity stating that, "if people were to ask me, I would still say I'm Muslim because being Muslim is a part of me. And I don't think that I should hide it from anyone" (Sakeena, #3). However, external constructions of the women's identities reduced them "to a single identity that is supposed to tell everything" (Ramadan, 2010, p. 36). The women's single identity was characterized by their *hijab*.

At times, the women conjectured that *hijab* was a "common" sight in Canada, assuming that others thought, "'ok, she's wearing the *hijab*, *khalis*,[14] we know she's a Muslim, whatever you know move on'" (Rana, #1). Although not having the academic language, the women were cognizant that the profile of "The Muslim Woman" was founded in the Orientalist discourse, particularly after the events of 9/11. Rana wrote in her written narrative, "[After] September 11th of that year, the media started to portray women in a negative way." Rana's classmates began to ask, "Why do you wear that? Are you a terrorist? What does it mean? Are you related to Bin Laden?" (WN, p. 2) Based upon stereotypical and essentialist constructions of Muslims, the media increasingly portrayed Muslims as "violent people, and as the people who love to kill or love to slaughter or love war" (Amal, #2). As *hijab* increasingly became a household concept, the women understood that when non-Muslim Canadians see Muslims, "the first thing that comes to their mind is Osama Bin Laden. I hate to say it but it's one fundamental person that ruined … it for the rest of us Muslims because of his actions" (Sakeena, #1). Suddenly, the media was populated with three central characters: the dangerous Muslim man, the imperiled Muslim woman, and the civilized white European (Razack, 2002). Consequently, their fellow Canadians "just automatically see Muslims and identify them with … what the media shows them" (Amal, #1).

Gendered understandings of *hijab* were particularly emphasized in this identity negotiation. "Because we are more visibly Muslim than men" (Amal, #1), the women conjectured that Muslim men would not experience these identity negotiations in the same manner as Muslim women as they are not immediately recognizable as Muslim based on their appearance. Others could speculate that "he's wearing a beard, 'oh he could be a Muslim, he could be a Jew,' … but right away when you see a head cover, right away she's Muslim, you know she's Muslim, *khalis*" (Rana, #1). Bullock (2005) contends

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[14] *Khalis* is an Arabic word which means "that's it."

that Muslim women who practice *hijab* "are targets every time they step out into public space" whereas "the men who wear the traditional Muslim head-cap may face similar public scrutiny, but their headgear is not held up in public discourse as a symbol of oppression" (p. xvi). Thus, the women surmised that "it's easier for men in our religion. ... It's easier for them to say that we should wear *hijab* and stuff because for them, they don't have anything visible that tells people that they're Muslim" (Sakeena, #3). Imam and Yuval-Davis (as cited in Shaheed, 2008) posit that

> definitions of collective identity are increasingly hinged on definitions of gender, so that the construction of a 'Muslim woman,' a 'Christian woman' or a 'Hindu woman' is therefore integral to the construction of 'Muslimness,' 'Christianity' or 'Hinduism.' (p. 293)

However, it is imperative to note that though the women compared their experiences of "being a Muslim" to those of Muslim men, they refrained from extending their analysis of "being Canadian" to address manifestations of patriarchy in Canada, whether inside or outside of their families and communities, focusing instead "on what they believe is the intent of the Islamic message and not on the sexist practices" (Shahnaz Khan, 2002, p. 105). This segment of their narratives is silenced as discussion of the structures of patriarchy within the Muslim community could have potentially validated Orientalist constructions of "The Muslim Man." As such, the women were conscious of the manner in which they presented their experiences, cautious to refrain from further deprecating their faith and their people: "And *InshAllah* whatever I say, may Allah forgive me if I said anything wrong" (Rana, #1).

Accordingly, the women navigated between their personal understandings of "being a Muslim" and externally constructed and imposed understandings of "Muslim." As "the new *mestiza*," they responded "by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 101) and by developing "a personal vision" of their identities that did not "betray the essence of the faith" (Waugh, 1991, p. 78).

The negotiation between "being a Muslim" and "being recognized as Muslim" involved two key characteristics: the burden of representation and resistance through education.

Burden of representation. The women recognized that "when a Muslim woman goes out and she's wearing *hijab*, she's wearing Islam on her head" (Rana, #2). With *hijab*, the women were immediately recognizable and labelled as Muslim, "and being a Muslim nowadays is not the best thing" (Sakeena, #2). The women were tokenized, always representing the social category "Muslim," and this part of their identity was salient. The women recognized that they themselves had made this decision to display their identities in the form of *hijab* "because you're showing other people this is who I am, I'm a Muslim" (Amal, #2). Jasmin Zine (2006) contends that, "as a political and discursive space, Islamic dress represents a mode of gendered communication that implicates how the body is narrated, read, and consumed" (p. 242). This gendered communication translated into a gap between the ways in which the self constructed *hijab* and the ways in which others constructed *hijab*, "[creating] a barrier between Muslims and ... non-Muslims" (Amal, #1).

The women recognized that "we are the visible representation of Islam so whether other people are judging you or not, as a Muslim woman, it's your responsibility to represent Islam in a positive way no matter what you do" (Sakeena, FGC). The women realized that they were encumbered by a burden of representation, a social construction that determined that the women's individual identities were always understood as part of a collective. The sources for this burden, the women realized, were twofold, stemming from both societal understandings of "Muslim" as well as their own faith's guidelines regarding their conduct as Muslims.

First, the women were scrutinized by the constant judgement and watchful gaze of their fellow Canadians who would "look at us and then every

single thing you do, ... they'll associate it with the religion and not with the person" (Reem, FGC). Determined to differentiate their individual identities from Orientalist constructions of "Muslim," the women constantly explained that they were not terrorists or religious fanatics simply because they practiced *hijab*, striving "to fight extremism on the one hand and Islamophobia on the other" (Sheema Khan, 2009, p. 33). Mariam reflected:

> As a young Muslim woman wearing the *Hijab* in a Western country, I am more easily judged than I would be living in a Middle Eastern country. As a consequence I vowed to always carry myself in the most well-rounded, righteous, professional and hospitable manner. I realized that in the eyes of the public I was never looked at as a young lady with her own identity, but as a Muslim. (WN, p. 1)

Second, the women recognized that the responsibility to uphold one's character is outlined in the guidelines of *hijab*. "With *hijab* comes a whole set of guidelines: the way you act, the way you talk and all that ... [and] we accepted those rules" (Amal, #1). Ramadan (2007) elaborates upon this responsibility advising that, "in every one of your actions, in every commitment, you should hold to what you say, you word should carry weight, your honesty should be visible, your conscience should be tirelessly active—this is very important" (p. 460).

Thus, pressured by both Canadian society and their religious guidelines to uphold themselves, the women were encumbered by a burden of representation, a burden of negotiating their individual identities amidst guidelines that constrained their identities. This constant association of individual actions with collective identity was frustrating for the women as no one "[wants] your own personal [actions] ... to represent an entire group of people" (Sakeena, FGC), and vice versa. Although "the individual is not judged as an individual but as a member of [her] class" (Boas, 2007, p. 9), I would posit that an individual is judged as a member of a group or as an individual based upon her membership in either a "majority" or "minority" grouping. If an individual is a member of a majority group, she will be judged

based upon her individuality and uniqueness as a human being. On the contrary, if she is a member of a minority group, she will be essentialized and judged as a representative of that particular group. Either way, this burden entailed that the women were recognized based upon one singular aspect of their identity, "being Muslim," even though they exclaimed, "I'm not just one thing, I'm many things. And a lot of people don't look at the other things, they look at just the one thing" (Sakeena, #2). This attributed narrow construction of "Muslim" pigeonholes the women into "being recognized as Muslim" first, foremost and always, a notion comparable to Fanon's (as cited in Bhabha, 1994) argument that "wherever he goes … the Negro remains a Negro" (p. 108).

This burden of representation ensured that the women were constantly conscious of "being Muslim." Although they were "[taking] Islam with you everywhere you go" (Rana, #2), "being Muslim does not mean I cannot associate with various other associations and affiliations such as being a university student, human rights advocate, avid traveller, etc." (Faiza, WN, p. 2). Subsequently, the women adopted and embraced the responsibility to educate as a means of resistance.

Resistance through education. The women recognized that they had made a conscious decision to visibly identify themselves as Muslim and subsequently adopted the responsibility to educate others about their identities, to challenge and resist essentialized constructions of *hijab*, and to negotiate the space between their identities and others' constructions of their identities. Audre Lorde (as cited in Tong, 2009) contends that "it is the members of the oppressed, objectified groups who are expected to stretch out and bridge the gap between the actualities of our lives and the consciousness of our oppressor" (p. 208). As such, the women advocated that even "if you educate one person, that's enough. … I've changed one person but she could change another person and they would change another person's opinion, … it's a chain reaction" (Fatima, FGC). Resisting "being recognized as

Muslim" was at once a burden and site of empowerment for the women, at once reactionary and preventative. Each woman understood her role as educator in a different manner.

Amal was cognizant of a disconnect between her perception of herself and others' constructions of her, reflecting that "you might think of yourself as respectable or 'I'm wearing this for my religion' [but] other people look at us as a symbol of, 'you're from that group [and] that group is a terrorist group'" (#2). Correspondingly, she felt that "[other people] should know that [*hijab*] is a choice that I made. ... If they're curious, they can always search up or come ask me, ... I'm not gonna bite their heads off" (Amal #1). However, Amal did not perceive overt attempts to educate to be meaningful, rather conjecturing that actions speak louder than words and "just one small action that we do can change everything that they know" (Amal, #2). As an example, Amal cited the story of a man in the United States army who, after serving at Guantanamo Bay and spending time with some Muslim prisoners, decided to convert to Islam:

> He would look at [the Muslim prisoners] and they're smiling and they're talking and he's like, 'what is it that they have that I don't have? Why are they so happy?'... And he would talk to them and then he figured out about Islam and then eventually he converted. ... After he converted, he's like, 'I felt that happiness that they felt.'

Amal, then, negotiated the gap between her individual identity and a prescribed group identity by being conscious of her day-to-day actions as a means of everyday resistance.

Rana, on the other hand, negotiated this particular bridge between "being a Muslim" and "being recognized as Muslim" by embracing the role of educator. She proudly remarked, "I've done so many things *Alhamdolillah*[15] in my life that show what Islam is and I'm not afraid to tell people what it is" (#1). Rana (#1) believed that "our purpose here as a Muslim on this earth [is]

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[15] *Alhamdolillah* means "thanks to Allah" or "praise be to Allah."

to tell people about Islam," which corresponds to a belief that "Islam is all for activism. ... It's everyone's job to promote Islam and do *da'wa* (spreading the news about Islam) in whatever form they are capable of" (Beshir, 2007, p. 23). Rana was active in organizing *da'wa* booths at her university, turned to filmmaking as a tool to resist stereotypes about Muslim women and *hijab*, and pursued a career in education to show that "we don't just wear *hijab* and be housewives [laughs]. ... We can also fight for our freedom and religion" (Rana, #1). Rana was hopeful that the cumulative education efforts of Muslim women would lead to the acceptance of Muslim women, as she witnessed on the following occasion:

> One time when I was in a store in the mall, there was a younger girl, like she's maybe 5, 6 something like that. ... I was in the line and the girl kept on staring at me until she's like, 'Mommy, why does she have that thing on her head? What is that?' And so her mom, she actually told her what it was ... [saying] 'oh it's part of her religion, honey.' She said it in front of me, and ... everything she said was right. And I was like 'wow, I'm so proud of her.' ... She could've said like, 'oh honey, that's a bad thing on their head, her husband forces her to wear it.' That would've frustrated me. But she said it the right way [and] that made me happy. (#1)

Thus, Rana embraced the role of educator, seeking to challenge and change others' constructions of her *hijab* through her conscious educational efforts.

Sakeena compared the misconstructions of *hijab* and Muslim women's identities to "a plague," signifying its ubiquitous and pervasive nature. Sakeena at times embraced the role of educator and at times found it to be burdensome, reflecting that "I go through phases [giggles] because I'm like 'no, I can open their mind,' but ... you can only open someone's mind to a certain extent" (#1). To divest herself of the burden of representation and its according responsibilities, Sakeena stopped the practice of *hijab*, sacrificing part of her identity, a symbol of her faith. She maintained that "my *hijab* is in my heart and my actions," (#3) but could no longer negotiate between "being a Muslim" and "being recognized as Muslim" through the practice of *hijab*.

Though the women were burdened by misconstructions of their identities, which I posit are rooted in the Orientalist discourse, they established a channel of resistance through education. As a form of activism, the women determined a site of empowerment, a means of proclaiming their identities as Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*. Orientalist constructions of Muslim women as illiterate, meek, and submissive, as discussed in chapter 2, have

> compelled Muslim activists to reach out to their neighbors, colleagues, and fellow citizens to impress upon them the decency of Islam as a religion and the positive contribution the activists believe Islam can make to the fabric of North American societies. (Bullock, 2005, p. xvi)

For the women, the practice of *hijab* itself was a means of resistance as "it [is] such a big effort to go against the accepted culture and tradition of the time" (Beshir, 2007, p. 26), establishing a vital component of Muslim identity to "be an educator[,] of oneself and others" (Ramadan, 2007, p. 454).

As the women navigated their role as educators, they related their *hijab* to uniforms worn by other groups to visibly represent their identities: police officers, Christian nuns, and Sikh men with turbans. Amal (#1) compares a Muslim woman's attire to that of a Christian nun:

> A nun technically wears *hijab*. ... When she walks by, people are like 'Oh my god, a nun! Stay still and be good.' But when a Muslim girl walks by [and] she's covering the same things, she's not showing her hair, and they'd be like, 'Look at her. She's oppressed! Why's she covering? That's so sad! We should be scared of them! Those are Muslims!'... Why not compare me to the nun? I mean we are both kind of on the same level. We're both devoted to God. That's Christianity, this is Islam.

The difference between the Christian nun and the Muslim woman, as the women recognized, was that Muslim women who practice *hijab* are currently categorized as "internal dangerous foreigners" (Dhamoon & Y. Abu-Laban, 2009). As such, "it is the responsibility of the oppressed to teach the

oppressors their mistakes" (Lorde, 1984, p. 114), and so the women resist through education, one person at a time, all the while comparing themselves to others who wore head coverings, like Audrey Hepburn, but recognizing that when "she was wearing [the scarf] in the 60s, it wasn't questionable. It was a fashion statement, ... [but] she was white" (Sakeena, #2).

Summary. The women identified a gap between the way in which they perceived their individual identities and ways in which society and others around them perceived them, between "being a Muslim" and "being recognized as Muslim." Their individual beings were misrecognized, instead imposed upon them. Resultantly, the women were labelled with identities with which they did not identify. Though recognizing the interlocking nature of their identities, the women were aware that others saw them as disconnected, attempting to categorize them solely as "Muslim." In response to this burden of representation, to fill the gap between their identities and others' perceptions of their identities, the women adopted the role of educating others, albeit to varying extents, as the post-9/11 climate "has reinforced the urgent need for such a third space which identifies women's resistance to stereotypical pre-determinations of being muslim" (Shahnaz Khan, 2002, p. ix). Although at times a burden, the women adopted this role to defend their faith and their identities.

Further, the women's understandings of "being Canadian" were constantly in question as they were recognized as Muslim first, foremost, and always. Even as second-generation Canadians, the women were recognized as "The Muslim Woman" (Bannerji, 2000) contending that "if someone was looking at me from the outside and looking in, they would just look at me as a Muslim, or a Muslim living in Canada" (Sakeena, #1). This lack of recognition of their identities was further questioned as the women negotiated between "being a Canadian" and "being recognized as Canadian."

Between "Being a Canadian" and "Being Recognized as Canadian"

Love of homeland is part of your faith.

Prophet Muhammad (as cited in Mian, 2011)

As Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*, the women's understandings of what it means to "be Canadian" were fundamentally negotiated based on the compatibility and complementariness of "being a Muslim" and "being a Canadian" through the creation of a hybridized, third space (Bhabha, 1994). The women were "proud of being a Muslim and a Canadian at the same time" (Rana, #1), and understandings of "being Canadian" relied on a desire "to explore and discover my identity based on the foundation of a pious Muslim woman" (Mariam, WN, p. 1). The women understood these aspects of their identities to interlock to create multiple identities, which came together to define what it means to "be Canadian." As an example, Amal (#1) explores her particular identity:

> Collectively, you're known as Sudanese. And ... part of that Sudanese community, you're known as the Muslim community. And part of that Muslim community, you're known as [the] Canadian Muslim community. So I think it's all interconnected and you ... have a role in each and it's ... identity placed into another identity and then Canada being the big box of identity.

Thus, the women navigated their personal sense of "being a Canadian" as they negotiated the multiple subject positions that composed their unique identities (Rattansi, 2007).

However, the women's understanding of "being a Canadian" was contrasted by the responses of their fellow Canadian citizens to their identities, instilling in the women a sense that they were not "being recognized as Canadian." Their identities were constantly questioned, misrecognized and at times denied. As discussed earlier, the women were recognized primarily as "Muslim," even when they confidently exclaimed, "I wanna be Canadian!" as they understood that their Canadian identities would

not be recognized "because I wear a scarf … and my skin color is not white" (Sakeena, #2). The women knew that, in the minds of Canadians, there existed an image of "The Canadian," from which they were excluded because when one "[thinks] of Canada or a Canadian, you don't think of a Muslim woman in *hijab*" (C. S. Taylor, 2007/2008, p. 128). The conflation of "Canadian" and Whiteness was apparent as the women recognized the reality that "all white people, no matter when they immigrate to Canada or as carriers of which European ethnicity, become invisible and hold a dual membership in Canada, while others remain immigrants generations later" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 112). Although the women were second-generation Canadians, born and raised in Canada, they were still constructed as Others, perceived as foreigners, as outsiders. Faiza conjectured:

> Many times, I have had people come up to me and ask me where are you from and when I replied Canadian they further questioned in clarifying themselves by saying, no I mean where are you really from, looking at me to justify my "non white" appearance that is characterized by a non Canadian familial background. Therefore, this line of questioning has made me reflect on my Canadian-born identity, I am Canadian by birth but socially, Canadian has come to mean "white Canadian" for many people seem to associate that only those who look Caucasian are entitled to be assumed natural Canadians and the rest of the diverse group of people are clumped into a group of others that need to justify an othering category to be placed in. (WN, p. 1)

Thus, the women understood that "legally, you can be a Canadian Muslim woman or a Canadian Sikh man" but this "does not transcend to an open social interpretation of Canadian identity" (C. S. Taylor, 2007/2008, p. 128). Resisting these challenges to their identities, the women exclaimed, "if somebody said, 'Go back to your own country!' … I would defend. I'd be like 'No, I'm Canadian! I grew up here, so what country would I go back to?'" (Rana, #2).

Thus, the women's experiences of "being Canadian" were characterized by the constant negotiations between "being a Canadian" and "being recognized as Canadian." The women identified two key characteristics regarding this identity negotiation: understanding Canadianness and constructing Otherness.

Understanding Canadianness. The women defined "Canadianness" as unique to every Canadian, negotiated based upon their particular positionalities and contextual beings:

> Every person has their own Canadian identity and ... part of your Canadian identity is trying to maintain it rather than to conform. ... [Because] when you try to conform too much, you lose part of your identity and people don't recognize you anymore. They just look at you as the same as everyone else [because] you don't stand out. (Amal, #1)

Distinctive and unique identities were characteristic of "being a Canadian" for the women, as they challenged the notion of a single "Canadianness" and embraced the notion of Canada as "a cultural mosaic" in which "we all accept [each other] and work together as a huge community" (Sakeena, #1). When asked what comes to mind when one thinks of "Canadianness," Rana (#1) said, "right away I saw multicultural. A whole bunch of people from different [countries], different color skin, different backgrounds, different cultural clothes, different cultural food. It's just all multicultural." Canada's global reputation, then, "inaccurate though it may be, has firmly implanted a utopian myth about the presence and potential of multiculturalism in the national psyche" (Thompson, 2008, p. 540). This utopian myth states that Canadians negotiate their identities in isolation, distanced from assimilationist messages or pre-defined constructions of Self and Other. The women at times were cautious to criticize a nation that had provided their families with freedoms and opportunities they may otherwise have not experienced: "Regardless of people's emotions towards Muslim woman and the Hijab, countries around the world like Canada defend my freedom of

speech and allow Muslim woman to live their lives without any governmental or legislative stipulations" (Mariam, WN, p. 2). However, they were critical of the notion of a single Canadianness "as the glue that is called upon to paste together the disparaging inconsistencies of a land that never quite succeeds in representing itself as homogeneous" (Manning, 2000, para. 12). Each woman understood her Canadianness in a different manner.

Amal felt that her *hijab* provided her with a stronger sense of "being a Canadian" as "people know who I am … when they look at me" (#2). This identification as a Canadian Muslim woman who practices *hijab* enabled Amal to stand out as an individual and did not adversely impact her identity as a Canadian as "my votes still count. I still have concerns like every other person" (Amal, #1). For Amal, confidence in one's Canadianness is more significant than others' constructions of your identity and, "as long as you know you're Canadian … and you're happy, the things around you should not matter" (Amal, #2). Her use of the word *should* implies that, knowingly or unknowingly, one defines a sense of self based on others' constructions of self and other.

Rana felt blessed to live in a nation that provided space for individuals to practice their faith as desired, defining "being a Canadian" as "being our own self and having your own identity and being multicultural" (#2). Though Rana understood "being Canadian" to involve the interlocking of "being a Muslim" and "being a Canadian," she admitted that "religion, to me, is more important than country" (#1). Rana also acknowledged that, "as a family, we have very minimal, like maybe 10% interaction with non-Muslims in our life" (#2). Rana's segregation resulted in her learning Canadianness "not really from the people [but] … more from the TV" (#2). Accordingly, Rana's segregation strengthened her Canadianness, as "I've always thought of myself as Canadian. And I've always been proud of being a Canadian. … I don't really recall any time that I wasn't" (#2). Echoing Amal's sentiments, Rana resisted

challenges to her Canadian identity as "we don't need people to tell us that we're Canadian. You look Canadian from the inside" (#2).

Living abroad enabled Sakeena to feel "more Canadian when I'm outside of Canada" (#2). Sakeena's Canadian accent was a key indicator of her Canadianness, recalling that "I had a five minute conversation with someone one time and they're like, 'You're from Canada, right?' And I'm like 'Ya, how'd you know?' 'You said 'eh' like 20 times'" (#1). Conversely, Sakeena was frustrated when her Canadianness was not recognized:

> There [were] two other girls that were from Norway in my group and ... they wore the *hijab* as well and right away, they categorized all three of us from Norway, even though I've said probably like five times that I was from Canada. But they just ignored [that] fact. ... I was like 'No, I'm from Canada,' 'No, I'm from Canada,' 'No, I'm from Canada,' and it was like I was constantly pushing and working myself to a point of exhaustion. ... It's like I'm invisible to them. (#3)

Ultimately, this lack of recognition of her "being a Canadian" forced Sakeena to sacrifice her visible identity as a Muslim, and she instantly noticed a profound change in others' reactions to her as "they were just like 'Oh ok, you're from Canada, ok,' [and] moved on right away" (#3).

Although the women understood their Canadianness as deeply significant to their beings, they referenced popular Canadian symbols and activities which were characteristic of "being a Canadian," and, though they are "stereotypical, ... at the same time, they are really part of our lives" (Rana, #2). Participation in the 2011 Winter Olympics or watching NHL hockey created a sense of community and collective amongst and between themselves and other Canadians, a bridge across their differences. Although "I know hockey's ... a sport [and] doesn't really define a nationality, ... for me it does. ... [It's] the feeling of coming home" (Sakeena, #1). Rana (#1) shared how a Canadian flag on a traveller's backpack provides for an instant connection:

I would like to go and talk to that person. ... If I'm wearing *hijab* and I'm talking to a non-Muslim woman that's Canadian, I still feel like, 'Ok, we're Canadian. We can still have something in common.' ... We'll probably still stick up for each other.

Additionally, celebrating Canada Day creates a feeling that "you're celebrating with all other Canadians [and] regardless [of] where they're from, they're all still Canadian" (Amal, #2).

However, these examples were determined by the women to be *halal*,[16] activities that were significant to "being a Canadian" but did not conflict with "being a Muslim." Conversely, the women also identified "Canadian" activities that they deemed to be *haram* as they conflicted with their religious beliefs and practices, ultimately impacting their identity negotiations:

Beer is a big part of the culture, right? But as soon as you say, 'Oh, I'm a Muslim. I don't drink,' then that's one thing out of the culture that we don't do. ... So that's the only thing we can take out of it, whatever's *halal*. Like watching hockey and playing hockey and winter and ... Tim Horton's. (Rana, #2)

Reminding "Canadians of the strong (and unfailing) connection between nationalism, beer and hockey in Canada" (Manning, 2000, para. 3), activities that were part of "being a Canadian" but not characteristic of "being a Muslim," made the women feel as though, "we want to be a part of that and we wanna be Canadian ... [but] to be Canadian, you have to do what the other Canadian teenagers are doing" (Fatima, FGC). Peer pressure to engage in partying and drinking, which they felt conflicted with their religious beliefs and understandings of self, made the women feel excluded from the fold of what it means to "be Canadian." The women negotiated this liminal space

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[16] Rooted in Islamic teachings, *halal* refers to actions, activities, and objects that are considered pure and permissible whereas *haram* refers to actions, activities, and objects that are considered sinful and impermissible.

between "being a Canadian" and "being recognized as Canadian" by turning
to their Muslim peers:

> My interests and their interests or their plans and mine will not work
> out together so they'll be like, 'Look at this girl. She doesn't even go to
> the bar, she doesn't go to parties, she doesn't do this, how could we
> hang out with her?' ... It's like you're ... in two different worlds. But
> when you hang out with people like you, who wear the *hijab*, you will
> do the same activities together and you feel happier, more
> comfortable. (Amal, #1)

The women then negotiated understandings of Canadianness through the
presence or absence of relationships with other Canadians and Canadian
symbols but, in the end, were ultimately not "being recognized as Canadian"
by their fellow Canadian citizens as Canadian "identity is defined by those
who position themselves as 'ordinary Canadians' or *Canadian*-Canadians—as
opposed to 'ethnic' or 'multicultural Canadians'—both referring to a category
of unmarked, 'non-ethnic', white Canadians" (Arat-Koç, as cited in Riley,
2009, p. 58, emphasis in original). This is consistent with Meshal's (2003)
survey of young, educated Canadian Muslim women across the nation that
determined that only 11 percent of women who practiced *hijab* felt "very
integrated" into Canadian society and, furthermore, 21 percent of women
who practiced *hijab* felt "not integrated at all" (p. 96). This lack of belonging
and increasing segregation based upon definitions of Canadianness stemmed
from and resulted in the construction of the women as Others.

     Constructing Otherness. Although the women constructed their
individual identities of "being a Canadian," they were not "being recognized
as Canadian," and this lack of recognition ultimately led to their construction
as Other. The women recognized that "some people don't think I'm Canadian.
They might think I'm from outside, you know a different country,"
particularly if that "person's definition of Canadian is for me to sit there and
straighten my hair every day" (Amal, #1). The processes of questioning the
women's identities both signified and legitimized their status as Other in

their own "homes," the nation in which they felt or did not feel a sense of comfort and belonging, sense of belonging being the "[vehicle] through which inequalities and imbalances are legitimized" (Henry & Tator, 2010, p. 17). This construction of Otherness manifested in three ways: the questioning of their identities, increased segregation, and lacking a sense of belonging.

The women were constantly asked the question, "Where are you from?" This question challenged the women's identities because "before I wore the *hijab*, I never got asked that" (Sakeena, #2). The question assumes that identities exist in discrete categories as opposed to multiple and interlocking understandings of identity, as described by Rattansi (2007) in chapter 2. Though the nature of this question is analyzed by many writers (Aujla, 2000; Barazangi, 2005; Ramadan, 2007), for the women, the question denotes and categorizes an Other based upon her appearance:

> They'll ask me where I'm from. I'll be like, 'Canada.' And they'll be like 'No, where are you from?' And I'll be like, 'Canada!' And they'll look at me [and] they'll be like, 'No, where are you from?' And I'll be telling them a million times, 'Canada!' ... So it kind of makes you wonder, just cause I wear the *hijab*, does it make me different and people have to double think ... if I'm Canadian or not, or [if] I've been born in Canada or not? ... In some way, we're all not from here. But for you to accept yourself as being here and not me ... shows the groupings people put for other people. (Amal, #1)

Thus, through this questioning, the identity of the Other is constructed as outside of a shared national identity. Underlying the question "where are you from?" is a latent message which says, "You are not Canadian." The Self thus distances herself from the Other, implying that "what you are not, I am" and "what I am, you are not" (Hall, as cited in Ahadi, 2009, p. 245). These conceptions of Self and Other are static and essentialized, rooted in the Orientalist discourse, and defining what it means to "be a Canadian" for those who are not "being recognized as Canadian." In Canada, this "ideological binary ... is predicated upon the existence of a homogenous national, that is, a

Canadian cultural self with its multiple and different others" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 37). The presence of the Other "produces an unresolvable problem" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 49), a problem that is responded to by the management of identities. If the problem were not solved, Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* were segregated into "our own group" of Canadians (Amal, #1).

When the women were not accepted as "being a Canadian," they were segregated in Canadian society, categorized with others who are Othered. Amal (#2) eloquently analyzes the complexity of her segregation:

> I am segregated. ... It's just always us Muslim girls [and] we're always just doing our own thing. When we make plans, it's just us. If a non-[Muslim] person will come and sit with us, it'll be chitchat for that day but it's not like we progress forward or make any effort to ... extend our friendship with them. ... You do feel like you're in your own world. In a way, maybe that's positive that you don't feel alone, you don't feel like such an outsider because you're with a group of people, but then at the same time, ... you feel like there's this division between you and then the outside world. ... I think the *hijab* does ... it. It does affect a lot of things. ... It's just a headpiece but it just segregates everything.

This analysis highlights the challenges of negotiating between the solace and comfort stemming from group association on the one hand, and recognizing that increasing segregation fuels and legitimizes notions of Self and Other on the other. This Othering of women results in the "exclusion of the resistant or the different, the stranger and the alien" (Goldberg, 2009, p. 366) from understandings of Canadianness.

The women also experienced a sense of not belonging in their own homes, a sense of not feeling safety and security in "being a Canadian," as "slowly, year after year [it's] being taken away. ... It's starting to feel like I'm not Canadian anymore. It's starting to feel like I'm just Muslim" (Sakeena, #2). Lack of recognition of the women's Canadianness highlights the nation's attempts to create a unified state in the face of the immense diversity of its

citizens, which creates an "emphasis on the conversion of difference into otherness" (Manning, 2003, p. 88). As such, the women "began to feel not at home anymore in my own home" (Sakeena, WN, p. 1). This Othering assumed the form of a vibe, a general feeling, a sense of not belonging:

> You can feel that tension. It's visible to you. ... [It] might feel like, 'Where are you from?' type of thing. 'Why are you here?' ... They won't say that, but I will get that impression. You can just tell visibly from their face, the way they look at you, the way they'll talk to you. In a very rude manner (Amal, #1).

As Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*, the women were Othered and constructed in contrast to the unified national Self. This national Self is defined by "a cultural preference for the cloned or same and an elevation of those who fit the streamlining profile over those who don't" (Goldberg, 2009, p. 181), resulting in Others as being segregated and declared as outsiders in their own "homes." Using data from Statistics Canada's *Ethnic Diversity Survey* in 2002, both Reitz and Banerjee (2007) and Wong and Simon (2007) discuss the realities of second-generation "visible minorities." The survey results reveal that "the likelihood of a very strong sense of belonging to Canada generally diminishes with the second-plus generation in most religious groups" (Wong & Simon, 2009, p. 12). Further, based on seven characteristics of social integration—belonging, trust, Canadian identity, citizenship, life satisfaction, volunteering, and voting in a federal election—"in the second generation, all visible minority groups are more negative on all indicators" (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007, p. 522), with second-generation Muslims to be less likely to have a strong sense of belonging. Wong and Simon (2009) question, "Why are second generation Muslims less likely to have a very strong sense of belonging to Canada than other second generation religious groups, even when gender, age, income, experience of discrimination, and education are controlled for?" (p. 12).

Ultimately, the women were constructed as Other by their fellow Canadians. As they negotiated between "being a Canadian" and "being

recognized as Canadian," the women's identities were questioned, they were increasingly segregated from their non-Muslim peers, seeking solace with their Muslim peers, and lacked a sense of belonging in their own "homes."

Summary. The women identified a second gap between the way in which they understood their personal identities and the ways in which others around them perceived them: between their individual identities as a Canadian and societal constructions of The Canadian. The women understood their experiences of "being Canadian" as negotiating between "being a Muslim" and "being a Canadian," understandings that were "a grounding space, not a final space" (Shahnaz Khan, 2002, p. 130). However, this negotiation created in the women "a marginalizing, unsettling, diasporic experience like Bhabha's notion of hybridization, where subjects are formed 'in between,' or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference" (Shahnaz Khan, 2002, p. 129), particularly when these aspects of their identities were not recognized. The women negotiated between societal constructions of Self and Other as they realized that they were constructing their identities in response to "the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 64). Despite popular understandings that "A Canadian" embodies diversity and uniqueness, the women recognized that there exists a clear definition of what it means to "be Canadian" and "the most important element of Canadian identity" is that "you must be white" (C. S. Taylor, 2007/2008, p. 127).

Zine (2006) discusses similar patterns of negotiation in the identities of Canadian Muslim women:

> The veil located them as 'foreigners' who did not belong to the Canadian social fabric. ... Being subject to this open hostility created a fragile narrative of 'Canadianness' and belonging for these girls that was easily ruptured by the lack of social acceptance they encountered in mainstream society. ... The white, Eurocentric, secular cultural codes of Canadian society are the standard of measure against which all other identities are judged and positioned and within which all

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other identities must be disciplined into conformity or face exclusion. (p. 246)

Ultimately, the women were not recognized as "being Canadian" because, as Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*, they did not embody an external, predefined, and exclusive definition of what it means to "be Canadian." Sakeena (#1) provides one example that such a definition exists:

> I was working at my sister's store and there was a little sticker on this man's car and first, it said 'redneck' on the back of his truck. And then, it said 'If you don't speak English, then get the f- out of our country' and it had a big Canadian flag.

This sticker identifies one particular socially-defined characteristic of what it means to "be Canadian," knowledge of the English language, but alludes to a broader societal understanding of this conception. I question, then, from where this definition of what it means to "be Canadian" emerges?

Defining What It Means to "Be Canadian"

The women's understandings of what it means to "be Canadian" resulted from individual instances with other Canadians which caused them to negotiate between "being a Muslim" and "being recognized as Muslim," and between "being a Canadian" and "being recognized as Canadian." These individual actions did not occur in isolation, though, but were informed by and subsequently informed ideologies and institutions. In this way, individual actions, ideologies, and institutions interlocked (Zenev Educational Consultants, 2012) to create a national construction of what it means to "be Canadian." Particular to this discussion is an understanding of "the politics of recognition:"

> Identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted,

and reduced mode of being. (C. Taylor, 1994b, p. 25, emphasis in original)

The women's identities of "being Canadian" were not recognized. Though they sometimes felt "like I am a Canadian and therefore I don't feel like I need to conform or assimilate in any way" (Amal, #1), they also recognized that what it means to "be Canadian" is pre-defined through official and unofficial institutions, manifested through overt and covert means. Perceived gaps in the women's identity negotiations stem from distinct definitions disseminated through three processes: through messages in official state documents and legislations, through popular conceptions promulgated through mass media, and through familial and communitarian advice. Each of these three means—the state, mass media, and Muslim families and communities—influenced the women's understandings of what it means to "be Canadian," categorizing "being a Canadian" as divergent from and conflicting with "being a Muslim." Though the women perceived these two aspects of their identity to be complementary, others were intent to "chop me up into little fragments and tag each piece with a label" if they could (Anzaldúa, 2009, p. 45). Although the women resist attempts to Other their identities, the reality of *la mestiza* is that she receives "multiple, often opposing messages" that result in "the coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference [causing] *un choque*, a cultural collision," which the women were left to negotiate for themselves (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 100).

I explore each of these three processes in turn and, though the women discussed each one, I as the researcher categorized these processes when engaging in a deeper analysis of the women's experiences. As such, there are segments of the analysis which do not contain the women's words, but were determined by me to be significant in developing a contextualization of the women's narratives.

The state. In Canada's official documents, certain rights are guaranteed for its citizens including the freedom to practice religion in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the assurance "that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity" in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (CanLII, 2003, para. 2). Although discussed in chapter 2, it is imperative that these state-sanctioned guarantees be reiterated as they contradict the experiences of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*. The women perceive the facets of their identities to be "interconnected, and if I have one without the other, then that's not my identity. So for me to be Canadian, I'm Muslim. And for me to be Muslim, I'm Canadian" (Amal, #1). However, through the regulation of the women's identities, the state "tells" and "shows" its citizens what it means to "be Canadian," those citizens who fit the criteria, and those who are excluded from this definition.

Dhamoon and Y. Abu-Laban (2009) argue that, at particularly vulnerable points in Canadian history, the state acted to define groups as "internal dangerous foreigners" as a means of rallying and unifying citizens under support of the state. Historically, generating fear of Japanese-Canadians during World War II, the Québécois during The Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ)/October Crisis of 1970, and Mohawks and other indigenous peoples during the 1990 Kanehsatake/Oka Crisis enabled the state to rally its citizens in its support, claiming to keep them secure in times of crises. Currently, it could be argued that Canadian Muslims, specifically Muslim women who practice *hijab*, are internal dangerous foreigners. As legal citizens of the state who are subject to increased profiling and securitization efforts, state regulation of their identities enables the general population to feel secure in their homes. So if "you're not dressed in that 'Canadian' way, … you don't adhere to their codes" (Amal, #2), and are hence constituted as Other.

The state possesses the power to "[determine] which identities and identity claims are taken into account and how they are represented in actions or policy, and conversely which ones are downplayed or even ignored" (Y. Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002, p. 14). Even though the women feel Canadian, "it's other people who might not see that" (Amal, #1), and this regulation of "women's roles, autonomy, and identity" (Stasiulis, 2005, p. 50) is a means of constructing a unified national identity. This struggle to create a unified national identity in the face of limitless diversity establishes the private body of a woman as the site for public conceptions of citizenship. According to Sherene Razack (2008), "women's bodies have long been the ground on which national difference is constructed" and "the Muslim woman's body is constituted as ... an indicator of who belongs to national community and who does not" (p. 86). Thus, regulation of a Muslim woman's identity not only serves as a means to construct national difference but also distracts the general public from the violence, inequality, and racism in the homes of "western women."

Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* are "simultaneously present and absent" in the political-cultural space of Canada as a product of "an ethos of European or white supremacy" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 156), particularly due to the national multiculturalism discourse. Bannerji (2000) argues that Canadian multiculturalism creates legitimate citizens, those perceived to possess no "culture," as distinct from those who possess an excess of culture. Who is Canadian is created by the Self who "forge[s] an identifiable ideological core, a national identity, around which other cultural elements may be arranged hierarchically" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 109). Through these "conceptual practices of power" (Smith, as cited in Harding, 2007), the identities of Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* are regulated by the "element of whiteness [that] quietly enters into cultural definitions" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 10). As "in this day and age, white is right," Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* are exempted from what it means to "be

Canadian" "because, A, our skin color and, B, the *hijab*" (Sakeena, #2). All in all, "the government promotes multiculturalism but … they don't practice it" (Fatima, FGC), and this realization is apparent in the state regulation of Muslim women's identities and the state's support, or lack thereof, of Canadian Muslims.

As described in chapter 2, there have been numerous attempts by the state to regulate the identities of visible Muslim women and subsequently achieve national solidarity through the removal of religion from the public sphere, perpetuating the notion that visible displays of identity in the form of *hijab* are incompatible with "being Canadian." Underlying a proposition such as the aforementioned Bill 94 in Québec lies a need to unveil and rescue the Muslim woman, to make "her body visible and hence knowable and available for possession" by the state (Razack, 2008, p. 86). The state, then, maintains the power to dictate the terms for a legitimate national identity through the regulation of a Muslim women's dress, contradicting Canada's aforementioned guarantee to its citizens that there would be "no coercion into a single cultural standard" (Samuel & Schachhuber, 2000, p. 31). Policymakers purport that these public restrictions of private identities are created with "good" intentions, with full knowledge of what is "best" for the well-being of all citizens (Henderson, 2000) but "their ideological content [is] as much nationalist as racist" (Miles & Brown, 2003, p. 149). This public demarcation between the identities of the Self and the Other functions "in an imagined community that is composed of mutually exclusive, territorially bounded spaces and subjects, [where] the stranger is conceptualized as an aberration of the proper citizen, belonging nowhere" (Manning, 2003, p. 75). The state creates an "imagined community" (Anderson, as cited in Whitehead, Bannerji, & Mojab, 2001), a fictitious place where citizens feel empowered to claim a sense of home, where the equality and freedoms of all citizens are accepted and honoured, and where the identities of Canadian-

born Muslim women who practice *hijab* are respected. No such community exists in Canada.

The women identified the state's support, or lack thereof, of its Muslim citizens to be significant to their understandings of "being Canadian." In September of 2011, Prime Minister Stephen Harper declared that "the biggest security threat to Canada a decade after 9/11 is Islamic terrorism" ("Harper says 'Islamicism' biggest threat to Canada," 2011):

> We have a public figure addressing this to the community, what are they gonna think? They're gonna literally think that our world was safe after 9/11. That's what they're thinking, that it's safer now because more people are targeting Islamic people and ... more security measures are in place. ... And it's only gonna get worse from now on, I think personally. ... [especially] if our own [prime minister] is categorizing us. (Sakeena, #1)

State tactics such as increased securitization and "racial profiling" reinforce the Orientalist assumption that all Muslims are terrorists and pose a threat to national security, and thus should be excluded from conceptions of "being Canadian." Further, the women posited that the state's response to the Omar Khadr trial demonstrated its lack of support for Muslims:

> That Omar Khadr guy, he was a ... Canadian child soldier who was imprisoned in Guantanomo for so long, and I feel like the people were demanding that the government did something. ... People of so many different races, of so many different cultures, people of all different ages were coming out and saying the government needs to do something but the government refuses. And I feel like until the government puts us on the same level as anyone else, ... it's almost like you're allowing ... the segregation of Islam. (Fatima, FGC)

This public lack of support of Muslims, coupled with state regulation of Muslim women's identities, legitimizes the Othering of Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*. This exercise of the power of the state is a hegemony that functions by "reducing something to nothing" (Grossberg, as cited in Gunaratnam, 2007, p. 13).

Curiously, this state regulation of the women's identities is championed by western liberal feminists (Razack, 2008) who, in presuming to challenge manifestations of religious and cultural patriarchy, neglect a Muslim woman's right to choose, to make her own decisions as she deems fit. In doing so, the feminists affirm their own status as distinct from that of the Muslim woman who must be rescued (Razack, 2008). Thus, Muslim women in Canada are "silenced, ignored and oppressed, not only by structures and institutions, but also by the very social movement whose legitimization is largely derived from its opposition to oppression, namely feminism" (Abdo, as cited in Shahnaz Khan, 2002, p. 17).

In Canada, thus, the "white European men, especially those of British and French descent" occupy the top spot in the hierarchy of identities and their "ideas become the premise on which societal norms and values are based, and [their] practices become the 'normal' way of doing things" (Ng, as cited in James, 2007, p. 357). Thus, constructions of Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* as exclusive to the conception of "being Canadian" occurs latently and manifestly through the ideology of the multiculturalism discourse, state regulations of Muslim women's identities, and state support, or lack thereof, of its Muslim citizens. Mass media is another institution which reinforces exclusionary definitions of "being Canadian" and disseminates them to the Canadian population.

Mass media.

I'm not a lumber jack
Or a fur trader
And I don't live in an igloo
Or eat blubber
Or own a dog sled ...
I believe in peacekeeping not policing
Diversity not assimilation ...
My name is Joe and I am Canadian!

I Am Canadian, Molson Canadian, Argot Language Center, 2009

Identities are not endpoints nor destinations but rather fluid journeys of shared and personal experiences, rooted in particular social, cultural, political, and economic spaces (Duderija, 2008). A particularly powerful institution that shapes our understandings of who "we" are, who belongs within "our" nation, and who does not belong at all, is mass media. By rooting news reports in Orientalist discourses, media outlets not only increase their audiences and profits, but produce and reproduce structures of oppression and privilege and hierarchies of identities, normalizing these structures so that they appear to be "common sense" (Byng, 2010). This characterizes Solomos and Back's (2007) notion of propaganda, which transmits "ideas and values from dominant groups who control the means of communication, with the intention of influencing the receivers' attitudes and thus enhancing and maintaining their position and interests" (p. 247).

The construction of Canada's current "internal dangerous foreigners," Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*, is based upon the Orientalist discourse wherein "the media ... over-exaggerates everything. And they try to blame everything on Muslims. And they'll only show the bad parts about Islam. And even with the *hijab*, they'll only show how women are oppressed" (Amal, #2). In Canadian media, not only are Muslims presented as "foreign, distant others," but are depicted as practicing "anti-Canadian values such as indiscriminate violence and gender oppression" (Bullock & Jafri, 2000, p. 35). Yasmin Jiwani (2005) contends that this depiction enhances the profile of female reporters who "advance the interests of white feminists often at the expense of black and other minority women under the guise of benevolence and imperial logic" by contrasting "oppressed Muslim women" with the "Western, progressive, liberated and egalitarian journalists" (p. 19). This profile of The Muslim Woman proliferated substantially after 9/11 when "the media ... started pointing fingers. Then that's when people started

pointing fingers at us, too" (Rana, #1). In order to counter the effects of these misconstructions of their identities, the women

> stuck with the people that [said], 'You know what, I'm gonna wear [*hijab*]. I'm gonna still be proud of it. And I'm gonna show people that that's not what Muslims are. This is not what Islam is. We're not like this. Those people are probably extremists. They take the word of whatever it says in the Quran the wrong way. ... Bombing yourself is *haram*. It's actually forbidden. Why would you do something like that?' (Rana, #1)

As described earlier, the women resisted these misconstructions of their identities through education, an example of which is Humda Malik's (2012) poem entitled "Distorted Images:"

> There's never been a paper I couldn't sell, discussed, reported, image distorted but always noted.
> I'm the concocted headline, the exaggerated main event.
> Reality just doesn't cut it, not worth 2 cents.
> The media's my sick lover, clocking me in cover to cover.
> I'm sayin' Salaam, they're callin' me a con, no peace of mind, everywhere you look its hate that you find.
> I'm statin' clear and true, I'm a Muslim through and through, now don't get in a panic, I'm not that manic.
> Not O'Reilly's crazed stereotype, no substance and all hype.
> Note this head gear, my saving grace, but wait, the press is makin' a different case.
> They're shoutin' and hollerin', I must be cracked for this belief that I'm following.
> Drop that tool of oppression! Get rid of that male suppression!
> Who said I'm owned by a man?
> Allah is my ultimate keeper, but they're pullin' me in deeper and deeper.
> Now the Man's on my case, it started in France and now it's a race.
> They're passin' laws, confining me with their tight worded clause.
> No room for reasonable accommodation, the hijab is not a part of their nation.
> But it's them who is flawed!
> The hijab is no foreign notion, their minds are warped by this constructed commotion ...

The media generates fear, it picks and chooses what you hear.
Be wary of that crafted word, the doubtful whisper often heard.
The soul can often see what the mind refuses to believe.
The truth is deeper than the text, today it's me, tomorrow you'll be next.
But don't take my words as proof, look to the maker for the ultimate truth.

Mass media serve as a tool of oppression as the global narrative on Islam (Karim, 2003) signifies a space where crude and malicious representations of Muslims have become perfectly acceptable (Said, 1997) and reports of WMD (Women in Muslim Dress) are on the rise (Sheema Khan, 2009). The Muslim woman who practices *hijab* is constructed as "oppressed, ... your husband probably beats you, you're probably forced to wear it, ... you're a terrorist, you're from the Taliban ... this is what people associate from the media" (Rana, #1). Presenting a singular and monolithic association of the veil with colonialism, violence, and oppression removes Muslim women from their positionalities in terms of class, race, nationality, and even gender, presenting them instead as universally and fundamentally oppressed (Bullock, 2000; Karim, 2003). Reading an editorial that opened with the line, "Women in niqabs look like scary black crows as they flutter along a Canadian sidewalk" (Mallick, 2010), I became more cognizant of the impact of media constructions on the minds of Canadian viewers and readers. Muslim women "don't see myself the way the media portrays these women" (Sakeena, #2), and can sense their identities being appropriated and misrepresented. These constructions of "Muslim" convey that Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* are scary, are Other, are Different, and are Muslim, first, foremost, and always, denying their individual experiences and understandings of "being Canadian."

As mass media comprise extremely powerful institutions that juxtapose "normal" and "abnormal," they produce and reproduce profiles of legitimate and illegitimate citizens and, right now, those targets are all too

easy to identify. "When reporting on 'Islamic violence' ... the media often identify Muslims by their religion," whereas one would be unlikely to read about "Christian violence in a story about anti-abortion acts" (Morlino, 2007, p. 246). These depictions then translate into action for many Canadians:

> It's the media always targeting Muslim people. It's not like they're targeting Christianity or Judaism or any other religion. It's always Muslims. ... And when people are fed those negative ideas, they'll just ... back away from you. (Amal, #2)

The message received from mass media is that Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* are excluded from conceptions of "being Canadian." As "people believe what's on the news" (Sakeena, #1), Canadians consciously and unconsciously adopt these views, emitting them when in contact with "real" Muslim women who practice *hijab*. Said (1997) accepts that journalists and media personnel should not be expected to spend all their time conducting academic research and critically challenging Orientalist attitudes, but he questions: "Why the slavish and uncritical adoption of views that stress the unvaryingly reductive arguments about Islam" (p. xxix)?

Mass media also influence our understandings of what it means to "be Canadian" through the cultivation of a global obsession with physical appearance, characterizing any identity that falls outside a particular standard as Other. Mariam writes, "the media plays an inequitable role in raising acceptance for women who reveal their bodies and have a seductive image, while undermining the women who are protective of their beauty" (WN, p. 1), and thus, it becomes "weird to see someone walking down the street covered" (Sakeena, #1). Furthermore, celebrity appearances and endorsements affect perceptions about the appearance of Muslim women:

> It's all back to the media, especially what we see stars wearing. ... It's like 'Oh, look at that Kim Kardashian dress! I have to get it!' ... We can't wear it unfortunately, ... we just can't. ... So I guess that's why people would say we're oppressed. (Amal, #1)

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Thus, mass media develops pervasive, popular conceptions of what it means to "be Canadian" through Orientalist constructions of *hijab* and cultivating obsessions with physical appearance, which ultimately deems Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* as outside popular understandings of what it means to "be Canadian." Even though Muslim women like Rana are using forms of media such as film to challenge misconstructions of their identities, people are strongly influenced by the image of "the scary black crow" and this informs their understandings of the Muslim women they encounter in Canadian society. It is significant to note that these constructions of what it means to "be Canadian" impact both non-Muslims and Muslims alike, as is witnessed in the advice and cautions to the women from within their Muslim families and communities.

Muslim families and communities. The women's Muslim families and communities were also influenced by state and media constructions of what it means to "be Canadian," consequently cautioning the women to maintain identities that were not too visible. Their intentions are characteristic of a form of protectionism which involves the subconscious internalization of societal racism (Aujla, 2000) and manifests in the relaying of parallel assimilationist messages.

The women's families and communities cautioned them about being too visible in their Muslim identities. As their families had moved to Canada from nations where Islam was the "majority" religion, they were accustomed to their beliefs and practices being fundamental characteristics of society. Holidays off for *Eid*, time for Friday *Juma* prayers, breaks for the five daily *salat*, and accommodating schedules during the month of Ramadan were all integral to their home communities. Immigrating to Canada to create a new life was a sacrifice for the families, as they found themselves in the "minority" in a nation where they "[faced] the reality of living, almost daily, with negative media portrayals of Islam, Muslim countries, and Muslim leaders ... [and] with the knowledge that they have little control over the images that

represent them" (S. Abu-Laban, 1991, p. 27). The families responded, then, by protecting their children from a society which threatened to appropriate their identities, attempting to discern a balance between preserving their identities and integrating into Canadian society. Thus, the strong family unit described by all the women can "ease adaptation or, conversely, strengthen resistance to assimilation" (S. Abu-Laban, 1991, p. 7).

"Being Canadian" was understood by the families in a particular manner and, at times, this construction was witnessed in parents' cautions to their children regarding their religious practices. Sakeena (#1) shares her father's warnings when she first started to practice *hijab*:

> My own father was like, 'Don't be extreme, ok? Whatever you do, do not become very extreme.' He was afraid that I would become very fundamental. And that was a fear of his because he has had experience with many people in the community that start to find Islam, and then they just kinda go more and more deep into it, and they become like very fundamental. And he was afraid that I would, too, become like that.

Knowing individuals in Muslim communities who had become increasingly fundamental and thus excluded from Canadian society, Sakeena's father cautioned his daughter to not be *too* religious nor be *too* visible as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*. His cautions stem from the notion that, "although private religious identification as a Muslim can be tolerated, public support for certain 'official' religious legal principles would automatically make one a bad Canadian" (Riley, 2009, p. 64).

His cautions correlate with ongoing debates within Muslim communities regarding the practice of *hijab*, particularly regarding the belief that the practice makes women more visible and hence more susceptible to acts of racism, thus encouraging women to abandon their practice. Resultantly, "even Muslim people are starting to turn away from the *hijab* because they're afraid of comments or afraid of judgements" (Sakeena, #1). In a display of unsolidarity, Amal (#2) recalls how some Muslim girls who did

not practice *hijab* did not support the practicing girls at her school: "They come from a different public school but they're Muslims as well and it's like, 'Oh, those are the Islamic school kids. Don't talk to them.' And it's like, 'What the hell? You know what I mean?" Judgements about *hijab* affected the women's understandings of what it means to "be Canadian," particularly in some Muslims' lack of support for the women's identities. Immediately following the events of 9/11, "some of my friends … were scared and they took off their *hijab* and would change even their name so they wouldn't be associated with Islam" (Rana, #1), signifying one coping response to the heightened awareness of "Muslimness" which involves the complete dissociation from the Muslim community and removal of any visible symbols of "Muslimness" (Hoodfar, 2003). The women also knew other girls "who take off their *hijab* … because they're pressured so much with … fashion, of what they see and what they wanna follow, and to conform. And they feel like if they conform, they're gonna be more accepted by people" (Amal, #1). Sakeena (#1) puzzled over the reaction of her close male Muslim friend who tugged at her *hijab* immediately after she started the practice: "that was disturbing for me. … He told me to take it off [as] 'it doesn't suit me.' … It's strange because he was a Muslim brother himself and that's what really shocked me." As Muslim women personally negotiated "being Canadian," they were cognizant of community members who increasingly abandoned parts of their identities to fit in, to not be too visible, to no longer be targets of Orientalist misconstructions, to "be Canadian."

The women's families and communities protected the women by raising them as members of active Muslim communities. Both Rana and Amal attended the local Islamic school and, though Amal's family lived in Inuvik, they moved to Edmonton to live amidst an active Muslim community. Rana's family was, as she admitted, segregated from Canadian society, not associating often with others who were not Muslim. Berry et al. (2006) outline two significant issues for immigrants: "the degree to which people

wish to maintain their heritage, culture, and identity; and the degree to which people seek involvement with the larger society," the negotiation of which results in one of four acculturation spaces: assimilation, separation, marginalisation, or integration (p. 306). Particularly in Rana's case, her family was marginalised from Canadian society, enabling them to maintain their distinct identities. However, Rana shares her Lebanese family members' assumptions regarding what it means to "be Canadian:"

> Over there, they would think 'Oh, you're Canadian! You're not supposed to pray and wear *hijab*! You're supposed to be very modern, westernized and not wear that kind of stuff.' … They would even probably be like, "Why is your hair not blond? (#1)

As the women received mixed messages from their families and communities about what it means to "be Canadian," predominantly as a means of protection, they then faced "not only ambivalent forms of knowledge about themselves but also their own ambivalent responses to that knowledge" (Shahnaz Khan, 2002, p. 23).

In addition, the women were encouraged by their families to engage in activities that promoted their integration into Canadian society, most significant of which was the acquisition of higher education. Our multiple subject positions entail that we are simultaneously privileged and unprivileged (Brah, as cited in Gunaratnam, 2003) and, though the women were unprivileged due to their membership in religious, gendered, and racial "minorities," they also possessed significant social capital in terms of their families' levels of formal education and social class association as professionals. The families perceived the attainment of higher education, which all seven women had attained or were in the process of attaining, to be a means of securing their children's integration into Canadian society, as the skills and knowledges acquired through these processes would ensure that the women would be productive members of the knowledge economy due to their increased social capital:

> Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group. (Bourdieu, 2006, p. 110)

Thus, through higher education, the second-generation Muslim women who practiced *hijab* symbolized "a cultural bridge between their parents' ways of living and a new way of living that is thought of as Canadian" (Kobayashi, as cited in Wong & Smith, 2009, p. 7).

Muslim identities involve understanding text and context (Ramadan, 2007), and the women and their families and communities constructed understandings of what it means to "be Canadian" within their Canadian contexts. The women were guided by their families and communities to not be too visible in their identities. Thus, influenced by exclusionary definitions of what it means to "be Canadian" from both inside and outside of their families and communities, the women's personal negotiations of "being Canadian" were challenged.

Moving Forward

In this chapter, I wove an analysis of the women's experiences of "being Canadian" with the literature to contextualize multiple understandings of "being Canadian." The women negotiated between two primary gaps in their experiences of "being Canadian:" (1) between "being a Muslim" and "being recognized as Muslim," and (2) between "being a Canadian" and "being recognized as Canadian." Navigating a personal sense of religious identity while surrounded by Orientalist constructions of their being encumbered the women with a burden of representation. They resisted this burden by adopting the role of educating others about their identities. Additionally, as the women constructed their personal understanding of Canadianness, they were conscious that their identities were constantly in question, they were increasingly segregated within Canadian society, and

they lacked a sense of belonging, ultimately categorizing the women as Others. The women were subject to these identity negotiations because what it means to "be Canadian" was defined through state policies and practices, Orientalist constructions of Muslim women and *hijab* in mass media, and contradictory, protectionist messages from their Muslim families and communities. As I wrote this analysis, I was conscious of avoiding narrative smoothing (Spence, as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) or glossing over segments of the women's narratives to ensure an "all's well that ends well" ending as, I feel, the negotiations within their narratives highlight the complexities inherent in understanding what it means to "be Canadian."

Though the aforementioned three processes determine some of the means through which exclusionary definitions of "being Canadian" are constructed and disseminated in Canada, the women and I questioned the broader context in which these definitions were produced. In the next chapter, then, I discuss what emerged as a result of this reflexive and dialogic research project as a potential "explanation" for the women's identity negotiations: processes of racism in Canada.

Chapter Six: Experiences of "Being A Problem"

They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town. … At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.

W.E.B Du Bois (as cited in West, 2001, p. 5)

Why can't I be Canadian, too? Why am I looked at [differently]?

Sakeena, #2

It was a challenging and emotional process to arrive at this conclusion, but here it is: The experiences of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* means being the object of racism, means "being a problem" that needs to be categorized, accommodated, managed, and regulated. Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* are constrained in their identities, constructed within structures that define what it means to "be Canadian." The women were constantly reminded that they did not "fit in" as Canadians due to Orientalist constructions of their identities, the lack of recognition of their individual identities, the constant questioning of their identities, and the Othering of their identities, which are all manifestations of racism in Canada. Though these manifestations occurred in individual, one-on-one encounters with other Canadians, the actions are reflective of broader ideologies and institutions which construct Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* as Other and ultimately un-Canadian. Thus, what it means to "be Canadian" for the women is to experience racism in its multifarious manifestations.

As I mentioned, it was difficult to arrive at this conclusion. Not only difficult because it is challenging to comprehend that the experience of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* is to be objects of racism, but difficult also because it is challenging to discuss issues

of racism in Canada. As described in chapter 2, the multiculturalism discourse has succeeded in creating a nation in which it is difficult to name or challenge the structures of oppression and privilege which characterize our society and its institutions. Euphemistic notions of "diversity" and "multiculturalism" encourage Canadians to profess notions like, "I don't see color" whilst failing to recognize the ideologies and institutions which construct hierarchies of identities in Canada based upon raced, gendered, and classed constructs. The women's experiences speak to the racism in our nation, and I write today to challenge and resist it, to "shift the focus from the individual and attitudinal to the global and structural" (Mills, 1998, p. 146).

Although I commenced this research journey with an ontological question, due to the women's openness and reflexivity, I emerged with a broader understanding of the realities of this nation's peoples, realities that expose and confront the racism in our nation. As the women and I discussed terms like "prejudice," "stereotype," "misconception," and "discrimination," I wondered why they were initially hesitant to use the term "racism." After problematizing the disconnect between discrimination against Muslim women at a societal level and direct instances of racism emerging from the first set of interviews, the women and I engaged in a deeper and contextual understanding of what it means to "be Canadian" in our subsequent conversations, leading to a broader understanding of racism in our society.

I approach the topic of racism by grounding my analysis in the women's words and experiences of "being Canadian" and how their identities are defined as "being a problem." I continue the three-way dialogue from the previous chapter to connect the women's words and academic literature through my voice as a researcher to develop a layered analysis of racism in Canada. In this chapter, I first explore the concept of racism and share my understanding of the term. I then contextualize racism in Canada, exploring how processes of racism are responsible for the women's identity

negotiations, as shared in chapter 5. I then discuss the women's difficulties in recognizing processes of racism, discussing how we arrived at those recognitions through reflection and dialogue. What I share below is a partial understanding of racism in Canada, grounded in the women's words and experiences. By no means do I propose the solution to the eradication of racism in our society, but I do highlight its pervasive manifestations through an analysis of the experiences of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*.

Racism

Why do we always have to say 'Stop Racism'? That means there is racism, right?

Rana, #1

The experiences of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* meant being the objects of processes of racism in Canada. These processes define exclusionary conceptions of "being Canadian" while regulating the means by which particular identities are included and excluded from these definitions. I begin my discussion of how processes of racism in Canada contextualize the women's identity negotiations by exploring academic conceptualizations of the term and follow by clarifying my use of the term, as grounded in the women's words and experiences.

Conceptually, the term "racism" exudes a power and saliency that is difficult to ignore. The concept has been discussed, analyzed, problematized, conceptualized and re-conceptualized yet contentions remain regarding its definition and manifestations, and thus it continues to be a dominant focus of academic and popular discourses to this day (Miles & Brown, 2003). The concept of "race" is a social construct, as are other social classifications of gender, class, and ethnicity. Whether or not racism has become reified through our constant reference to and fascination with the topic, it

nonetheless exists and manifests itself every day. As a concept "under erasure," racism has "passed [its] analytic sell-by date … but [has] yet to be replaced" (Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 31). Though the term "racism" is limited and limiting, processes of racism manifest in the everyday lives of Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*:

> No one wants to say it openly but you can feel it without anyone even saying it. And it's just a piece of cloth on our heads … [but] you can feel it in the way they speak to you, the way they first react with you, and the way that you're supposed to be. (Sakeena, FGC)

For the women, thus, racism is manifested in the response of their fellow Canadians to their identities. I conscientiously debated the usage of terminology in this research, reading about varied analyses of racism: neo-racism (Balibar, 1991a, 2007), xeno-racism (Fekete, 2001), born-again racism (Goldberg, 2009), new racism (Barker, as cited in Miles & Brown, 2003), everyday racism (Essed, as cited in Goldberg, 2009), democratic racism (Henry & Tator, 2010), and racialization (Miles, as cited in Miles & Brown, 2003). In the end, I decided to use the term "racism." The usage of this term, though constraining at times, creates the potential for it to be enabling as it imbues power and implicates us all as Canadians in processes of racism. Thus, I use the term because the women used the term. I subscribe to the powerful definition of racism as provided by Amal (#1):

> In public, you're walking, something happens. It's not like a big incident, 'Oh my god! She said this to me, she's racist!' … It's kinda just a few things that you pick up and so you get the signal, … the overall vibe around you that people are being racist. … And it's just reactions, small reaction from this person and a small reaction from that person, and the way that they speak to you. … And it's not like you can pinpoint it, 'that person's racist,' but it's just that general feeling you get from this society around you. And that general feeling just makes you feel like … you don't belong here … even though we're born here and everything but then it just makes you feel like you don't belong and you should be in a place where you have your kind.

Though the women's experiences refer to individual acts, these acts support, and are supported by, institutions and ideologies that together constitute processes of racism. The construction and maintenance of hierarchies of identities necessitates the existence of "ideological and epistemological frameworks that naturalize the unequal division of racial power" (Mojab, 2005, p. 76). Thus, "the idea of a 'racism without race' is not as revolutionary as one might imagine" (Balibar, 1991a, p. 23), as racism is "not of color of skin anymore" (Rana, #1). Instead,

> race is one way by which the boundary is to be constructed between those who can and those who cannot belong to a particular construction of a collectivity or population. ... This entails understanding racisms as modes of exclusion, inferiorization, subordination and exploitation. (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 2005, p. 2)

My use of the term racism, thus, provides contextualization for the women's experiences of "being Canadian:" of the denial of their identities, of segregation, of Othering, and of feelings of not belonging in their own "homes." In this regard, there "a number of *racisms,* forming a broad, open spectrum of situations" (Balibar, 1991b, p. 40), which "[structure] the norms and values of societies, and ... [are] evident in the policies and practices of institutions" (James, 2007, p. 357). As such, Cornel West (2001) contends that the discourse of racism has broadened to encompass religious, ethnic, gendered, and even socioeconomic attributes. After establishing my use of the terminology racism, I now discuss the conceptualization of racism in Canada.

Conceptualizing racism in Canada. Understandings of Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* as "being a problem" emerge from contextually-specific processes of racism which hierarchize their Othered identities. As a global system of oppression and injustice, racism has existed since the beginning of time yet its expressions, victimizers, and victims have shifted due to historicity and context. Racism refers to a process by which an

individual is either privileged or subordinated, or simultaneously both, to demonstrate exercises of power and to maintain status quo structures of dominance (Mills, 1998). Thus, a certain group is constructed as a problem in order for a dominant group to differentiate between Self and Other and maintain its position of power. At this moment in time, Muslims are endlessly constituted as the Other through violent, extremist, and cultural representations of the religion. The Muslim Problem emerges from a type of racism that "becomes an everyday life and 'normal' way of seeing" (Bannerji, 2005, p. 56). Although "Whiteness" is a social construction, it is also the norm, and the ubiquitousness of white privilege as defined by Audre Lorde in chapter 3 categorizes those who are non-Whites as Other. What is conceived to be a natural fact of life is a hierarchical power structure designed to keep those of the "nonraced norm" at the top (Mills, 1998). The presumed invisibility of the white race highlights the visibility of those who are non-Whites, increasing the gap between the Self and the Other. Oblivious to many Whites is the fact that they are afforded privileges based solely upon their skin color and the social constructions attributed to that color; whether racist or not, Whites "are heirs to a system of consolidated structural advantage that will continue to exist unless active moves are made to dismantle it" (Mills, 1998, p. 146).

Racism is not a contemporary phenomenon in Canada. Historical accounts of Black Canadian slavery in the 17th century, head tax and discriminatory labour policies levied against Chinese Canadians during the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 19th century, internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II, and anti-South Asian Canadian legislation in British Columbia in the early 20th century establish racism in Canada as "related to the dominant group's need for cheap labour" (Henry & Tator, 2010, p. 64). Racism in the 21st century has taken on "less overt and yet more complicated forms of expressions" than historically (Galabuzi, 2010, p. 28), particularly in the formation of "the racialized structure of citizenship

that characterizes Canada" (Razack, 2007, p. 75). Though difficult to recognize, the presence of defining "levels of citizenship" (Bannerji, 2000) are witnessed in the experiences of Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*. Canada, as a modern nation state, "continues to exercise class (capitalism), gender (patriarchal), and racial power. ... Racism, even when not enshrined in law in racially divided Western societies, continues to be one form of the exercise of power" (Mojab, 2005, p. 79). Significant to an analysis of racism in Canada is an interlocking analysis of nationalism, racism, sexism, and capitalism in the women's narratives (Miles & Brown, 2003), as "racial hierarchies come into existence through patriarchy and capitalism, each system of domination mutually constituting the other" (Razack, 2007, p. 76).

In Canada, nationalism and racism function side by side, legitimized by sexism and capitalism, to achieve "a nationalistic purism, an ideology that 'we' must not be contaminated by 'them'" (Miles & Brown, 2003, p. 10). Thus, "being a Muslim" in Canada is "a reactive stance, a product of a colonial-racist situation" (Shahnaz Khan, 2002, p. 105). Muslims are constantly on guard, constantly prepared to respond to the questioning of their identities, constantly justifying their presence, constantly proving their Canadianness in the midst of these Orientalist constructions of their self. The women's experiences of "being Canadian" highlight the disconnect between Canadian policy and practice, speaking to the day-to-day occurrences of racism in a society which professes to be racism-free. Most significantly, the women are denied their realities, their identities, their beings as "the sick reality is that people do judge us and people do not look at us as Canadians. And people look at us as just Muslims. We don't have a nationality, we just have a religion" (Sakeena, FGC).

"Being Canadian," then, means being subject to these racisms and their manifestations and "being a problem." Said (2007) contends that Others are *always* "seen through" and evaluated "as problems to be solved" in western nations as opposed to unique, contributing, individual human beings

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(p. 47). Understanding racism in Canada involves comprehending its interlocking presence with nationalism and that racism is "necessary to nationalism" (Balibar, 1991b, p. 50). This cycle of dependency stemming from our nation's very creation, makes it difficult to name, recognize, and challenge it, to "separate the presence of racism *within the state* from an (official) state racism" (Balibar, 1991b, p. 39).

In Canada then, "racialized discourses can ... be a guise to secure 'our' national identity" in the face of challenges from the Other (Dhamoon & Y. Abu-Laban, 2009, p. 167). The Other, who "stands at the border between inclusion and exclusion, ... [is] reminded that he or she must endure the pain of being neither here nor there" (Manning, 2003, p. 73). Further, "the only 'legitimate' inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites" (Anzaldúa, 2007, pp. 25-26). Though Canada "claims not to discriminate on the bases of race, gender, and so on, ... it is obvious that, by its very organization of social communities in 'race' and ethnic terms, the state constantly creates 'Canadians' and 'others'" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 72). The women's experiences attest to this construction of an exclusionary Canadian identity. As Othered individuals,

> we are left with the paradox of both belonging and non-belonging simultaneously. As a population, we non-whites and women (in particular, non-white women) are living in a specific territory. We are part of its economy, subject to its laws, and members of its civil society. Yet we are not part of its self-definition as 'Canada' because we are not 'Canadians.' (Bannerji, 2000, p. 65)

Potentially conceived as "gendered Islamophobia," the women encountered "specific forms of ethno-religious and racialized discrimination ... that proceed from historically contextualized negative stereotypes that inform individual and systemic forms of oppression" (Zine, 2006, p. 240). As such, the disconnect between the multiculturalism discourse in Canada and the experiences of Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* is one of hypocrisy. Why do the women face assimilationist messages directing them

to sacrifice part of their beings to "become Canadian?" Why do Canadians pretend that racism does not exist in Canada when "race and racism are defining concepts that construct our understanding of Canada" (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004, p. 56)? Further, why was it difficult for the women to name and recognize racism as a process that defined their experiences?

Recognizing racism in Canada. The recognition of racism in Canada evolves through a process of reflection and dialogue, of developing understandings of one's positionality in a contextual frame of interlocking oppressions and hegemonic discourses. As racism "has become so naturalized, so pervasive that it has become invisible or transparent to those who are not adversely impacted by [it]" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 114), conscious spaces for reflection and dialogue are necessary for its exposure.

The experiences of Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* speak to being Othered in their own "homes," outside of dominant conceptions of what it means to "be Canadian." "This happens not only in the realm of state constructed policy, but also in that of everyday life—within what David Theo Goldberg (1993) calls a 'racist culture'" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 72). However, the racist message in Canada is deviously hidden behind slogans of multiculturalism, key words such as "tolerance," and a global reputation that Canadians are equal in their diversity. The latent nature of racism in Canada, in effect, serves to de-legitimize the women's experiences of racism. The women questioned and second-guessed whether in fact they had ever experienced racism, which

> expresses itself in glances, gestures, forms of speech, and physical movements. Sometimes it is not even consciously experienced by its perpetrators, but it is immediately and painfully felt by its victims— the empty seat next to a person of colour, which is the last to be occupied in a crowded bus; the slight movement away from a person of colour in an elevator; the overattention to the black customer in the shop; the inability to make direct eye contact with a person of colour;

the racist joke told at a meeting; and the ubiquitous question 'Where did you come from?' (Henry et al., as cited in Agnew, 2007, p. 318)

However, the women did not initially recognize these everyday actions as components of broader processes of racism in Canada. They recognized racism at societal and systemic levels in the form of Orientalist constructions of Muslim women and *hijab* but felt disconnected from these discourses, as did I as noted in chapter 1. The women recalled hearing the term

racism [when] ...I was young ... [but] you kind of ignore it after a while or you don't think about it. You don't think that someone could be racist. Because you haven't been inflicted yourself or ... someone hasn't inflicted you directly so you don't feel like, 'Oh, that was a racist act.' (Sakeena, #1)

I left our first set of conversations feeling that in the women's experiences of "being Canadian," they had not encountered racism in their daily lives. I questioned their responses, asking my colleagues, "Why are the women not talking about racism?"

I originally conjectured that the women's lack of recognition of racism may have been due to their capital: social, political, economic, religious and so on. Though the women are unprivileged due to their position in cultural, religious and gender "minorities," they had many, if not more, privileges than those afforded to individuals belonging to "majority" groupings lacking capital, perhaps protecting the women from manifestations of racism. I posited that the women's membership in particular social networks facilitated access to finances, schools, teachers, ideas, and relationships, which resulted in the women's membership in professional social classes, the attainment of high levels of formal education, and a lack of linguistic barriers. This may have "shielded" the women from racism, I conjectured, potentially also resulting in the women's omission of a class analysis of their experiences.

Though this may partially be the case, upon further analysis, I realized that it is "the discourse of diversity [which] makes it impossible to understand or name systemic and cultural racism, and its implication in gender and class" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 54). Our national image is such that it makes it difficult for us to name and challenge our realities. As the women and I continued to converse, I realized that the reality of living in a multicultural nation such as Canada means being an object of racism, but this is a silenced subject. When one remembers another's comments on their appearance or a feeling of not belonging, these are intangible, and the women were concerned that these would not be adequate "evidence" of racism. Thus, they ignored it or were silent, as W. E. B. Du Bois (as cited in West, 2001) responded over a century ago in this chapter's opening quote. The women did not associate those individual actions with ideological and institutional constructions of Others in Canada as the process of racism. Thus there was a need to reflect, a need to understand that others are manoeuvring through similar identity negotiations:

> I was aware of [the discrimination] before but you don't feel like anyone is going through the same thing because everyone just walks around acting like they're either immune to it or they're like, 'Oh no, no!' Like they'll just brush it off. (Sakeena, FGC)

After individual and collective reflections and dialogues, the women more noticeably expressed how the individual actions were part of broader ideologies and institutions, realizing that incidents such as "in the airports, … when they do the random checks, it's supposedly always me" (Amal, #2), are part of broader societal processes of racism. In this regard, the women "come to know that they are seen as virtually invading this Canada" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 46), and thus are objects of racism.

As is apparent in the women's narratives and their identity negotiations, the women experienced the effect of these systemic constructions of their identities in the lack of recognition of their identities as Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab.* Their experiences of

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discomfort and isolation stemming from individual communications with other Canadians made them "feel violated ... like that space I have or that bubble is being violated" (Amal, #2). This violation by their fellow Canadians left the women feeling confused and conflicted about how to respond when

> you'll be walking, for example in the mall or something, and you'll see somebody just watching you and just staring at you. And ... it's really uncomfortable but ... you just don't do anything. Some people will be like, 'What're you staring at?' ... [but] we just learn [to get] used to it. ... I always catch people staring at me and I just ignore it. ... I dunno what's going on in their head. (Reem, FGC)

This self-doubt and uncertainty resulting from the gaze, the gaze that followed the women wherever they went, is testament to the latent nature of racism in Canada. The women were constructed and recognized as Other, characterized as excluded from the fold of what it means to "be Canadian." Though the women initially downplayed these instances of racism, conjecturing that "maybe it's all in my head" they gradually recognized that "I've noticed it on many occasions now because I start paying more attention to it. ... Before, ... I let it go to a certain degree but, now I'm noticing it more" (Sakeena, #1). Each woman engaged in an understanding of the processes of racism in a different manner.

Out of the three women, Amal was most cognizant of manifestations of racism in Canadian society, attributing this understanding to the fact that she was "doubly different" as a Black Muslim woman who practices *hijab*. In addition to highlighting her feelings of segregation, she found it difficult to

> [prove] that a person's racist. ... You obviously feel it ... [but] I don't know if it's them being racist towards Black people or being racist towards Muslims. But ... I do feel like people sometimes are racist towards me. ... I feel like there is racism in Canada. (#1)

This interlocking analysis of racism, and understanding that Muslims are both a racialized group and a religious Other, excludes them "not necessarily in the sense of being excluded from citizenship of the nation state, ... but in

the sense of not being regarded as 'really belonging'" (Miles & Brown, 2003, p. 167).

Through a process of reflection and dialogue, Sakeena understood her Othered identity to be a manifestation of racism. In our first two conversations, Sakeena expressed that

> yes, there is racism towards people and towards us. ... I personally have not had a lot of problems with it other than my small, little, nitty-gritty things, ... like standing in line and not being asked, "How are you?"... But to tell you the truth, I haven't experienced anything personally that bad ... that I can say was because of my *hijab.* (#1)

However, through reflection upon her experiences, Sakeena developed consciousness and "started feeling the discrimination toward my *hijab.* ... Things I ignored before, I started feeling all of a sudden" (#3). Ultimately, Sakeena stopped practicing *hijab* due to the racism exhibited toward her by her colleagues and patients, as she connected the systemic racism toward Muslim women who practice *hijab* to her individual identity, and could no longer ignore others' reactions to her *hijab*. She puzzled, "it's weird [how] in just a matter of days or weeks, something can just change" (#3).

Though recognizing societal misconstructions of Muslim women, Rana presents a positive narrative and "[doesn't] remember being discriminated at all. Even ... the white Canadian non-Muslim folks, they were very open to [*hijab*]" and "I was accepted. I didn't have any discrimination. I didn't feel discriminated. I felt comfortable" (#1). Rana distanced her individual identity from societal constructs of her prescribed identity. Yet I wondered, was this how racism was manifesting itself in her life? Rana and her family became more immersed in the Muslim community as she acknowledged that she "wouldn't really interact with [non-Muslims] that much" because her family did not (#1). But she did know acquaintances who had experienced racism and Rana recognized that "it's my duty too to stand up for those people. ... I just feel like this is the thing that hits my heart, and at the same time, it's

nothing too close to me" (#2). In this way, Rana perceived her responsibility as rallying for the group's cause as a witness of oppression in others. Bullock (2005) contends that even Muslim women who do not practice *hijab* are affected by the Orientalist discourse as their identity is first, "effaced by the ubiquitous image of 'the veiled woman,' and, second, they are guilty by association" (p. xvi). The segregation of Rana's family, stemming from protectionism as discussed in chapter 5, reflects the struggle of *mestizas* living in the borderlands who question: "How much do they assimilate to the white culture and how much do we resist and risk becoming isolated in the culture and ghettoized" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 233)?

The process of reconciling hegemonic discourses with everyday acts to comprehend processes of racism developed through a series of reflections that were facilitated by participation in this research project. The women's experiences are some of many that reflect the effects of structures of racism in the lives of Canadian Muslim youth. According to the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC), instances of racism lead Muslim youth to experience feelings of loss of self-esteem, inferiority and even suicidal tendencies while simultaneously construct them as victims of suspicion, hate crimes, vandalism, and racial profiling in public settings (McDonough & Hoodfar, 2005). The "mainstream, 'respectable' forms of anti-Muslimism" (Law, 2010, p. 48) witnessed in the women's narratives signify that, "as the years pass on, it's getting worse and worse and worse for people who wear *hijab*" (Sakeena, #1).

Processes of racism, then, define what it means to "be Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* and manifests through the misrecognition of their identities. The women's narratives highlight racist processes in our nation, embedded within ideologies, institutions, and individual actions. As I conclude this chapter, I look at the women's experiences as "emerging counter-narratives from the nation's margins" as

they are "cultural hybrids who have lived, because of migration or exile, in more than one culture" (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 2005, p. 38). The women's narratives, understood as counter-narratives, offer a means of opening spaces for "Muslim women [to] bring issues of racism, diversity and difference to the forefront of discussion" (Faiza, WN, p. 3).

Moving Forward

Racism is a reality in the lives of Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*, women who are Othered as their identities are misconstructed and unrecognized. In this chapter, I have conceptualized what "being a problem" means for the women through an analysis of racism in Canada. After exploring the concept of racism in academic literature and clarifying my usage of the term as emerges from the women's words and experiences, I explored conceptualizations of racism in Canada which construct exclusionary definitions of what it means to "be Canadian." I then conjectured why the women were hesitant to recognize and name manifestations of racism in their daily lives, alluding to the strength of multiculturalism and Orientalist discourses which successfully conceal ideologies, institutions and acts of racism in Canada. In the next chapter, the concluding chapter, I speculate as to the future of our nation, a future that requires the construction of new realities.

Chapter Seven: Toward Constructing New Realities

In another's country that is also your own, your person divides, and in following the forked path you encounter yourself in a double movement ... once as stranger, and then as friend.

Bhabha, 1994, p. xxv

[We] are still lacking acceptance. And it doesn't feel really good to not be accepted.

Sakeena, #1

As I write this final chapter, I realize that I am exhausted. My journey as a researcher and as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab* and the associated analyses, discussions, explanations, justifications, and clarifications has exhausted me. Audre Lorde (1984) contends that her "response to racism is anger" (p. 131), but my response to racism is frustration. Frustration stemming from the realization that, regardless of how many people I share my research journey with, regardless of how many people to whom I offer an explanation of *hijab*, regardless of how many people I tell not to believe what they see in the media about Muslim women, one stare, one comment, one incident that simultaneously makes me feel visible/invisible, puts me back where I began. As I write, though, I think back to the women, the women who so openly and honestly shared their narratives in the quest to expose the realities of our society. It is for them that I instill within myself a sense of optimism as we continue to formulate our resistance, our resistance to being constructed as a problem. In this chapter, I consider, "so, now what?" After reflecting on the research journey thus far, I question the reader as to the prospect for change in our nation, how, when, and if it will ever come about.

So, Now What?

As I reflect on the women's narratives and experiences, considering what the women have exposed about the realities of our society, I think, now what? What does this mean? What does this mean for the women? For Muslims in Canada? For Canadian society? For my home? At this point, I can only speculate. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write:

> There is an irony in this for narrative inquirers because they tend to be less sure of themselves, less clear of what it is they have to say, *after* investing themselves intensely over time in their research than they were prior to doing their research. (p. 145, emphasis in original)

What I do know, I have written in this body of work. After sharing my personal journey and experiences of "being Canadian" as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*, I reviewed the academic literature and recent research on multiculturalism and Orientalist discourses, identities and hybridities, *hijab*, secularism in Canada, and fascinations with unveiling Muslim women. After sharing my epistemology and journey as an antiracist, feminist, narrative researcher who is both an insider and an outsider to the women, I shared Amal, Rana, and Sakeena's narratives. From their narratives, two key identity negotiations emerged in relation to their experiences of "being Canadian:" (1) between "being a Muslim" and "being recognized as Muslim," and (2) between "being a Canadian" and "being recognized as Canadian." I discussed three key processes in Canada which influenced the women's identity negotiations through externally imposed definitions of "being Canadian:" the state, mass media, and Muslim families and communities. Finally, I discussed how processes of racism contextualized the women's identity negotiations and experiences of "being Canadian" by exploring conceptualizations of the term in Canada and how the processes of reflection and dialogue in this research project led to the women's recognition of manifestations of racism in their lives.

By no means does this research project signal an end or conclusion to these issues. I do not claim to possess any answers or solutions. The hegemonic structures which constrict the women's identities are too pervasive, too embedded, and too latent for this thesis paper to absolve them. What I do know, though, and what I have shared here with you, is a deeply entrenched and unsettling view of racism in Canada from the perspective of a specific group of Canadians. Their identities and their beings are based upon manifestations of racism. As a researcher, then, I can only move in the direction in which I am directed from the research. So, moving forward, I know that "the possibilities for constructing a radically different Canada emerge only from those who have been 'othered' as the insider-outsiders of the nation" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 81). To move toward a radically different Canada, we must understand the reality of our present Canada, a reality of segregation, lack of belonging, and racism. A reality that contradicts the common presumption that Canada is "a cultural mosaic." Does this reality stimulate a sense of urgency, of discomfort, of angst in the reader about the nature of our nation? Are you prompted to question and challenge what you thought you knew? Do these narratives rouse you to action, to resist through the means available to you? If so, then I have done what I can as an antiracist, feminist researcher. But how can we ensure that change comes about? Will we ever get there?

Formulating Resistances

Recognizing and challenging racism requires challenging interlocking structures of privilege and oppression in Canada. Disconnect between the equalities mandated in policies and the social realities of Canadians reflect the pervasiveness of these hegemonic structures. Why are our discussions about racism silenced? Denied? Trivialized? Though this project explored understandings of identity, how does racism manifest in public systems such as employment, education, housing, and justice? How do other Others

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understand racism in these areas? What is the relationship between patriarchies, neoliberalisms, and racisms? How do they work together to oppress, subjugate, and bind? How long will this colonization continue?

There are so many questions and uncertainties. But the one truth is that we are all different. As Canadians, we are all different. Regrettably, we continue to view difference negatively, as a quality to be feared, to be obstructed, to be nonexistent. Audre Lorde (1984) posits that "we have *all* been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing ... but we have no patterns for relating across our human differences as equals" (p. 115). How do we turn our understanding of difference into a quality to be respected? Could "difference" be utilized as a form of resistance? In what areas could we begin to consider difference differently? Could we begin to question, to challenge and to consider these six sites of resistance: policy, education, research, community, individual, and activism?

Policy. How do hegemonic structures which possess so much power succumb to change? Even though policies are constructed to guide the functioning of our institutions, their everyday realities need to be assessed and challenged. What kinds of structural change need to occur for social change to come about? Who has the power to make this change? Will change result from working from within the system, from the outside the system, or do we need an entirely new system? Certainly the women's experiences of "being Canadian" necessitate a stringent examination and challenging of structures and policies that function from Orientalist and racist lenses. By exposing racism as fundamental to notions of Canadianness, we can challenge prevailing notions "that existing government policies on the subject are adequate, so that further action is not needed" (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007, p. 499). But when our nation is founded upon the colonization of and racism toward its indigenous populations, how are we able to change it?

Education. What do our schools teach us about Muslims? About the practice of *hijab*? About other Others? To what extent and in what ways is our education system complacent in racist processes in Canada? Religion is a significant component in the lives of Canadians but are we able to initiate an intelligent conversation about religion in our public education systems? I wonder how education about world religions, from an inclusive and holistic perspective, taught by teachers who are aware of their personal biases and stereotypes, will enable Canadian students to build respect for one another. For example, Reem (FGC) suggests that by "[incorporating] Islam in a positive way ... in school textbooks," students will be able to understand the religion in a positive light. In this manner, we develop the "ability to hear what religious people of *all* varieties have to say" (Bramadat, 2005b, p. 214, emphasis in original). Another example is the incorporation of students' religious backgrounds into educational policies and practices, such as potentially allowing Muslims to hold congregational Friday prayers in schools. This acceptance of identity, of difference, allows you to "still feel Canadian" (Sakeena, #1). Additionally, explicit courses and workshops on antiracism education not only enable participants to self-examine racist ideologies and actions in an educational context but to "[investigate] and [change] how schools deal [with European] privilege and power sharing (Dei, as cited in Abdi & Shultz, 2008, p. 30). Will increased understandings of difference lead to social change? Will increased recognition of racism lead to stronger challenges?

Research. This research project is one of many forms of resistance in the struggle to transform our nation. My eyes have been opened to the limitless possibilities and potential of research as a means of resistance. Some questions that arise from this research are:

- How does racism intersect with Canada's colonial history? With transnational capitalism? With global patriarchies?

- How does Islamic feminism contribute to growing understandings of the experiences of Muslim women in diasporic contexts?
- How do Muslim women who practice *hijab* understand the practice of *hijab* as a means of individual and collective resistance?
- What is the experience of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who do *not* practice *hijab*? For Canadian-born Muslim men?
- In what ways is lateral violence between Muslims from differing nationalities, ethnicities, and sects reflective of internalized racist understandings of "being Canadian?"
- What is the experience of "being Canadian" for Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab* and belong to marginalized social classes? Alternatively, how do the women who participated in this research project understand other women who practice *hijab* who may also be marginalized due to their social class?
- What are some of the tensions undergone by Muslim researchers when researching Muslim communities?
- What is the role of reflexivity and dialogue in recognizing processes of racism? How can this pedagogical tool be useful for antiracism educators?
- What is the role of intergenerational learning in developing notions of "being Canadian" for Canadian Others?

The research possibilities are endless. But with each project, each query, each challenge, we continue to resist.

Community. How do communities implicitly and explicitly influence what it means to "be Canadian?"Not only Muslim communities, but other communities who are Othered? Creating "sites of empowerment and support [instead of] censure and admonition" (Meshal, 2003, p. 90) between and within communities can be a starting point for respecting difference. This

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doesn't mean that we all have "to like everyone. We're not all meant to like everyone. But [we can] just accept them for who they are, what they are" (Sakeena, #1). In this way, we voice our disagreements and defend our personal beliefs while demonstrating respect and open-mindedness, exemplifying new means of co-existence (Ivison, Patton & Sanders, 2000). Challenging segregations and building bridges happens when "you just talk to other people" (Reem, FGC). Communication is key. I wonder, what was the experience of other Others when they read about the women? Could you relate? Do you also feel the isolation, segregation, and constant questioning of your identities? What is the role of allies in resisting these divisions? Is there a way for us to come together to resist?

Individual. Racism involves each and every one of us. We are all complicit in these structures in one way or another. How do we as individuals contribute to the legitimization of these hegemonic structures? By reflecting on our own understandings of what it means to "be Canadian," we can move forward toward understanding multiple conceptions of "being Canadian." This research forces us to consider: Who possesses the power to define me? Who forcibly takes that power to define me and to whom do I give it to, willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly? In my own experiences of "being Canadian," whose identities am I negating or silencing? Is it significant to determine what "being Canadian" means? Is it enough that an individual knows it for themselves, or does the process of recognition need to exist? Reflecting upon our individual and collective understandings of identity will enable us to resist racist constructions of ours and others' identities.

Activism. Before I started this research project, I didn't consider myself an activist. But talking to the women and watching them grow in their consciousness as everyday activists, individuals who resisted attempts to appropriate and misconstruct their identities, made me reflect on my own understandings of the term. How do Muslim women activists resist? Do they

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resist through the practice of *hijab*? Do they resist through their very beings, their very identities as Muslim women in the west? Can Islamic feminism ally with other organized social movements to challenge interlocking oppressions? Katherine Bullock (2005) highlights the narratives of 18 Muslim women activists in North America, each of whom embodies and asserts a distinct hybridized identity to challenge Orientalist constructions of Muslim women and *hijab*. As part of "the silent revolution" (Barazangi, 2007), the women increasingly understand *hijab* and their selves as sites of empowerment and everyday resistance. How, then, can Muslim women activists in North America rally together to resist? I offer now this body of work as a means of continued resistance toward constructing new realities in Canada. What can you offer?

Moving Forward

There are no easy answers. Instead, there are more questions to be asked, more research to be done, more resistances to plan. In this chapter, I considered the "so what" of this research project and asked the reader questions about formulating resistance in six sites. But I know that "none of us alone can save the nation or world. But each of us can make a positive difference if we commit ourselves to do so" (West, 2001, p. 159). Through this work, I challenge us to construct new realities in Canada. Though we may not get there anytime soon, are we prepared to resist until we do? Are we truly committed? What can each of us do as individuals? As communities? As organizations? As Canadians?

From the women, I learned that what it means to "be Canadian" is to be perceived as a problem. Am I a problem? Maybe. But I am also a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*. That, to me, is what it means to "be Canadian."

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Appendix A: Script for Intermediaries & Letter for Potential Participants

Exploring the Experiences of Canadian Muslim Women Who Practice *Hijab*

Ayesha Mian is a Master's student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. She is currently looking for participants for her thesis research project on the experiences of Canadian Muslim women. Ayesha wants to talk to young Muslim women who, like her, were born and raised in Canada and practice *hijab* to share their experiences of "being Canadian." Participation in her project will involve three steps:

(1) A short written response to the question: What is your experience of "being Canadian" as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*?
(2) Two individual interviews with Ayesha of one-two hours each to share your experiences
(3) A group conversation of about two hours with other participants on the same topic

If this research project seems interesting to you, Ayesha would be delighted to contact you with more details! If you would like to contact her for more information, you can email her at <u>amian@ualberta.ca</u> or call her at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Do you consent to provide me with your contact information so that Ayesha can get in touch with you with more details about the project?

☐ Yes, I consent to provide my contact details to Ayesha Mian.

Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Signature: _____

Thank you for considering being part of this research project!

Appendix B: Demographic Information Sheet

Exploring the Experiences of Canadian Muslim Women Who Practice *Hijab*

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Age: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Religious Sect: _____

Parents' Countr(ies) of Origin: _____

Appendix C: Written Narrative Guide

Exploring the Experiences of Canadian Muslim Women Who Practice *Hijab*

For the first phase of this research project, please share your response to the following question. It may be as brief or as lengthy as you wish. After completing the response, please contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or amian@ualberta.ca to let me know that you have completed it. **Do not email it to me directly**. Instead, I will let you know how to submit it in a secure and confidential manner. Please be assured that your paper and its contents will be kept in accordance with strict privacy and confidentiality standards.

Name:

What is your experience of "being Canadian" as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*?

You may want to think about experiences with your family and friends and in your community, education and work environments.

Appendix D: Information Letter and Consent Forms

Exploring the Experiences of Canadian Muslim Women Who Practice *Hijab*

Information Letter

My name is Ayesha Mian, and I am a student in the Master's program in the Department of Educational Policy Studies in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. I am currently conducting research for my thesis project on the experiences of Canadian Muslim women. The purpose of my research is to explore how Canadian Muslim women understand themselves to be Canadian. I am interested in hearing about the experiences of women who, like myself, are both Canadian and practice *hijab*. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project.

If you agree to participate in this study, I hope to collect information from you in three forms during the summer and fall months of 2011:

(1) **A short written response** to the question: What is your experience of "being Canadian" as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*?

(2) I may contact you to arrange **two individual interviews**. Each interview will take one-two hours. I will audio-tape each interview and transcribe it. If you wish, I will provide you with a copy of the transcript of the interview(s).

(3) I would also like to conduct **one group conversation** with all the women participating in this project to discuss some of the ideas coming out of the study. I will also audio-tape and transcribe this conversation.

I will use the information that you provide in my thesis. I may also use it in journal articles, book chapters, and conference presentations.

All your information will be kept confidential in a password-protected electronic file. I, along with my supervisor, Dr. Donna M. Chovanec, will be the only individuals with access to the information that you provide. The data collection and storage methods in this research project will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. Questions about your rights as a research participant may be

directed to the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office at telephone number (780) 492-2615.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. I will keep your identity completely confidential and will not use your real name at any time, unless you wish me to. Even after you agree to participate in the study, you have the right to physically withdraw from the study at any point during the data collection process. If you choose to withdraw your information as well, you must let me know before participating in the group conversation. If you choose to do so, I will delete your information and not include it in the study.

If you have any questions about this research project now or at a later date, please contact Ayesha Mian at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or amian@ualberta.ca, or my supervisor, Dr. Donna M. Chovanec at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or chovanec@ualberta.ca.

Thank you for considering being part of my research project!

Sincerely,

Ayesha Mian
Master's of Education student
University of Alberta

Consent to Participate (Parent)

☐ I have read and understood the information letter on page 1.

☐ I give my permission for _____ to participate in this research project.

_____   _____   _____

Parent Name   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____

Researcher Name   Signature   Date

Consent to Participate (Recruitment)

☐ I have read and understood the information letter on page 1.

☐ I consent to participate in this project and understand my rights as a
participant.

☐ I consent to complete a written response about my experiences that will
be used in the research project.

☐ I understand that I may be contacted to participate in two individual
interviews.

☐ I am interested in participating in the group conversation.

_____   _____   _____

Participant Name   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____

Researcher Name   Signature   Date

Please sign two copies, one to be returned to the researcher and one for you
to keep for your own records.

Consent to Participate (Interviews)

☐ I have read and understood the information letter on page 1.

☐ I understand my rights as a participant in this research project.

☐ I consent to be interviewed.

☐ I consent to be audio recorded.

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Participant Name | Signature | Date |

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Researcher Name | Signature | Date |

Please sign two copies, one to be returned to the researcher and one for you to keep for your own records.

Consent to Participate (Focus Group Conversation)

☐ I have read and understood the information letter on page 1.

☐ I understand my rights as a participant in this research project.

☐ I consent to participate in the group conversation.

☐ I understand that I can discontinue my participation in the group at any time, but it will not be possible to withdraw statements that I have already made. I also understand that I can refrain from answering any questions I do not wish to answer.

☐ I consent to be audio recorded.

☐ I consent to keep the identities and all information revealed by other participants in strict confidence.

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Participant Name | Signature | Date |

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Researcher Name | Signature | Date |

Please sign two copies, one to be returned to the researcher and one for you to keep for your own records

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Exploring the Experiences of Canadian Muslim Women Who Practice *Hijab*

Interview Guide

After inviting the participant to sign the consent form in which she consents to be interviewed and audio-taped, I will start the interview by introducing myself. I will provide an explanation of the purpose and process of the study, as stated in the information letter:

"I am currently conducting research for my thesis project on the experiences of Canadian Muslim women. The purpose of my research is to explore how Canadian Muslim women understand themselves to be Canadian. I am interested in hearing about the experiences of women who, like myself, are both Canadian and practice *hijab*."

After that, I will invite the participant to tell me about herself as a Canadian-born Muslim woman who practices *hijab*. I will use the following probes only as guides and will follow the thread of the participant's story, while at all times keeping in mind the purpose of the research project.

➢ What do you think it means to "be Canadian?"
➢ What are your experiences of being Canadian in Canada?
➢ What do you think are dominant perceptions of *hijab* and Muslim women in Canada? How do you think these affect your experiences?

Possible specifics:

➢ What community did you grow up in?
➢ What were/are your educational experiences like?
➢ Tell me about your family.
➢ What are your experiences like with your friends?
➢ What are your work experiences like?

Keep in mind: The Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space

1. Interaction (link between personal and social)
2. Continuity (past, present, and future)
3. Situation (the notion of place)

End on a positive note: "Is there anything you want to add?" "How was it for you talking to me in this way?" "I appreciate your openness and willingness to share your experiences with me. I feel that I have learned a lot from you that will help me in my work" (Josselson, 2007).

In the follow-up interview with each participant, I will begin by recapping what was discussed in the first interview. I will invite participants to clarify or expand upon anything from the first interview, or something they reflected on in the time between.

After that, I will ask for clarifications or expansions that emerged while I was transcribing and reviewing our first interview. In particular, I will ask participants to elaborate on a particularly significant idea, event, or concept that the participant mentioned repeatedly during the first interview.

Finally, I will present some emerging themes from my preliminary analysis and ask the participant to provide feedback on them.

I will conclude both interviews by thanking the participant for their participation in and contributions to this research project and ask them to contact me if they think of anything else to add or if they have any other questions.

Appendix F: Focus Group Conversation Guide

Exploring the Experiences of Canadian Muslim Women Who Practice
Hijab

Focus Group Conversation Guide

I will start the focus group conversation by introducing myself and thanking participants for being part of the conversation. After that, we will go around the group and ask participants to introduce themselves. I will explain the purpose and process of the research project again, as outlined in the information letter. Each participant will be asked to sign a consent form in which they consent to be part of the focus group, to be audio-recorded, and to maintain the confidentiality of the identities and all the information provided by the participants during the conversation.

The purpose of the focus group conversation is to bring women together to share their thoughts on the data thus far and to see where we can go from here in terms of what needs to change in our society.

As a means of introducing ourselves to one another, ask each participant to "draw what it means to you to be Canadian."

After this, I will present some preliminary themes that emerged from the data subsequent to the individual interviews. I will ask participants to expand upon or give feedback on these themes. In this manner, we will engage in the next level of analysis.

➢ What are your thoughts regarding these themes? Can you relate to them? How do these resonate for you?
➢ As a community of Canadian-born Muslim women who practice *hijab*, what does this mean for us?
➢ How do we challenge or confront these feelings of not being recognized as Canadian?
➢ Where do we go from here?
➢ What in society needs to change? How will it change?

At the end of the conversation, participants will be reminded to keep the confidentiality of the identities and information provided by all the participants. I will thank participants for their participation in and contribution to this research project and ask them to contact me if they think of anything else to add or if they have any other questions.